4-2018

Deviance Fluidity on the Urban Landscape: Graffiti and Street Art as Non-Normative Placemaking

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NON-NORMATIVE PLACEMAKING

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science
Geography
Western Michigan University
April 2018

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DEVIANCE FLUIDITY ON THE URBAN LANDSCAPE: GRAFFITI AND STREET ART AS
NON-NORMATIVE PLACEMAKING

Alyson M. Mabie, M.S.

Graffiti is recognized as an illegal deviant act. Sociologically, deviance is defined by the
audience perceiving the act, rather than inherent in the act itself. In this context, deviance is
subjective and fluid. This paper explores the spectrum of graffiti from criminal vandalism to
celebrated art form in the context of its placement on the urban landscape. The fluidity of
deviance is reflected in the concentration of different types of graffiti in different locations. The
spatial distribution of graffiti writing, street art, and the equally illegal guerrilla marketing
stickers, which mimic graffiti placement and street art styles, were collected in two gentrifying
neighborhood commercial districts in the southeast quadrant of Grand Rapids, MI. Data of
vandalism incidents were collected in 2014 and 2017 using a GPS device and analyzed using
ArcGIS. The character of the neighborhoods was further explored through fieldwork. The
analysis of neighborhood characteristics and graffiti location and type over time is used to
illustrate how graffiti and deviance are delineated. Graffiti writers were interviewed to assess
perspectives on urban space. Results indicate graffiti and street art to be non-normative
methods of placemaking.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In February of 2005, the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan Police Department (GRPD) declared war on graffiti. The GRPD followed through on their promise to "crackdown," arresting at least nine graffiti writers and aggressively covering up existing graffiti (Edcutlip 2005a). The mayor declared "If you tag us, we will tag you harder. We will find you and it won't be to recognize you as an artist." (Edcutlip 2005b).

To the present, Grand Rapids maintains a hardline stance against graffiti, adhering to the Broken Windows era idea (Kelling & Wilson, 1982) that graffiti allowed to exist invites more graffiti or worse to the detriment of the area. "The City Commission and staff take the position that graffiti has a negative effect on the quality of life within Grand Rapids. Quick removal is key to controlling and stopping the spread of more graffiti" (City of Grand Rapids, 2018). However, graffiti comes in many forms.

In 2012, public tolerance for vandalism was tested again, only this time it came in the form of street art, an equally illegal yet visually different sibling of the urbane writing style many associate with the term 'graffiti.' Several stenciled images depicting Grand Rapids native, President Gerald R. Ford, sprang up across the city. One image depicted Ford in a pose of action alongside the Grand Rapids city motto *Motu Viget*, Latin for "strength in activity." Another showed Ford in a swimsuit on a retaining wall next to the Grand River, which runs through the center of the city.

Official statements regarding the presidential images acknowledged the cultural and historical significance such work had to the city. Curators from the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum "found it difficult [to] condone," yet wrestled with whether or not to post photos of the stencils on their social media (ultimately, they decided against it) (Ellison, 2012a). An associate professor from the Kendall School of Art and Design, located in Grand Rapids, suggested the city "leave it alone," citing the context, narrative, and significance to the city as factors that deemed the stencils art rather than vandalism (Ellison, 2012a).

Grand Rapids had recently seen a surge in public art as host of the annual ArtPrize, one of the largest public art competitions in the United States. Since 2009, each year the city is the site and medium of countless art installations, including permanent wall murals. Despite the city's cultural shift towards public arts appreciation, the stencils had the residents divided. Some were outraged by the vandalism. One commenter, zoowriter, stated in an online news article:

> "...the distinction between street art and vandalism..." It's easy. If you paint on
> your own property, or you have permission from the property owner, then it is
> art. If you deface (create art upon) public or private property, without
> permission, then it is vandalism. I'm tired of the phrase "graffiti artist." It is an
> oxymoron, and I wish that reporters would stop using it in an attempt to appear
> hip. An artist creates art; a criminal creates graffiti. (Ellison Sept 17, 2012)

Others were delighted by the presence of "Banksy style street art." Banksy refers to the infamous British street artist, known internationally for his sardonic stencil work.

In the same comment forum, after suggesting the city hold a graffiti version of ArtPrize, commenter lipas added:

> What another neat way Grand Rapids could set itself apart from any other city.
> What a way to draw tourists. I wonder how many of the really cool graffiti artists
> would come and leave their wares on our ugly concrete canvasses? (Ellison Sept
> 17, 2012)

The street artist responsible, who uses the name "SKBFF," created another President Ford stencil later as an officially sanctioned 2012 ArtPrize entry, though he remained anonymous. Despite the city's stance on graffiti removal, they were slow to remove the illegal stencils, with the interesting exception of several pieces which had been "vandalized" with the words "WAR CRIMINAL" (Figure 1.1). Some pieces remained on the walls as late as the end of 2017, a full five years after their creation. One stencil along an on-ramp to the 131-S expressway was nestled in between a few graffiti writers' "throw-ups" (medium to large bubbled lettering), and tags. The graffiti writing had been long since covered up by the time the Jerry Ford stencil was painted over.

Statement of Purpose

What underlies the very different reactions to equally illegal acts of vandalism? In the prevailing contemporary sociology, deviance is viewed as a social construct (Smith, 2017). An act of vandalism therefore is only as deviant as the audience perceives it to be. Deviance is not

inherent in the act of vandalism itself, but rather a product of society's interpretation of that act. While studies often note the difference in public reaction to different types of vandalism, the concept of deviance fluidity has a spatiality that is yet unexamined in geography.

Figure 1.1: War Criminal. The "vandalized" stencil of Gerald R. Ford. MLive, 2012

Further, the role of different types of graffiti in contributing to a sense of place rarely go beyond the fear and avoidance induced by graffiti and its public association to more serious

crimes, such as gang related violence or drug trafficking. While urban placemaking efforts seek to create places where people want to be, it ignores the unsanctioned, or informal methods that also act to create place. While lacking the approval of those in positions of power, different forms of graffiti nonetheless act as informal placemaking mechanisms. Though often labeled offhandedly as vandalism, the contribution to place necessarily has a bearing on the audience's interpretation of the level of deviance associated with each piece. The opening example of the Gerald R. Ford stencils exemplifies this concept as those viewing the graffiti as contributing positively to place were inclined towards a less deviant assessment. The ability of both public art and unsanctioned art in public to allow meaningful connections to place along a spectrum of deviance fluidity warrants investigation.

Finally, Ross et. al (2017) note that while academic contributions to the study of graffiti have been significant enough to consider graffiti as its own field of research, there is a lack in the research regarding graffiti and gentrification. There is also a lack of graffiti research occurring in small to mid-sized cities, with most scholars focusing on large cities, such as Los Angeles (Bloch, 2012, 2016; Phillips 1999), Toronto (Brighenti, 2010), Denver (Ferrell, 1993, 1995, 1996), Philadelphia (Ley and Cybriwsky, 1974), Melbourne (Young, 2012, 2013), and New York (Lachmann, 1988).

This study will address three aspects of graffiti and street art: 1) The spatial and cultural distributions of graffiti and street art within the context of gentrifying/gentrified neighborhoods in the mid-sized city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. 2) Investigate the extent that deviance fluidity

can be observed on the physical urban landscape. 3) The extent that different types of graffiti

contribute to non-normative placemaking.

Aim and Scope

Specifically, this thesis will examine the shifting boundaries of different types of graffiti

over time to explore deviance fluidity on the urban landscape in a geographical context. The

public acceptance or rejection of non-normative placemaking methods based on perceived

deviance will be visualized spatially. The aim of this research is to assess the value of informal

placemaking in contributing to the feel of the urban environment.

This research is spatially limited to two neighborhoods in southeast Grand Rapids,

Michigan (Figure 1.2). Grand Rapids is a midsized city, with an estimated 2016 population of

196,445 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The city is located in Kent County on the west side of lower

Michigan. Due to its size, the city may have a less developed or less active graffiti subculture

than large cities such as New York City or Los Angeles, often the sites of previous graffiti

related research. However, this research does not directly address graffiti and street art

Figure 1.2: Grand Rapids, Michigan. Map generated in ArcMap 10.6 by Author, 2018

communities of midsized cities in subcultural or social terms. The primary types of graffiti included in the study area are (1) graffiti writing, (2) street art, and (3) guerilla marketing stickers. The study area does not include gang-related graffiti so gang-related graffiti is not included in the analysis, outside of a brief description in the background chapter.

Significance of the Study

One outcome of this study will be to reflect on the significance of non-normative placemaking within the urban environment. Although illegal or unsanctioned activities may not have the blessing of those in power, they may nonetheless be appreciated and embraced by some portion of the community. The practice of graffiti and street art provides individuals with an intimate interaction with urban space. The public's assessment of the products of that relationship should be considered even in the face of sanctioned placemaking. The concept of deviance fluidity helps to underlie an understanding of how unsanctioned graffiti and street art may be viewed as valuable despite their illegal status. Another significant contribution of this study will be providing a spatial context to the concept of deviance fluidity as it relates to graffiti and the idea of vandalism.

Overview

The following thesis contains five additional chapters. Chapter II incorporates two sections. The first section will provide a historical context of graffiti and street art, from prehistoric to modern times. This section will also provide definitions of the various types of

graffiti and street art. The second section will discuss the sociology of deviance in detail.

Chapter III will consist of a review of the current literature on the perceptions and reactions to

graffiti, graffiti and gentrification, and graffiti as placemaking. Chapter IV will outline the

methods utilized in the research, and Chapter V will contain the results of the research. The

final chapter, Chapter VI, will include conclusions followed by a discussion of the results and its

implications.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

History of Graffiti and Street Art

Graffiti as a broad term translates from many languages, and with several interesting variations, into writings or scribblings on the wall (Phillips, 1999). It is no overstatement to suggest that graffiti plays an integral role in human history. The images carved and painted by our cave-dwelling ancestors stand as some of the earliest remnants of humankind's need for story-telling; for the transmission of information that defines our species. Graffiti, in that general sense, can be found throughout the human timeline in many iterations: religiously fueled contemptuous images and words scrawled inside a guard room of the Palatine of ancient Rome (Gross & Gross, 1993), images of ships carved for spiritual protection in the churches of medieval England (Champion, 2015), and spray can tags and "pieces" coating the subways of late twentieth century New York City.

