

Correlation Between Behavioral Factors and Opinion of Graffiti

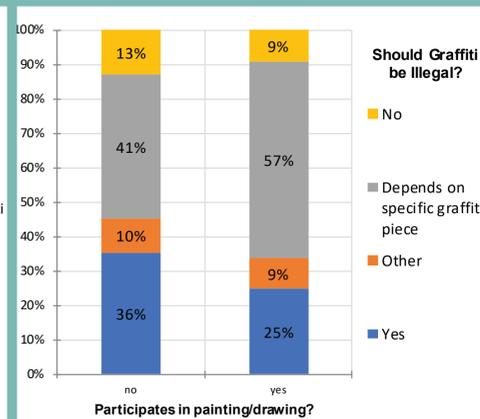
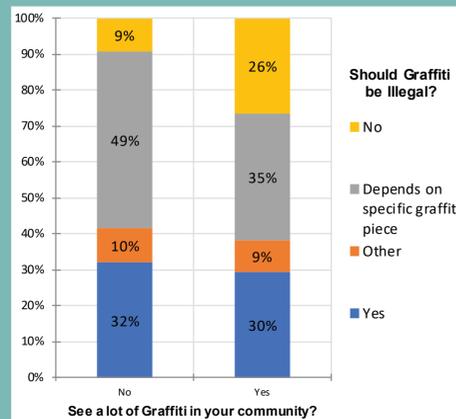
Natalie Dulansky

Abstract

Graffiti in the contemporary form has been present in many U.S. cities for generations since its rise in the 1970s. Public reaction to the many pieces located in their community has been scarcely mentioned in most literature focused on graffiti subculture. No previous study has thoroughly analysed or addressed the correlation between someone's graffiti opinion and their specific behavioral or cultural profile. This study aims to fill that gap in research by gathering data on two topics: an individual's opinion on graffiti and comprehensive behavioral background information regarding the individuals creative and lifestyle habits. This study investigated what behaviors and traits affect the formation of the subjects' beliefs about graffiti. By analyzing the correlation between many lifestyle and behavioral tendencies and the participants tolerance of graffiti, this study aims to narrow down the commonalities to assess why an individual would be more likely to have a high or low tolerance of graffiti in their community.

Background

Graffiti is any writing or drawings sprayed, scratched, or scribbled illicitly on a surface in a public place. The root of contemporary graffiti can be traced back to New York subways in the 1970s, where gang members and political activists used graffiti as a form of expression. The calligraphic nature of many pieces seen today became popularized in 1971 in an effort for each writer to stand as an individual in the ever growing community. Currently in the Ventura and LA Counties, graffiti is considered an act of vandalism with consequences ranging from \$1,000 fines to imprisonment, even in the circumstances of nonviolent graffiti. In many cases it is a way for writers to express their emotions on social, political, and economic topics as well as personal frustrations. This public form of media enhances many public spaces, and even attracts tourists to some cities. A piece of graffiti located centrally in a city promotes visual interactions and dialogue about its presence and visual themes.



Question

What behavioral factors affects someone's opinion of graffiti in their community?

Methods

This study surveyed 250 people ranging from ages 14-71. The included generations were Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. The survey questions can be categorized into two parts including questions about lifestyle habits as well as opinion of graffiti. Questions in the first section aim to categorize the participants on a scale of highly creative or less creative. The second half of the survey is based around personal opinion of graffiti. By asking whether they believe graffiti should be legal, or if it is an art, this study has placed respondents on a scale of graffiti tolerance. In other words, if a participant answered many questions in favor of graffiti, such as always considering graffiti an art form, the person will fall much higher on the scale of tolerance than someone who said they never considered graffiti to be an art form. Similarly, if a participant answers many questions in opposition of graffiti, it would indicate that they are less tolerant of it in general.

Identifying Questions

- Age
- Creative activities
- Music preferences
- Location

Opinion of Graffiti

- Is it vandalism?
- Is it art?
- Specific visual characteristics
- Illegal or not?

Literature Review

A study conducted by Gabry Vanderveen, an assistant professor of criminology at the institute for criminal law and criminology, and Gwen van Eijk, a criminologist and urban sociologist Erasmus University Rotterdam (2015), acknowledged the impact of the broken windows theory and strict regulation on graffiti as possible influencers on public judgement. An important article that helped shape this study and many of the survey questions is "Visitors to modern and contemporary art museums: towards a new sociology of 'cultural profiles'" by Laurie Hanquinet (2013). Although the article is a study of museum attendees, Hanquinet's use of the 'cultural background' was relevant in this study regarding graffiti. The cultural profile disregards any previous assumptions made about a person based on their own socioeconomic status and instead focuses on the social determinants in their life that can more accurately bracket them into a category. Kim Dovey, Simon Wollan, and Ian Woodlock of the University of Melbourne concluded that "all graffiti conveys meaning, it is often the resident's exclusion from this aesthetic field that marks graffiti as vandalism" (Dovey Wollan, & Woodcock, 2012).

Results

- Older generations have a much lower tolerance of graffiti
- Those who live in suburban areas are more likely to have a low tolerance for graffiti compared to others that live in urban or rural areas
- Those who saw a multitude of graffiti in their community had a likelihood of believing graffiti should be legal
- Those who participated in more creative activities would take other visual characteristics of the specific piece into consideration at a higher rate than the non-painter and drawers
- Those who did not participate in any creative activities were more likely to have a lower tolerance of graffiti

Conclusions

It has been found that age, participation in creative activities, and relative location to graffiti have had the largest influence on opinions, whether they be positive or negative. With these results available, it is now important to consider the future placement and regulation of graffiti in individual communities.

Discussion/ Future Applications

As the variation in data shows, the behavioral characteristics included in this study predict the likelihood that someone would or would not accepting it in their community, and this could be helpful for future city planning in the aspect of graffiti regulation. Those who have participated in more creative activities, are younger, and who live in urban areas are more likely to be highly tolerant of graffiti in their community, so the inclusion of more street art could benefit the area. On the other hand, places with high populations of Generation X and Baby Boomers or rural areas would not be as willing to accept graffiti as a form of art, and therefore more regulation and precaution should be in place to please the local citizens. Evaluating the existing population or the likely citizens of a new city for the attributes questioned in this study could indicate whether the citizens would have high or low tolerance for graffiti additions or removal. When creating laws and policies about a specific group of people, in this case graffiti writers, the opinion of all the community members should be gaged to plan appropriate follow through.

References

- Hanquinet, L. (2013). Visitors to Modern and Contemporary Art Museums: Towards a New Sociology of 'Cultural Profiles'. *The Sociological Review*, 61(4), 790-813. doi:10.1111/1467-954x.12072
- Vanderveen, G., & Eijk, G. V. (2015). Criminal but Beautiful: A Study on Graffiti and the Role of Value Judgments and Context in Perceiving Disorder. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 22(1), 107-125. doi:10.1007/s10610-015-9288-4
- Dovey, K., Wollan, S., & Woodcock, I. (2012). Placing Graffiti: Creating and Contesting Character in Inner-city Melbourne. *Journal of Urban Design*, 17(1), 21-41. doi:10.1080/13574809.2011.646248