Gross and Gross (1993) determined three phases in the visual history of graffiti: the imitative phase, the transitional phase, and the apocryphal phase. In the earliest phase, the imitative phase, sees prehistoric humankind attempting to capture images of objects in the real world through symbolic representations. In the transitional phase, a few millennia later, letters and words, the symbolic representations of sounds, were added to the representations of objects. This transitional phase includes three broad strokes, which cover roughly 2,500 years of human history. The first stroke is graffiti as social expression – primarily focused on objects with the addition of letters and words and social in nature. The second stroke is graffiti as

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personal expression – visually similar to social expression, but "clearly the product of an individual representing personal affairs" (256). The third stroke is graffiti as word-message expression – a completely object-free representation in phrases and words as message.

The third phase, that which is the focus of this thesis, came to the surface in the late 1960's and is referred to by Gross and Gross as the apocryphal phase due to the graffiti depicting "words in disguise" that are at once "revealing to the initiated and concealing to the novice or outsider who happens to enter an unfamiliar cultural environment" (262). Gross and Gross refer to the act of "tagging," by both graffiti writers and gang members. "Tagging" refers to the act of producing a stylized signature of one's graffiti moniker, usually in magic marker or spray paint on smooth surfaces. Often described as cryptic, Gross and Gross make use of tag examples from several cities, which they themselves can barely decipher.

Gross and Gross were only accounting for the visual constructions of graffiti broadly through history, not the cultural or subcultural impacts. If one takes the progression laid out by Gross and Gross and applies their criteria to the walls of the last 30 or 40 years, one would find themselves on a return through time. Whereas the tagging that Gross and Gross refer in the apocryphal phase did not incorporate objects, the progression of graffiti writing since then incorporates objects and characters into graffiti murals (Bloch, 2012) much like the transitional phase. "Words in disguise" could easily be extended to include the larger works of graffiti writers, such as the highly stylized bubble type lettering ("throw-ups," or the more extravagant "pieces") many people associate with urban graffiti. Street art, with its murals, stencils, stickers, and wheat pastes, has brought a full return to the symbolic representation of objects in Gross

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and Gross's first imitation phase. One could say that graffiti has gone through a second transitional phase and a second imitative phase with considerable speed and overlap.

The term graffiti can conjure everything from the symbol of neighborhood degradation to high art, depending more on the interpretation of the audience than the intentions of the creator. Modern graffiti has several factions; graffiti writing, street art, gang graffiti, and 'one-off' acts of vandalism that do not adhere to a broader subculture, such as political statements, declarations of love or hate, and so-called bathroom graffiti.

While some researchers in the field assert that labeling something as "graffiti" or "street art" begins and ends with its illegality and its designation as unsanctioned, others use the terms in a more elastic manner, describing both public art and gallery works as street art, or "graffiti art" (Ross et. al, 2017). As an emergent area of study, and one which sees rapid changes in medium and media, the definitions of terms are necessarily and healthily debated among scholars (Ross et. al, 2017). Graffiti and street art as an urban subculture has seen its works everywhere from the back alley and train car to the gallery and auction house. Similarly, practitioners have been considered everything from temerarious vandals to international art sensations. They have been both murdered (Phillips, 1999; Bloch, 2017) and enshrined (Hansen, 2016). This is not a field that lends itself easily to stark definitions.

For the purposes of this research, graffiti, or "writing" as practitioners call it, will refer to unsanctioned name-based styles that adhere to the graffiti subculture, including tags, throw-ups, and pieces. Street art will refer to unsanctioned image-based forms (rather than name-based), including stencils, stickers, murals, and yarn bombs. One-off will refer to the singular

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instances of vandalism. Public art will refer to sanctioned work on walls, such as murals, and

may or may not be produced by the same artists who also work in the unsanctioned arena.

Guerilla marketing will refer to the stickers produced by commercial businesses or other vested

entities, such as music groups, as a means of low-cost marketing. Gang graffiti will refer to the

acts of territorial marking created by gangs.

In all its forms, graffiti acts as claims to space that simultaneously create a sense of place.

This research will explore these aspects of graffiti and street art, as well as the coincident trend

of guerilla marketing stickers, which mimic street art style and placement, in the context of the

gentrifying neighborhood of a midsized midwestern American city, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Graffiti Writing

The advent of modern graffiti writing is usually attributed to a single New York City

tagger, TAKI 183. TAKI 183 achieved mythical status after a 1971 New York Times article ran

detailing his magic marker laden activities across the five boroughs ("TAKI 183 Spawns Pen

Pals"). In the article, TAKI 183 is cemented as the original "king," a term which graffiti writers

use to denote those of high status or respect (Ferrell, 1993), and responsible for "spawn[ing]

hundreds of imitators." In Los Angeles, another tagger, CHAKA, is widely credited with

bringing the New York based graffiti style to the Golden State and making it at once an

accessible (legible) and an individual pursuit (Phillips, 1999, Bloch, personal communication,

Jan. 27, 2018). CHAKA is also credited with starting the trend of the "pure" tagger, someone

who tags for their own infamy and does not aspire to other more complex forms of graffiti art, such as throw-ups, pieces, or murals (Phillips, 1999).

Tags (Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2) are commonly described as ubiquitous and cryptic. Tagging is also the form of graffiti writing that is most likely to be mistaken for being gang related by the uninitiated public, despite having marked differences in composition and style (Phillips, 1999)). The swift and practiced signatures are often obscured to public comprehension, utilizing nicknames, initials, and codes that "constrain the ability of mainstream audiences to understand either their meaning or purpose" (Phillips, 1999:319). Tagging is viewed by graffiti practitioners (including gang members, as Phillips notes) as the riskiest style of graffiti writing. The goal of the tagger is to "get up," gaining fame through repetition, visibility of their work, and the impossibility of tag placement (Russell, 2008; Phillips, 1999; Ferrell, 1993). The drive for frequency and visibility generate a higher likelihood of being caught by authorities. To further the risk factors, taggers endanger life and limb in pursuit of hard to reach locations, such as expressway signage and tall structures.

Tagging may be individual or social. Taggers may tag their own "name," or the tags of members of their graffiti or tagger crew (Ferrell, 1993). A crew refers to a group of graffiti writers who "run" together. In his exhaustive field study of Denver graffiti writers, Ferrell describes the act of "going out tagging" as an "incalculably rich experience," contrary to officials' narrow view of tagging as "dog-like marking of territory" (71). A tagger must be acutely aware of every nuance of their surroundings and every potential venue for a prying eye if they wish to evade capture.

Figure 2.1: SOUP Tag, Eastown. Source: Author, 2017.

Figure 2.2: SAEDO Tag, Eastown. Source: Author, 2017.

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Tagging often occurs as a response to existing tags, as part of a subcultural conversation that revolves around place. Tagging is often utilized as an initiation in the graffiti world (Ferrell; Phillips 1999) and is not without its ideas of etiquette. The veteran graffiti kings in Ferrell's work describe a desire not to disrupt the existing aesthetic of a place with tags, but rather finding locations where tagging would "fit in" (Fie in Ferrell, 1993:74). This equates to avoiding "clean" spaces, private property, and installations such as statues or monuments. Instead, the tagger will seek out areas with existing tags, or already degraded places where tagging won't cause much more harm. Taggers who violate these vague ethics may be frowned upon in the graffiti community.

Of course, the reasons for abstaining from tagging an area, Ferrell notes, are not entirely out of social conscious. Tagging a clean, nice space or a public installation means a tag is more likely to be covered up, which contrasts sharply with the goals of the tagger. An area where tags already exist is a safer bet as their continued existence indicates slow or no clean up activity. This also leads to geographic concentrations of tags (Haworth, Bruce, & Iveson, 2013; Ferrell, 1993).

A piece refers to the elaborate large-scale lettering that can take hours to complete (Figure 2.3). Pieces are designed in advance and are often the result of collaboration between writers. Piecing requires some organization and a space where the writers can work for several hours without being detected. Given the amount of time and effort that goes into piecing, some form of alcohol is usually also brought to the site (Ferrell, 1993; Rev, personal communication

Feb. 26, 2018). According to Ferrell, piecing is the reason that the crew exists and is, in a way,

performance art as much as it is graffiti art. Excepting, of course, a viewing audience. Far and

wide, graffiti writers attach the most respect and status to the quality and placement of pieces.

Tagging over a piece is a cardinal sin in the graffiti subculture.

Figure 2.3: MAS Piece, Eastown. Source: Author, 2017.

Throw-ups, or "throwies," fall somewhere between a tag and a piece. Though larger and

more complex than a tag, throw-ups do not reach the levels of complexity or the time

commitment of a piece. The level of recognition and status a writer gets from bombing also falls between tagging and piecing (Ferrell, 1993). Throw-ups are the bubbled letters, which are usually either an outline without fill-in color, called a "hollow" (Figure 2.4), or a mono-color filled outline (figures 2.5). Generally, when graffiti writers refer to themselves as "bombers" they are prolific producers of throw-up style writing. Though, it should be noted that bombing may also refer to a night of extensive tagging. Throw-ups usually take anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes to perform, depending on whether or not they are filled. After tags, throw-ups are the most ubiquitous style found on the urban landscape (Phillips, 1999).

Figure 2.4: BACE Hollow Throw-up, Eastown. Source: Author, 2014

Figure 2.5: KANT Throw-up, Eastown. Source: Author, 2018.

The "Evolution" of the Graffiti Writer

Many researchers assert that the graffiti writer often begins their deviant career as a tagger, a less elaborate form of graffiti writing. The tagger will hone their skills until they evolve to more complex works, such as throw-ups and hollows. Their final metamorphosis occurs when they graduate to piecing and even higher with graffiti murals. In the process, the graffiti writer sheds his former style, for example, the piecer is no longer a tagger as he or she practices "higher" forms of graffiti writing.

This manner of linear thinking is false, according to geographer and former prolific L.A. graffiti bomber Stefano Bloch (Personal communication, Jan. 27, 2018). Bloch rejects the misinformed notion of a forward trajectory and explains that the writer is instead working with an "expanded repertoire of aesthetic practice." A graffiti writer does not simply quit tagging because they have honed a new skill. In fact, Bloch suggests that tagging is an integral part of the subculture, and writers rarely stop tagging.

Street Art

Graffiti writing and street art are as siblings, born of the same mother with similar features. Yet, much as siblings do, graffiti and street art matured in different directions. Spurred on by their individual interactions with the public, with authority, and with their creators, each takes on a life of its own even while retaining many of the same qualities consistent with a common upbringing. One of the writers interviewed for this project, 2ND, offered this analogy:

> They are related, like street art can be a form of graffiti. Graffiti is like an
>
> umbrella, except it is only raining on the inside, and street art is just one of those
>
> rain drops.

Street art is a term commonly ascribed to works produced both legally and illegally (Ross et. al, 2017). As an illegally produced marking, street art could be technically classified as graffiti or vandalism and would be in the course of legal action. However, as an image driven work demanding public evaluation, the term is also applied to legally produced works, such as

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wall murals. This watery terminology sometimes makes it difficult to draw the line between what should be classified as either art or vandalism. Street art imagery is more accessible than the cryptic writing style of the graffiti writer, which allows the public to engage with it. The earlier example of the stencils of Gerald R. Ford in Grand Rapids show that the public can separate street art from vandalism and attach meaning to the works despite their illegality. This scenario is far less likely with graffiti.

Figure 2.6: Beyoncé Wheat Paste, Eastown. Source: Author, 2017.

The infamous street artist Banksy has placed his wares everywhere from the glorified ruins of Detroit to the Israeli West Bank Barrier. His vandalism has been celebrated and embraced by communities who view themselves as lucky to be chosen as a Banksy site (Hansen,

2016). His work has also been chiseled from the walls by night and shipped to auction houses

overseas, leading some communities to protect Banksy's often satirical stencil work with

bulletproof plexiglass casing. In October of 2013, Banksy declared himself the artist in residence

of New York and went on a well-documented and ardently followed month-long vandalism

spree throughout the city, which he dubbed Better Out Than In. Capturing the dichotomous

role street art vandalism plays in society, the New York Times reported:

> Banksy seemed to conduct a kind of social experiment, using the city as a rat
>
> maze into which he dropped different kinds of bait to see how New Yorkers
>
> would react. We saw paranoia, greed and competitiveness as well as
>
> camaraderie, flashmob-like fun and sincere or cash-driven reverence. People who
>
> had barely heard of Banksy until one of his works turned up on their buildings
>
> were suddenly hiring guards or covering them with plexiglass or roll-down
>
> gates. Some graffiti pieces lasted less than two hours before they went the way of
>
> all graffiti, and much else, quickly sinking beneath the restless surface of the city
>
> (Smith, R., 2013, Oct 30).

Although Banksy remains anonymous and his work remains illegal, the public reaction

is more appreciative, at times fanatical. Works from Banksy and other street artist create an

interaction point for passersby in the urban environment.

Modern street art was born from the so called post-graffiti period, after the rise and fall

of subway car masterpieces in New York City and a second gallerization period in the 1980s.

The term "post-graffiti" is sometimes used to indicate the difference between street art style and

graffiti writing (Merrill, 2014). While still retaining the illegal, subversive nature of graffiti writing, street art was a break away from the name-based theme. Instead, street artists worked in images and later included everything from yarn bombs, stickers, wheat pasted (Figure 2.6), to 3-D installations. Stenciling is common form of street art (Figure 2.7). Its origin is attributed to French artist Blek le Rat, who claims he started using the stenciling style to differentiate himself from the graffiti writing styles (Moodie, 2012). Stenciling has made international sensations out of other street artists, such as Banksy and Nick Walker from Bristol, and Miss. Tic and Jef Aèrosol from France.

Figure 2.7: Felix Stencil, East Hills. Source: Author, 2014.

Stenciling is a rather simple process. A premade stencil is held against the wall and sprayed or painted over. The process is generally quick and does not necessarily require a large amount of artistic ability. For example, images can be found online, printed, cut out, and they are ready for application on a wall. Stencils can, of course, be made more elaborate, such as multi-layered stencil. Graffiti writers, who value the skill and mastery of hand drawn spray can art often revile stencilers (Ferrell, 1993). During a conversation with Stefano Bloch, he remarked that stencilers are seen as taking space away from graffiti writers and are sometimes referred to as "street art fags" by writers in the L.A. scene (personal communication, Jan. 27, 2018).

Street art is viewed by many in the graffiti world as commercialized or commodified, and therefore lacking the respect and credibility from writers. Christensen and Thor (2017) note that street art is absorbed socially and commodified or co-opted. This notion of commodification is amplified by the corporate realization that subversion sells. As Moodie (2012:37) explains:

> Street artists do not sell their artwork but their pervading rebellious and urban lifestyle… Corporations have appropriated this intrigue of the rebellious and controversial, as coolness became a form of brand currency with the recognition of youth buying power in the 1990s…. The endorsement deals with contemporary street artists multiplied as corporations recognized the considerable market appeal of the subversive… Street art and its aesthetic had already been recuperated into a commodity by society. The branding power of its subversive

street style and its assimilation into tangible commercial products has brought

street art into its most democratizing form yet.

Another commercializing aspect is the self-promotion of street artists and their ability to

capitalize on their subversive works. Despite the anti-corporate stance suggested in his work,

Banksy's stencil images are now replicated on everything from t-shirts, phone cases, and tattoos

(though no one is sure whether or not he sees any of the profit). There is a shop in Notting Hill,

UK called the Unofficial Banksy Store that sells Banksy printed merchandise exclusively.

Shepard Fairey, a San Francisco based street artist who got his start in the skateboarding scene,

has placed his brand in many places other than the street. He is responsible for the iconic 2008

presidential campaign posters depicting the nominee Barak Obama in shades of red, white, and

blue and the word *Hope*. Fairey has also started a clothing brand, OBEY Giant, based on his

street art featuring Andre the Giant, and travels the world installing large scale murals.

The appearance of graffiti writing in the auction houses seemed to drain it of its

subversive integrity and remove power from the writers and piecers to evaluate and judge the

work of their peers (Lachmann, 1988). Street art has seen success in the gallery setting, as well as

profit for the street art celebrities in the auction house. Banksy, who's illegal works have been

"stolen" from the sides of buildings by night only to show up later in an auction house, had

sold at least 265 pieces at auction on the secondary market by 2012, with the highest price

achieved being 974,099 USD. Shepard Fairey had sold 54 pieces with a highest price achieved of

80,500 USD. Despite this, urban art on the secondary market is less viable for the average street

artist. In Moodie's (2012) assessment, she found street art to be a viable market "through the

derivative projects it undertakes in mass culture," including commissioned commercial design,

marketing design, and promoting their own products. She notes that street art is highly

appropriable for commercial undertakings, which "secure[s] their inherent populism in the

mainstream." Ultimately, Moodie concludes the form will "profit… as a subversive

commodifiable form" (47).

Gang Graffiti

Gang graffiti (figure 2.8) differs from graffiti writing in that it can be intentionally

threatening and highly territorial. A gang tag's purpose is not put forth an artistic and stylized

hand, but rather to get a point across. Neighborhood and nationally affiliated gangs use graffiti

markers to delineate the range of their territory, to claim and reclaim space from rival gangs,

and to declare membership or belonging (Phillips, 1999; Ley and Cybriwsky, 1974). Gang

graffiti can also be a symbol of unity and "representing," an action that motivates and acts as

social glue for the gang (Phillips 1999). Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) found that areas of overlap in

rival gang graffiti in the neighborhood context were often sites of gang violence or physical

altercations and hypothesized that such areas may be used to predict gang activity. The gang

symbolism in their study was interpreted by non-gang affiliated youth as marking places to be

avoided in everyday passage through the neighborhood. This indicates the connotation of a

negative sense of place derived from graffiti symbolism and placement.

Figure 2.8: Tres Manos Gang Tag Crossed Out by Sureños X3, Southeast Grand Rapids. Source: Author, 2014.

Guerilla Marketing

Guerilla marketing stickers hover outside the realm of street art. They are unsanctioned and illegally placed, but clearly artifacts of consumerism. They utilize the subversive appeal by their illegality. These artifacts are placed in territory familiar to graffiti and street art, such as street signs and utility structures (figure 2.9). The presence of these marketing stickers, while not graffiti or street art, was so overwhelming in the study area that they could not be overlooked.

Guerilla marketing was originally used by small firms as a means of competing with larger firms without spending large amounts of money. Large firms have since highjacked the technique. This form of marketing utilizes low cost elements that generate large returns of exposure, often relying on generated publicity and the hope of the marketing ploy going viral. Guerilla marketing is founded on the visual consumption of an increasingly media driven society (McNoughton, 2008). Like graffiti and street art, guerilla marketing makes use of the urban environment and the visual disruption of everyday life. Bigat (2012) likens guerilla marketing to guerilla art, which "seek to shake daily perceptions and consciousness by exhibiting their stencil works, graffiti, mural paintings or environmental works within the rhythm of daily street life" (1027). This form of marketing may or may not seek permissions prior to implementation. Street artist and graffiti artist alike have been commissioned for such undertakings.

Figure 2.9: Funkn Oddest Clothing Guerilla Marketing Stickers, Eastown.
Source: Author, 2017.

Graffiti and the Sociology of Deviance

Graffiti, street art, and guerilla marketing stickers all have one thing in common; all three are forms of illegal vandalism by law. One may assume that the breaking of formal laws would automatically place an act, and the person committing the act, into the category of deviant. However, deviance is not so narrowly defined. One could, for example, be considered deviant for *not* drinking at a frat party while underage. Certainly, this person is not breaking any formal laws, they may be the only one adhering to them in this case. By not drinking at a frat party, this person is breaking informal expectations and acting outside of the norm.

To account for this elasticity, contemporary sociologists define deviance as a social construct (Smith, J., 2017). Howard Becker was the first to suggest that" deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (1963:9). For Becker, deviance is perceived by the audience, not inherent in the act itself, nor a quality of the person committing the act. The boundary between what is defined as deviant and what is not is fluid, rather than absolute. Deviant acts may be defined up (made to be more deviant) or down (made to be less deviant) depending on the reaction of the audience. Graffiti is both defined up and defined down based on its aesthetic qualities, perceived criminality (i.e. gang related), and location.

In his book, *Outsiders* (1963), Becker goes on to note several variations in responses by the audience toward deviance. The first is the variation in response over time. The judgement of the audience may be more or less harsh depending on a variety of social and cultural factors.

Graffiti writers interviewed by sociologist Jeff Ferrell (1993) illustrate this temporal variation by noting that when they first started painting walls, passersby (even police officers!) were curious and appreciative of the work. It wasn't until later, when the city administration declared a war on graffiti and pursued an aggressive anti-graffiti campaign that the perception of such graffiti murals shifted to condemnation, arrests, and fines.

Another variation in response depends on who is committing the deviant act and who feels they are affected by it. Becker makes note of the different responses to the same actions depending on the race, class, or gender of the offender and the offended. There is also the crucial element of power to consider. Who makes the rules and upon whom these rules are imposed have an impact on the response.

In a well-publicized, nationally debated event in 1995, two Chicano graffiti taggers were shot in Los Angeles by a neighborhood vigilante. One of the taggers, a 19-year-old youth, Cesar Rene Arce, was killed after being shot in the back while trying to flee from 35-year-old gun aficionado, William Masters. Arce's friend, 20-year-old David Hillo, was shot in the rear, but survived. The story sparked a national debate as Masters, a white male, was hailed as a hero and commended for taking action against the Chicano graffiti taggers (Dellios, 1995, Feb 12). His actions prompted one city commissioner from outside of LA to claim, "Kudos to William Masters for his vigilant anti-graffiti efforts and for his foresight in carrying a gun for self-protection. If (Los Angeles) refuses to honor Masters as a crime-fighting hero, then I invite him to relocate to our town" (Sandi Webb in Dellios, 1995, Feb 12).

Masters claimed the taggers threatened him with a screwdriver (a tool taggers use to

reach street signs) and demanded the paper he had written their car's license plate number on,

as well as his wallet. The details of the confrontation differed from Hillo's account markedly.

Many felt that Masters had murdered Arce, especially considering Masters' history of weapon

worship and the fact that he shot the young man in the back from 30 feet away with a nine

millimeter handgun for which he had no permit. Despite Master's public appearances during

which he called the taggers "Mexican skinheads," and blamed Arce's mother for her son's death

due to her not raising him right, the court found that Masters used justifiable self-defense. He

was never tried for murder or attempted murder. Instead, Masters was sentenced to 30 days of

graffiti clean-up, 3 years of probation, and the forfeiture of his "small collection" of weapons

(Hernandez Jr., 1995, Nov 5). Susan Phillip's notes this story's hypocrisy as the initiator to her

anthropological research on gang graffiti in Los Angeles. In her book, *Wallbangin'*, (1999)

Phillips considers:

> Now, imagine if it had been the other way around. If Masters had only
>
> threatened the two youths with the gun, they would have reasonable cause to
>
> fear for their lives (they did in fact demonstrate such a fear by turning to leave).
>
> What if one of them had managed to stab Masters with his screwdriver, perhaps
>
> fatally? The outcome is the same: one person is dead. While Masters - a white
>
> male fighting for a "just" cause - atoned for his crime merely with graffiti
>
> cleanup, chances are both Latinos would have been tried and sentenced to
>
> twenty-five years to life (3).

The Masters case exemplifies the variation in response to a deviant act based largely on race. Chicano males were committing an act of vandalism that offended Masters. He in turn committed murder and attempted murder against the Chicano youth. Masters' act of deviance was defined down, even justified to some, because it addressed an act of deviance defined up, tagging.

Variation in response also occurs when certain consequences are incurred. For example, vandalism may be viewed more harshly if it results in property damage to a newly refurbished building versus being found in places it is expected, such as abandoned buildings or back alleys. Similarly, graffiti vandalism leaves a visible marker of crime, a constant reminder that an illegal activity took place in a location. Over the course of time, the memory of criminal activities such as a mugging, a burglary, or even a murder may fade from their situated place as they leave no visible traces. The visibility of graffiti vandalism may also define the deviance up, even to the point of inducing moral panic (Ferrell, 1993).

While this relativist perspective of deviance is perhaps the best lens through which to view graffiti, social power theory and social control cannot be ignored. The question of who defines deviance is essential to understanding the reactions to deviant acts, such as vandalism. The conflict theory of crime (Quinney, 2016) assigns the power to define deviance to the decision makers or agents of the dominant class. In the introductory chapter of this thesis was a quote from the then mayor of Grand Rapids declaring a war on graffiti writers, who, it should be noted, never declared war on the city or the mayor. This action defined graffiti as deviant and criminal in the public conscious, an action worthy of pouring city resources into

aggressively combatting. Ferrell (1993) notes the process by which the mayor of Denver, CO

suddenly decided graffiti was a societal ill and started an aggressive (perhaps, overly

aggressive) campaign to "Keep Denver Beautiful." These actions sprang up just as the mayor

was facing a recall election, thereby redirecting public attention and making a name for himself

as a savior of the city by scapegoating graffiti artists. Graffiti writers interviewed by Ferrell

marked this as a turning point in the city's stance on graffiti. Up until then, their work was

generally appreciated by the public, even police! In his highly publicized grudge against

graffiti, New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani called graffiti a quality of life crime and

assembled a 25-person police squad specifically to fight graffiti, claiming "A cleaner city is a

safer city. That's something that everyone instinctually understands" (Hicks, 1994).

The mayors in these examples acted as moral entrepreneurs, campaigning against

graffiti and setting an official definition of crime. They also acted as the mouthpieces for the

dominant class. The formulated definition of graffiti was as vandalism and urban blight,

decidedly against the interests of the dominant class. The moral entrepreneurs generated a

moral panic in connecting graffiti proliferation to the proliferation of other, more violent or

deleterious criminal activity, such as gang violence or drug trafficking. The definition of graffiti

is then applied and administered through series of arrests and public watch campaigns

(Edcutlip 2005; Ferrell 1993; Hicks, 1994).

The integrated typology of deviance (Heckert and Heckert, 2016) acknowledges both the

norms of behavior and the societal evaluation and reaction to aspects of social deviance. Graffiti

can range from a negative type of deviance to deviance admiration, another example of its

fluidity. Graffiti violates the norm of respecting the sanctity of public and private property.

Graffiti associated with gang activity universally receives a negative evaluation. Tagger graffiti,

which is often conflated as gang related and has arguably less aesthetic value than more

complex forms of graffiti art would largely fall into the negatively evaluated category. Tagger

graffiti may be admired by some (most likely those within the graffiti community) for its style

and prolific nature. Graffiti throw-ups and pieces could fall under negative deviance and

deviance admiration types of deviance. Part of this is due to the location of the work

(Vanderveen and Ejik, 2015). During the course of fieldwork for this research, one Grand Rapids

resident and business owner commented, "It (graffiti on walls) doesn't make sense. I mean, you

can't read it. Now the stuff down there on the trains… some of that stuff is really cool."

Granted, both the graffiti on the walls and the graffiti on the trains follow the same types of

lettering and style aesthetics, however the location of the graffiti impacts the perception and

evaluation of it. The illegibility of graffiti lettering produces an exclusionary artform, where the

public is not able to properly judge the work as art based on the inability to decipher it.

Mitschke, Goller, and Leder (2017) used mobile eye tracking in an open, natural setting to

determine that graffiti with representational elements (such as mermaids or skulls) was valued

more highly than graffiti without representational elements (letter based). The researchers also

found that sculptures in their study area, the Danube Canal in Vienna where graffiti is legal,

were liked more on average than graffiti on walls. These sculptures were more recognizable as

'art' due to their aesthetic, accessibility, and plaques relating information about the work. As

the complexity of aesthetic of graffiti and street art increases, so too does the artistic intentions

as perceived by the public (Vanderveen and Eijik, 2015). Even if the public cannot decipher the

lettering, they may still admire the art of complex pieces (even while noting that the work is still, regrettably, vandalism). Thus, even as the norms of society are broken, the deviance receives a positive evaluation. Graffiti murals receive similarly conflicting responses and can be "tacitly tolerated" due to their illegality clashing with their aesthetic value and their potential to deter tagging (Bloch 2012).

While some graffiti writers and taggers may keep their identities secret and resist a public deviant label, they still self-label as deviants. Most graffiti writers exceed this primary form of deviance and move into secondary deviance. They become more engaged in the graffiti community and begin to organize their lives and identities around graffiti (Ferrell 1993). Graffiti writing represents a selected behavioral deviance, wherein the writer choses to engage in the action of graffiti creation. The graffiti subculture also represents an attitudinal deviance. Literature that utilizes interviews with graffiti artists reveal an ideology about art and society that permeates the subculture. Ferrell's (1993) robust field study of the large Denver, CO graffiti scene revealed graffiti artists (many of whom had attended art school or art classes of one kind or another) who viewed the world of institutional art training and commercial art as restrictive, structured, and controlled. One graffiti writer remarked, "I didn't like the structured format of (commercial art). I just like going off on my own and doing whatever I want" (38). Ferrell notes that such resistance was also found as the writers entered the realm of gallery shows and high art. The writers believe that graffiti is a deviation from the traditional ideas about what art is allowed to be, and they actively embrace and promote this deviation.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Political and Social Tension

Brighenti (2010) contends that "definition is problematic" for graffiti writing as a social

field due primarily to a lack of definable boundaries. Because graffiti writing operates across

multiple practices including art and design, criminal, political, and marketing, Brighenti defines

it as an interstital practice, "a practice about whose definition and boundaries different social

actors hold inevitable different conceptions" (316). These different conceptions can be viewed as

a result of graffiti writing's "yes, but…" quality wherein a social actor can agree, for instance,

that graffiti is vandalism, but also art. While acceptance may vary from person to person

(Vanderveen and Eijk, 2015), one cannot deny that graffiti has long since become inextricably

linked to the urban aesthetic (Ferrell, 1993).

Graffiti writing is a form of rebellion (Ferrell, 1995), it is performed intentionally against

society and the law. The analysis of graffiti can be used to gain insight into the cultural and

social undercurrents of marginalized groups or subcultures within a city (Phillips 1999). The

power of graffiti writing comes from its illicit nature, its rebellion and its claim to public space

by individuals or crews. "Illegality is regarded by writers as one of the crucial characteristics

that differentiate writing from other practices or visual products in the urban landscape"

(Brighenti 2010: 318). Graffiti writers relish their role as vandal and view their work as a form of

"sticking it to the man" (Bloch, Personal Communication, 2018, Jan 27). Ferrell notes that graffiti

writers "resist the increasing segregation and control of urban environments and… participants

in the graffiti underground undermine the efforts of legal and political authorities to control them" (1995:73). Ferrell goes on to show that graffiti writers repeatedly challenge the spatial restrictions imposed on the urban environment and use graffiti to reclaim public space from which they are systematically excluded. However, there is also a subcultural aspect of community and belonging that Ferrell suggests constructs "alternative structures of meaning" (1995: 83). In other words, graffiti writers write for themselves and their peers as much as they write as a form of resistance. The walls of the urban environment represent "a *strategy* aimed at controlling people and their activities by means of a control of space" (emphasis original) (Brighenti 2010: 322). Whereas most street users view walls as boundaries or backdrop, writers view walls as a social territory and interact accordingly.

Graffiti writing, especially in its less complex forms of tags and throw ups, is often misattributed as gang graffiti (Phillips 1999), which can lead to an unnecessary fear of crime in an area where graffiti is represented (Gibbons, 2004; Vanderveen and Eijk, 2015) and a perceived lack in neighborhood cohesion (Gibbons). The writing styles of graffiti artists are generally illegible to the unpracticed eye (i.e. the public), and further are not necessarily intend for the public, but rather for the evaluation by peers within the graffiti community (Ferrell, 1993; Phillips, 1999; Bloch, 2016, and others). In criminology, this leaves its illegality as the only understandable thing about graffiti in the public mind and the highly visible nature of graffiti increases the connection to crime in a given place (Gibbons 2004). Visible low-level disorder has been statistically linked to a fear of crime, although the "socially constructed nature of perceived disorder" suggest individual existing anxiety may play a role (Brunton-Smith, 2011). Kelling and Williams (1982) exemplify this concept in their broken windows theory, asserting

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that "at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence."

However, the discourse of the creative city has called into question the criminalization of graffiti writing and street art (Mcauliffe, 2012). Austin and Sanders (2012) show that the association of graffiti and a fear of crime by neighborhood residents varied by the type of graffiti. Gang related graffiti generated higher correlations with fear of crime, while murals (street art) generated the least. Vanderveen and Ejik (2015) question the law enforcement and criminologists' views of graffiti unambiguously as a social problem: something that must be prevented and dealt with because it would cause fear and (more) crime" (110). Instead, they argue that the responses to graffiti should reflect its form and context. Vanderveen and Eijk have demonstrated that the public opinion of graffiti as 'disorder' can shift depending on location and style. Their results ultimately indicate that value judgements vary among the public, as well as within an individual on the topic of graffiti, though generally the higher the perceived aesthetic or artistic value of graffiti the more likely it will be viewed as non-threatening or even as good depending on the environment it is placed. Haworth, Bruce and Iveson (2013) demonstrated the deeper knowledge of graffiti culture by investigating form, rather than labeling every graffiti as 'vandalism' as those who preform graffiti removal are wont to do. Haworth, Bruce and Iveson go on to suggest that graffiti is an integral urban form and law enforcement's tendency to ignore graffiti variation risks ignoring the impact of graffiti on "urban character" (55) as well as potentially encouraging a buildup of less desirable forms of graffiti in those areas where the cleanup efforts are concentrated. Chackel (2016) discusses the varying approaches by police to different forms of street art, suggesting that a yarn bomb (yarn

knit around trees, poles, fences etc.) receives a tame interception by polices, whereas spray can art receives a harsh reception, perhaps due to being more difficult to remove.

Docuyanan (2000) explores the argument that graffiti writing crews (and street gangs) "cultivate" creativity and skills, even as those in power and the public continue to "relegate [them] to simplistic and often inaccurate portrayals of violence, decay, and blight" (116). She notes that communities are unable or unwilling to provide an alternative way for the youth to gain the same social and cultural benefits they derive from participating in graffiti creation. Rowe and Hutton (2012) similarly note there is more to graffiti writing, including cultural and social aspects, that should not be ignored.

Graffiti, Street Art, and Place

For better or for worse, graffiti contributes to the creation of a sense of place in the urban environment. Many sensory and non-sensory aspects go into creating a sense of place, or the affective atmospheres (Duff 2010). Uniqueness and character offer a sense of authenticity to urban placemaking. Authenticity is a nonreplicable attribute - highly desired but rarely achieved in urban revitalization and gentrification. Such effort result in a watered down cultural experience. A sense of authentic place can be derived from informal, unsanctioned placemaking activities, rather than the contrived and marketable ones. Casey (2001) describes "place" as thick or thin and suggests a *more is more* relationship between place and self, whereas more thickness or richness of place, the greater possibility of self-enrichment. "Thin places are, for Casey, places that have been erased of any local specificity, any unique quality or feature

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that might enable individuals and groups to actively engage with place, to secure some kind of

purchase. These ``levelled down'' places trade the specificity, the uniquely differential character

of thick places for the fungible uniformity of the same, the familiar, and the navigable" (Duff

2010: 886). Urban graffiti and street art create a thickness of place for both the maker and the

casual observer.

Graffiti and street art contribute to creating an authentic sense of place, although

acceptable in certain areas and intolerable in others. The illegal nature of such works include

"social awareness of it as an original condition [and] provides a metric for authenticity and

reflects a sense of cultural genuineness" (Chackal, 2016: 363). The residents of economically

deprived neighborhoods in England were outraged when illegal stencil pieces by Banksy were

legally removed (Hansen, 2016). The removal and outcry prompted a local MP to implore the

responsible party to return Banksy's freely given community asset that "greatly enhanced an

area that needed it" (292). Graffiti has been shown to create a sense of place for residents in

mixed neighborhoods, who sometimes view the act of creating graffiti negatively while at the

same time appreciating its contribution to neighborhood "feel" and character (Dovey, Wollen,

Woodcock (2012). Bacharach (2015), while demoting the work of writers to 'mere' graffiti,

suggests that "rather than a purely utilitarian space through which one is forced to trudge to get

from one activity to another… these [street] artists re-conceive the public realm as one that is

itself worthy of inhabiting, experiencing and enjoying" (483).

Dovey, Wollen, and Woodcock (2012) note that from an economic framework street art "can be a key dimension of gentrification" as its image of creativity attracts the market's desire for authenticity. Bloch (2012b) establishes the ability of illegal works to contribute to "fundamental good," neighborhood image, as one writer in his study suggested. However, it is the social and cultural context that determines what gets criminalized and what gets romanticized, and by whom" (122). Writers in Bloch's study also contend that they created elaborate murals to 'show the incoming hipsters who we were already living in this neighborhood.' The neighborhood in question is the gentrified L.A. neighborhood of Echo Park and getting up in that location post-gentrification garners wide recognition.

Gentrification has been shown to start in neighborhoods where artists live and have invested creative energy into place (Ley, 2003; Mathews, 2010). Street art and graffiti populate these neighborhoods, creating a unique aesthetic. These lower cost neighborhoods are then 'discovered' by the middle class in their search for 'cool' or 'edgy' places. The more elaborate and aesthetically pleasing the graffiti is, and especially the street art, the more likely it is to attract attention as 'edgy' and more attractive to gentrification (Dovey, Wollen, & Woodcock, 2012).

At the same time, Dovey, Wollen, and Woodcock note that residents may allow graffiti on their house to keep the values low and deter gentrification. Others allow for murals due to the code of writers that frowns upon tagging over a mural. There are even instances of developers covering building walls in 'fake graffiti' to make it look 'cool' and increase

desirability to live there (Christensen and Thor, 2017). Christensen and Thor go on to show that the process of gentrification eventually "culturally *outsidered* and ousted" graffiti writing practice through a control of space that gives the practice a "nomadic sense of place." Those in positions of power in the gentrified or 'revitalized' neighborhoods actively seek to criminalize the cultural spatial practices of youth, minority, and the other to assert control over urban space (Ferrell, 1996).

Graffiti and Street Art as Placemaking

"The boundaries of middle-class normativity are negotiated in struggles over neighborhood landscapes" (Elwood, Lawson, and Nowak, 2015:131). Elwood, Lawson, and Nowak use two socially mixed neighborhoods, one of which leaned toward gentrification, as examples that exemplify middle-class placemaking, wherein the middle-class residents work to "improve" their neighborhood to (generally white) normative middle-class standards. The authors define middle-class placemaking as:

> Occur[ing] in everyday acts through which individual and social groups demand or seek the kind of residential neighborhood they desire, whether in terms of neighbors, sense of community, retail and recreation opportunities, housing options, and so on. These practices produce middle-class identities by transforming the ontological basis of middle class-ness from abstract discourses, values, and tastes into concrete expressions in places, naturalizing and materializing these class imaginings. (126)

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Docuyanan (2000) suggests that the youth use graffiti writing to "make place" where they are "out of place." She contends that graffiti writers "are actively engaged in place-making like other private interests, they use urban spaces to fulfill their own personal desires, needs, and motivations" (105). In this context, writers utilize graffiti to forge a connection to place, even as those in power attempt to regulate place. Baker's (2015) study of youth writers revealed that the youths are driven to create a space where they have some jurisdiction of the environment, a sense of belonging. In her research, the creation of legal walls in Melbourne provided a space where the youth writers could find an alternative method of constructing places of belongs, or citizenship. Christensen and Thor (2017) contend that graffiti and street art offer "place-specific reciprocity (among urban dwellers) and a translocally and globally connected sense of space-molding" (78). Like Docuyanan, Christensen and Thor view the process of graffiti and street art as place-making.

A key feature of graffiti is that it "awaken[s] the city to spaces it has forgotten about" and in appropriating devalued spaces acts to "rejuvenate the city" (Halsey & Pederick, 2010). Similar to graffiti writing, street art gains materiality and meaning from its location on the streets (Chackal, 2016). Chackal argues that, "the physical street must be included to retain street art's distinctive form and to prevent it from collapsing into public art or mainstream art" (361). Illegality is key. However, street art may be interpreted as a free "gift" to the public (Chackal), whereas graffiti is more likely to be viewed negatively.

Many writers and street artist speak to reclaiming the urban environment from advertisements put in place by corporations. The graffiti subculture generally holds an anti-

commercialism stance (Merrill, 2015; Bloch, personal communication, 2018, Jan 27; Ferrell, 1993; Ferrell & Weide, 2010), while street art has been more easily "assimilated by economic forces" (Merrill:375). Graffiti writers and street artists challenge the idea that their work is blight by suggesting that the bombardment of commercial advertising society comes in contact every day is "visual pollution." They view their work as a way to "challenge that hegemony over corporate control of space" and "the right of capital to dictate how spaces are shaped and adorned" (Christensen and Thor, 2017: 607).

Graffiti writers form alternative communities while resisting structures of authority (Ferrell, 1995). Miladi (2015) uses the anti-regime slogans and stencils that showed up in public squares during Tunisia's Arab Spring to show how graffiti, while being overtly political in this case, acts to reclaim spaces of restriction and directly challenge authority. Drawing on Lefebvre's *Le Droit á la ville* (1968), or Right to the City, Miladi argues that graffiti is used to break hegemony over public space and create an alternative hegemony where the power over space is transferred from the ruling authority to the public, which "potentially leads to the empowerment of social groups" (137).

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

Study Area

This study took place in two neighborhoods in the southeast quadrant of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Grand Rapids is a midsized city with an estimated 2016 population of 196,445 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The city is located in Kent County on the west side of lower Michigan (Figure 1.2).

I have lived in different areas of the southeast side of the city for the last 10 years. The Grand Rapids Convention and Visitors Bureau, Experience GR, refers to the area in this study as "Uptown" in its neighborhood guide, and suggests this area is a collection of four business districts; Eastown, East Hills, East Fulton, and Wealthy Street (figure 4.1). Experience GR characterizes this area as:

> …the city's hippest destination, where an eclectic mix of specialty shops and galleries, restaurants, coffee houses and entertainment venues reflect the area's friendly, funky, fabulous character. It's an easy walk or quick drive between the four business districts, on streets lined by historic homes and leafy trees.

I have never once heard anyone refer to this area as "Uptown," though there is the occasional wayfinding signage claiming the area as such. Despite the city's marketing, locals by and large use the term "Eastown area" to refer to the areas surrounding the Eastown, East Hills, and Wealthy Street business districts, though East Hills is

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also referred to as its own place. The East Fulton business district is not considered part of the

Eastown area. In this study (and as a local, myself), I refer to two neighborhoods, which I

differentiate as East Hills and Eastown, and the Wealthy Street corridor.
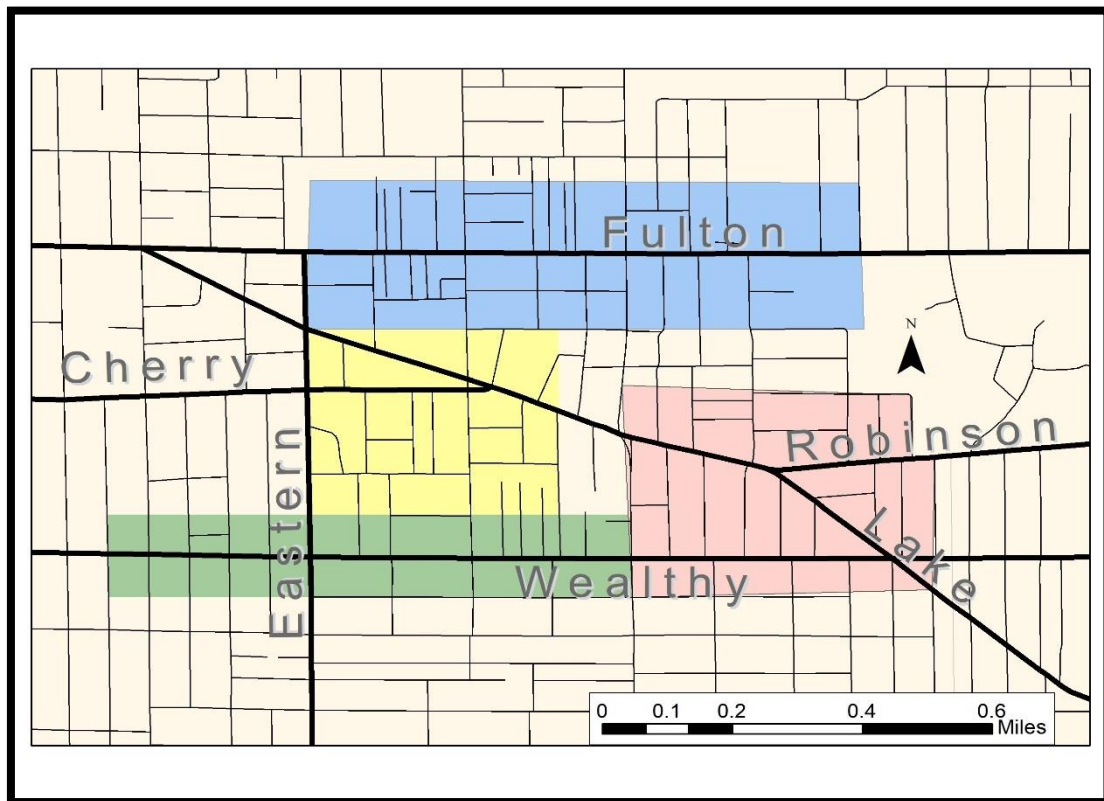
Figure 4.1: The Uptown Neighborhood sectioned by business districts: East Fulton (blue), East Hills (yellow), Eastown (orange), and Wealthy Street (green). Source: Uptown Grand Rapids, 2018. Map by Author.

The study area was chosen based on the results from previous research conducted in the

southeast quadrant of the city (Mabie, Unpublished, 2015). The spatial distribution of three

types of graffiti: graffiti art, street art, and gang graffiti, was mapped using a GPS. The results

indicated that the mean center of graffiti (then classified as 'graffiti art') and street art in the south east quadrant overlapped in the Eastown area, an increasingly white middle-class neighborhood, while gang graffiti was concentrated further south in a majority Latino neighborhood (figure 4.2). Furthermore, while graffiti writing ranged throughout the south east quadrant, street art style vandalism was found almost exclusively in the Eastown area. Having read that tensions exist between graffiti writers and street artists, I was interested in the implications of this spatial distribution. To add to these delineations, street art is sometimes referred to as the commodified version of urban graffiti, and the Eastown area had become synonymous with gentrification. In fact, these neighborhoods already had a history of conversation regarding gentrification and the classification of graffiti vandalism in that context. This was another point of interest in choosing these sites.

Over the last decade, Grand Rapids has entered a state of rapid redevelopment. The revitalization efforts in Eastown and East Hills have inevitably resulted in gentrification. Like many urban districts, Eastown experienced a steep economic decline in the 1970's. Many store fronts were left vacant and an intense period of gang activity permeated the area, so much so that many people avoided even driving through the area (Uptown Grand Rapids, 2018). Many of the historic homes now bragged about by the city's marketing were split into multiple apartments. Some of the older housing stock was torn down and replaced with spartan brick complexes of four- six units. Eastown became an enclave of poverty.
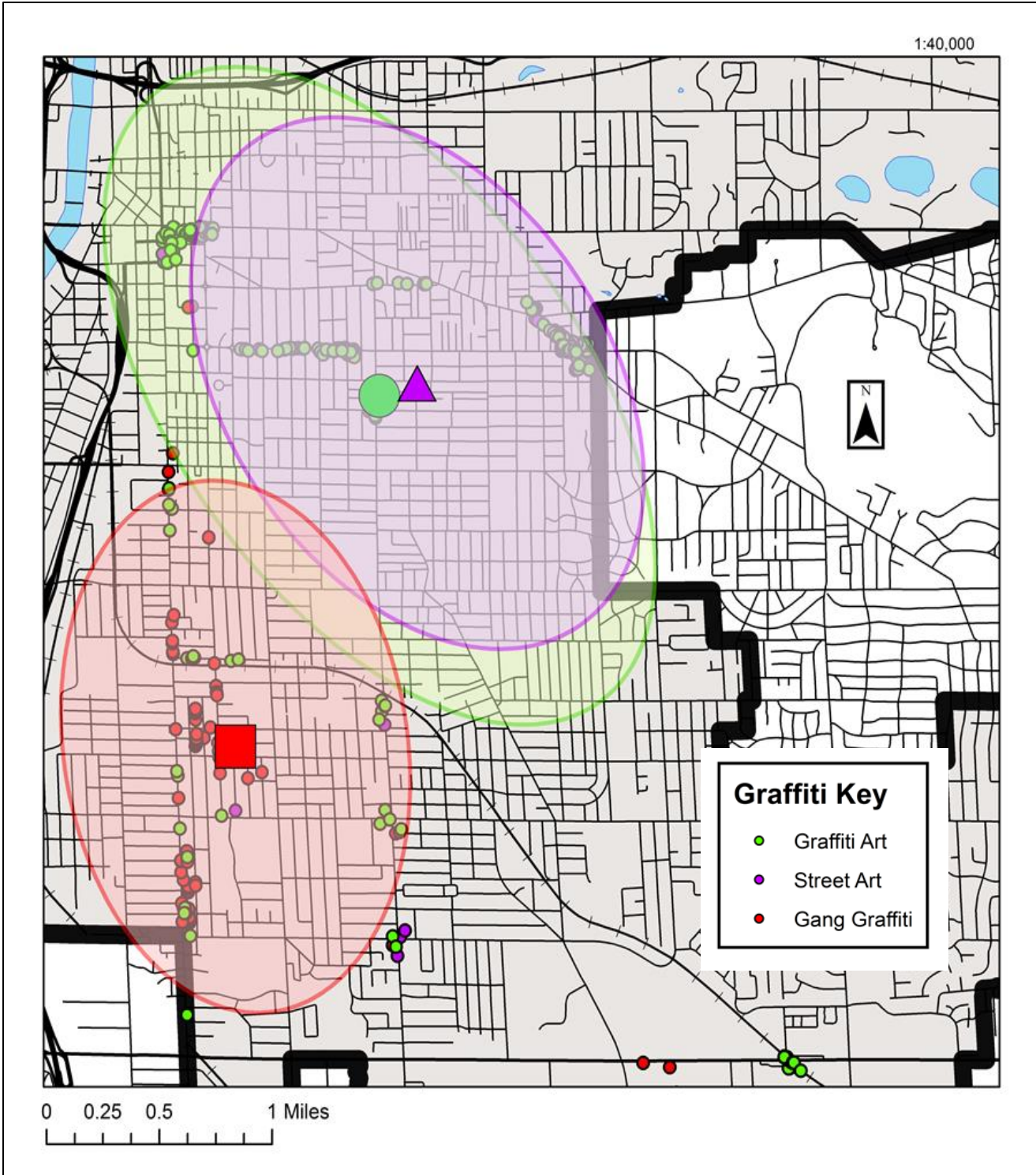
Figure 4.2: Spatial Distribution of Graffiti in Southeast Grand Rapids, MI: Mean Center and One Standard Deviation of Three Types. Source: Author, 2014.

The low rental prices also attracted students and artists to the area, and eventually, starting in the 1990's, investors who saw investment potential in the bared bones of the community. The true turn-over of the area is traced back to the well-publicized campaign to save a historic theater, now called Wealthy Street Theater, in 1999. Grand Rapids has a development history tightly bound with philanthropic investment, and the philanthropic community did not disappoint when it came to the preservation of the theater. The campaign drew much attention to the potential of the existing infrastructure of the Eastown area, as well as the struggles of the poverty-stricken residents. Suddenly, it was a neighborhood worth investing in. An art gallery opened, as well as several restaurants and shops that served the local population. Developers became willing to work in the area.

Restaurants and boutique shops began moving into vacant buildings in the late 1990's and early 2000's, and their target price range was far beyond the local population's means. Derelict housing stock was purchased at a low cost, transformed, and marketed to the middle class. Local residents felt alien in their own neighborhood. The tensions boiled beneath the surface, as they have the tendency to do. The incoming white middle class largely ignored the concerns of the 'native' residents and chose to view their investments as the salvation of the Eastown area.

When the tension finally did boil over, it was in the form of graffiti. In 2010, the area saw a string of Christmas Day vandalisms that exemplified some residents' feelings about the rapid changes to their neighborhood. "Yuppie Scum Your Time Has Come" (figure 4.3) and "Urban

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Renewal = Classist + Racist" (figure 4.4) were two of a string of graffiti scrawled across five different area business in both the Eastown neighborhood and the East Hills neighborhood. Other messages included a depiction of a (capitalist) pig and "Gentrify This!" and "This is Not Your Neighborhood." The front pane of a double paneled window was broken with a brick that had been painted with an anarchist "A" symbol.

Figure 4.3: "Yuppie Scum Your Time Has Come" graffiti on The Winchester Restaurant on the Wealthy Street Corridor in the Eastown area. Source: Wheeler, 2010.

Figure 4.4: "Urban Renewal = Classist + Racist" graffiti on The Sparrows Coffee & Tea & Newsstand on the Wealthy Street corridor in the Eastown area. Source: Wheeler, 2010.

The local media quoted the owner of one of the businesses as saying, "This is the mark of probably a suburban kid who had too much time and who doesn't understand what's really going on in this neighborhood" (in Tunison, 2010, Dec 25). The graffiti continued for a short period of time, and the culprits were never found. However, the vandalism sparked a debate among Grand Rapidians concerning the conditions of change in the Eastown area – Was it

gentrification or revitalization? Was the vandalism a form of legitimate protest or a crime? Residents left comments on articles discussing the vandalism claimed that vandalizing locally owned neighborhood businesses was not a form of protest, but criminal behavior. Other commenters in the same forum noted that if the vandalism demanding "Get Out!" and "This is Not Your Neighborhood" had occurred on neighborhood businesses owned by minorities, everyone would agree that it was a crime, as it would appear racial motivated. But, because the vandalism occurred on primarily white-owned businesses in the face of urban revitalization efforts some could consider it a protest to gentrification (in Wheeler, 2010, Dec 29).

Eastown Area Today

The Eastown area is known in the Grand Rapids community as a hotbed for 'hipsters' and attracts creatives, young professionals, and students wishing to patronize retail and services geared toward such groups. In recent years, as more upscale establishments have entered, and vacant buildings and lots have been disappearing into new developments, the area has been attracting more upscale clientele from nearby East Grand Rapids.

East Grand Rapids, which shares much of its border with Eastown, is one of the most educated cities in Michigan, with 98.2% of persons 25 and older having a high school diploma, and 79.8% having at least a bachelor's degree (Grand Rapids is 85.4% and 32.9% respectively) (U.S. Census, 2018). Their public-school system consistently ranks in the top 100 of school districts nationwide. In Grand Rapids, meanwhile, 'East' is recognized for its exclusivity and 'the place where all the rich people live' (the median family income is more than double that of

Grand Rapids). This proximity to affluence has no doubt played a role in the decisions of

business owners to set up in Eastown, and their ability to maintain price points outside the

range of local residents.

Eastown proper (figure 4.5 and figure 4.6) still houses a mix of uses and visibly vacant

commercial buildings along its red brick streets. However, the large percentage of vacant

buildings have been purchased and refurbished and are advertising available commercial

space. East Hills (figure 4.7) has fewer visibly vacant properties. Many of the existing

restaurants and shops are relatively new (opening within the last 10 years), trendy, upscale, and

cater to middle class sensibilities. Businesses include a gourmet donut shop, a chapel that was

reclaimed and transformed into a craft brewery, galleries, several studios practicing hot yoga,

Figure 4.5: Eastown. Source: Author, 2017.

Figure 4.6: Eastown Bakery. Source: Author, 2017.

Figure 4.7: East Hills Boutique Shops. Source: Author, 2017.

Figure 4.8: The Author's Heritage Hill Apartment, Eastown Area. Source: Author, 2018.

and hip restaurants. Much of the original housing stock consists of large Victorian Dollhouse

styles and other 19th and early 20th century styles (figure 4.8). Some of these houses were

preserved through great efforts by the community in the 1960's to fight clearcutting urban

renewal proposals, and include a plaque declaring them Heritage Hill Homes. The Heritage

Hill District has been recognized as one of the largest and most impressive urban historical

districts in the country (Heritage Hill Association, 2018). The character and charm of such

housing is attractive to young professionals and students, and many of the houses have been

split into apartments. The Heritage Hill Association and neighboring areas have put an

emphasis on owner-occupied rental properties in an effort, according to several landlords,

including my own, to stem the tide of split housing becoming college party zones or "flop houses." In recent years, there has been an upswing in condo and townhouse development in the Eastown Area. At the time of this writing, the cost of rent for a two-bedroom apartment ranges from $1,100-$1,600/month. The Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom rental in the Grand Rapids-Wyoming Metro Area is currently $878 for FY 2018 (HUD, 2018).

Research Design

This thesis seeks to address three aspects of graffiti and street art: 1) The spatial and cultural distributions of graffiti and street art within the context of gentrifying/gentrified neighborhoods in the mid-sized city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. 2) Investigate the extent that deviance fluidity may be observed on the urban landscape.

GIS Methods

Haworth, Bruce and Iveson (2013) have suggested that the use of GIS to illustrate qualitative research is underutilized yet can produce a vital layer for both public and research understanding of graffiti as a whole. Their GIS analyses utilized the hotspots of graffiti incident reporting in Sydney, Australia. They collected data on graffiti by type (tag, throw-up, piece, slogan, sticker, and other) in a subsection of a hotspot, which revealed a wide variety of graffiti and its dispersal. Graffiti appeared more on the side streets and back alleys, prompting the researchers to conclude graffiti writers may avoid areas where they feel exposed or where they believe their work will be swiftly removed (the arterial streets were where the city focused its removal efforts). Haworth, Bruce, and Iveson suggest that using data from graffiti removal reports cannot speak to the quality of graffiti that is removed. The researchers further conclude that future research and policy development would be best served by an integrated approach that utilizes both quantitative GIS analysis and existing qualitative methods.

Megler, Banis, and Chang (2104) point out that removal data indicates where graffiti is viewed as a negative and thus called on for removal. They used reported graffiti data and GIS analysis is several social and economic factors to create a model to predict graffiti target areas in

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San Francisco. They find more report incidences in neighborhoods with isolated commercial business districts, and that rapidly gentrifying areas report graffiti less often. The authors conclude that this pattern of reporting may be the result gentrifying areas "inviting graffiti as a social response" (71) and high-end business districts being hypervigilant. They also conclude, in consistency with the ethnographic confession of many graffiti writers, that visibility is a key factor in graffiti location choice, with proximity to arterial streets being a significant predictor.

In light of the suggestions and methods of previous researchers in the field, the research design for this study is a mixed methods approach. I incorporate case study interviews, field observation, and an analysis of the spatial distribution of graffiti in 2014 and 2018 using GPS data collected in the field in a GIS platform.

GPS Data Collection and Analysis

The spatial distribution of graffiti and street art was determined by collecting primary data in the field. In both 2014 and 2017/18, I took to the streets with a Garmin GPS unit in hand, a good ole fashioned clipboard, and trusted assistants, Maxwell and Aaron. In 2014, instances of graffiti were recorded for the entire southeast quadrant of Grand Rapids. Graffiti was categorized into one of three categories; graffiti art, street art, or gang. Other pertinent details, such as the name, image, style, and location (abandoned building or home, for example) were recorded manually, and later entered into an excel spreadsheet that contained the waypoint data. Photographs were taken at each site and a total of 741 waypoints were collected. The waypoints were translated into a shapefile and analyzed using ArcGIS 10.4 software to reveal the spatial distributions, mean centers, and one standard distance for each category. The

Business Analyst extension was used to determine the economic and social character of the area and assess the changes in demographic variables from 1980-2010. These results were presented at three conferences: The East Lakes/West Lakes Regional Association of American Geographers (AAG, renamed American Association of Geographers) conference in 2014, held at Western Michigan University, The Annual AAG National Meeting in 2015 in Chicago, and the Students Scholar Day Conference at Grand Valley State University in 2015.

To further the previous research and complete my thesis, I began collecting GPS waypoints in the Eastown area specifically starting in the summer of 2017 and ending on Dec 31, 2017. I took field notes as I went along, noting the character of buildings where graffiti was found and where it was not present. As a resident of the area, and a patron for over a decade of several businesses, I am intimately familiar with, and participate in, the culture of Eastown. My personal observations should be viewed in that context. Along my travels by foot, many passersby were interested in what my assistants and I were doing. This led to many informal conversations regarding graffiti and street art within the neighborhood. Though informal, I consider these insights from local residents and business owners highly valuable, as they reveal unprovoked and deeply personal reflections on the value (or lack thereof) of graffiti and street art in the study areas and the ability of graffiti to make place for observers. These insights also revealed further evidence of the social construction of deviance and its fluidity.

Having researched the subject a great deal more since 2014, and consulting with former bomber and current geographer, Stefano Bloch at the University of Arizona, the classification system expanded in 2018 to reflect the nuances and complexity of graffiti as a general term. The

graffiti was categorized as one of the following: (1) gang, (2) graffiti writing, (3) street art, (4) commissioned work, (5) political graffiti, and (6) "one-off" graffiti. Guerilla marketing was also documented to further explore the concept of deviance fluidity on the urban landscape. Other details about each instance of vandalism were again manually recorded and later entered into an excel spreadsheet that contained the waypoint data. Photographs were taken at most of the sites (the exception being when my camera refused to cooperate due to the frigid temperatures), and a total of 921 instances of graffiti were recorded.

Once the waypoints were collected, they were again converted to a shapefile using ArcGIS 10.6 software. The spatial distribution of the different types of vandalism were analyzed in the same manner as before, showing the mean center and one standard distance for each category. The 2014 data was overlaid with the 2018 data to reveal the changes in graffiti over time as the area became more and more gentrified. Graffiti and street art instances that were untouched in the four years between data collection were noted and the cultural and social aspects of their locations were determined using demographic data and field observations. Areas where graffiti writing had been covered up and remained so, or covered up and subsequently replaced with new graffiti writing were also noted.

Interviews

My liaison and friend, G, (all names associated with the graffiti community have been changed to protect the identities of the graffiti writers) who is at the center of the local hip hop scene, connected me to several writers and graffiti style muralists in Grand Rapids. G is a person who is trusted by the hip hop community, which worked in an effort to overcome my

normative white female outsider disadvantage. G was also very interested in the project and proved to be very knowledgeable about the local graffiti culture. The connections with the graffiti community were facilitated online through Facebook Messenger and over cell phone text messaging. The initial response was enthusiastic and positive.

HSIRB approval for this study was obtained on February 22, 2018 (Appendix I), including an approved set of interview questions and an informed consent document to be distributed to each participant (Appendix II). A significant period of time elapsed between my initial contact with subjects and Western Michigan University HSIRB's final approval. I was able to set up interviews with several subjects, though more dropped out of the communication than stayed. Initial contact was officially made through Facebook Messenger in early November 2017, though outreach by G had begun in mid-summer of that year. Many of my requests for interviews went unanswered when the time came in February 2018.

At the outset of interviewing, when a subject was presented with formal paperwork describing the study in the approved HSIRB format, their willingness to continue faltered and the interview failed. The formal nature of the interviews made the remaining subjects uncomfortable. One interviewee, Rev, questioned whether or not he was "incriminating myself with this shit." Despite my assurances that his identity was protected and exposing him was unethical as well as contrary to my purposes, and despite the fact that his close friend, G, had connected us, Rev ultimately discontinued the interview. In another case, the subject, 2ND, only agreed to the interview after G and another mutual friend both contacted him independently. 2ND 's initial reluctance during the interview was only overcome after yet another mutual friend,

who was aware of the research, came up to the bar table where we were sitting. Our friend took one look at the two of us and my yellow legal pad before turning to me and exclaiming, "Well! Looks like you have found the master right here!". After our friend left the table, 2ND let out a notable sigh of relief and said, "Well, it looks like you know everybody, so…" The interview was very productive from then on and 2ND even offered to connect me to others within the community in the future. 2ND's trust was hard won.

In the informal setting where we were introduced, potential subjects were enthusiastic about participating in a project presented as a chance to speak about their work. Generally, (and practically as a matter of legality) these writers are unable to speak to the public about. However, when the interview began in formalities, the enthusiasm seemed to turn toward apprehension. Other researchers have had great success infiltrating graffiti culture and gaining trust (Phillips, Ferrell, Brighenti, Bloch etc.). It should be noted, however, that many of these researchers spent years building that trust and were working toward PhD dissertations rather than on a master's thesis. Some published researchers participated in the culture to gain trust and were subsequently arrested for vandalism (Ferrell 1996). Others were graffiti writers themselves who even then faced trust issues within the graffiti writing community (see Bloch 2016).

I had several months to build a trust relationship, and though my friendship with G and others was a huge boon, in the end I feel my time frame proved insufficient to build a substantial trust relationship. It may also be that G's recruitment tactics were somehow misleading. I did not participate, nor was I present during recruitment. Other factors may

include the time lapse between being introduced to the community and setting up interviews (potential subjects may have lost interest or lost faith), or the fact that I, in G's words, "look like a cop," or a "white suburban mom," rather than a person with a vested interest in the protection of deviant identities.

Bloch (2016) suggests that it is a difficult process for researchers to gain the trust of the graffiti community and notes the tendency to" get in" through legal channels, such as gallery contacts or phone numbers on commissioned mural. He suggests interviewing graffitists *in situ* will help provide an alternative narrative from the predictable commentary of artistic outlets, il/legallity issues, and so on, what he called place-based elicitation (P-BE). Bloch adds, "Despite the primacy of space and place in actually doing graffiti, interviews often focus on identity and artistry above all else" (2016:7). While I was unable to reach a point where I could conduct *in situ* interviews, I tried to steer my line of question away from identity and artistry, while focusing instead on the value and attachment to place. However, several interviewee responses echoed those responses that Bloch notes are found time and again in graffiti research.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

GIS Results

A total of 922 waypoints were collected in the Eastown area: 525 are classified as graffiti

writing, 183 guerilla marketing, 83 cover-ups, 77 street art, 30 one-offs, and 25 political (Figure

5.1). The spatial analysis of the main forms of graffiti this study is concerned with indicate that

graffiti writing, street art, and guerilla marketing are concentrated in the business districts in the

Eastown Area (Figure 5.2). These findings are consistent with prior research in the field of

graffiti indicating concentration in heavily trafficked areas and business districts. The highest

concentrations of graffiti and street art are found in the heart of Eastown. Demographic data

from the US Census Bureau shows that the instances of graffiti, street art, and guerilla

marketing increase as household income and educational attainment increase (Figure 5.3).
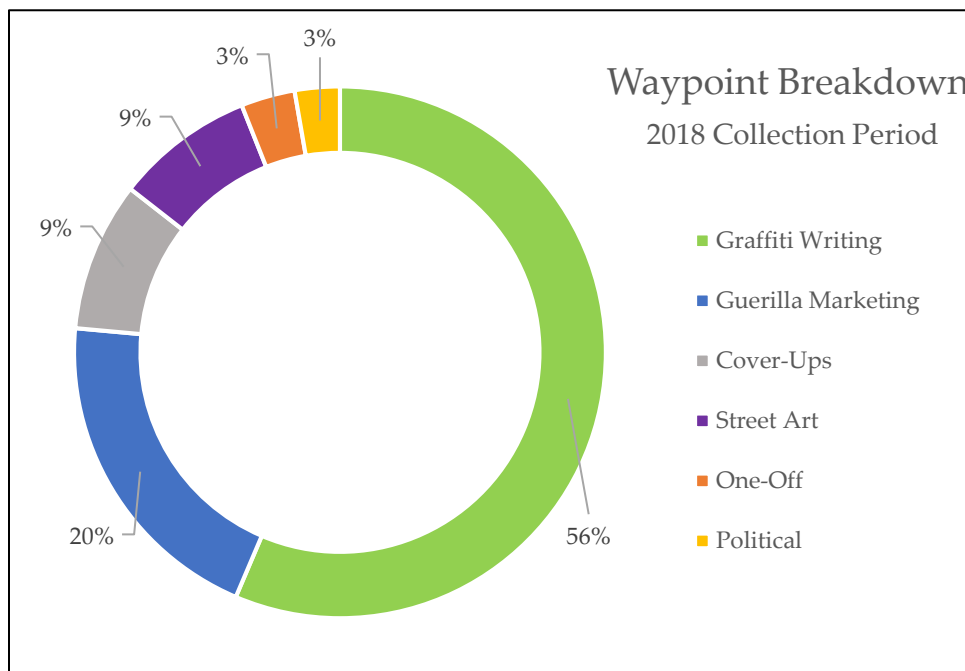

Figure 5.1: Waypoint Breakdown. Source: Author, 2018.

Meanwhile, the instances of cover-ups were lower in the higher income and higher educated

block groups.

Figure 5.2: Point Density Spatial Distribution of Graffiti Writing, Street Art and
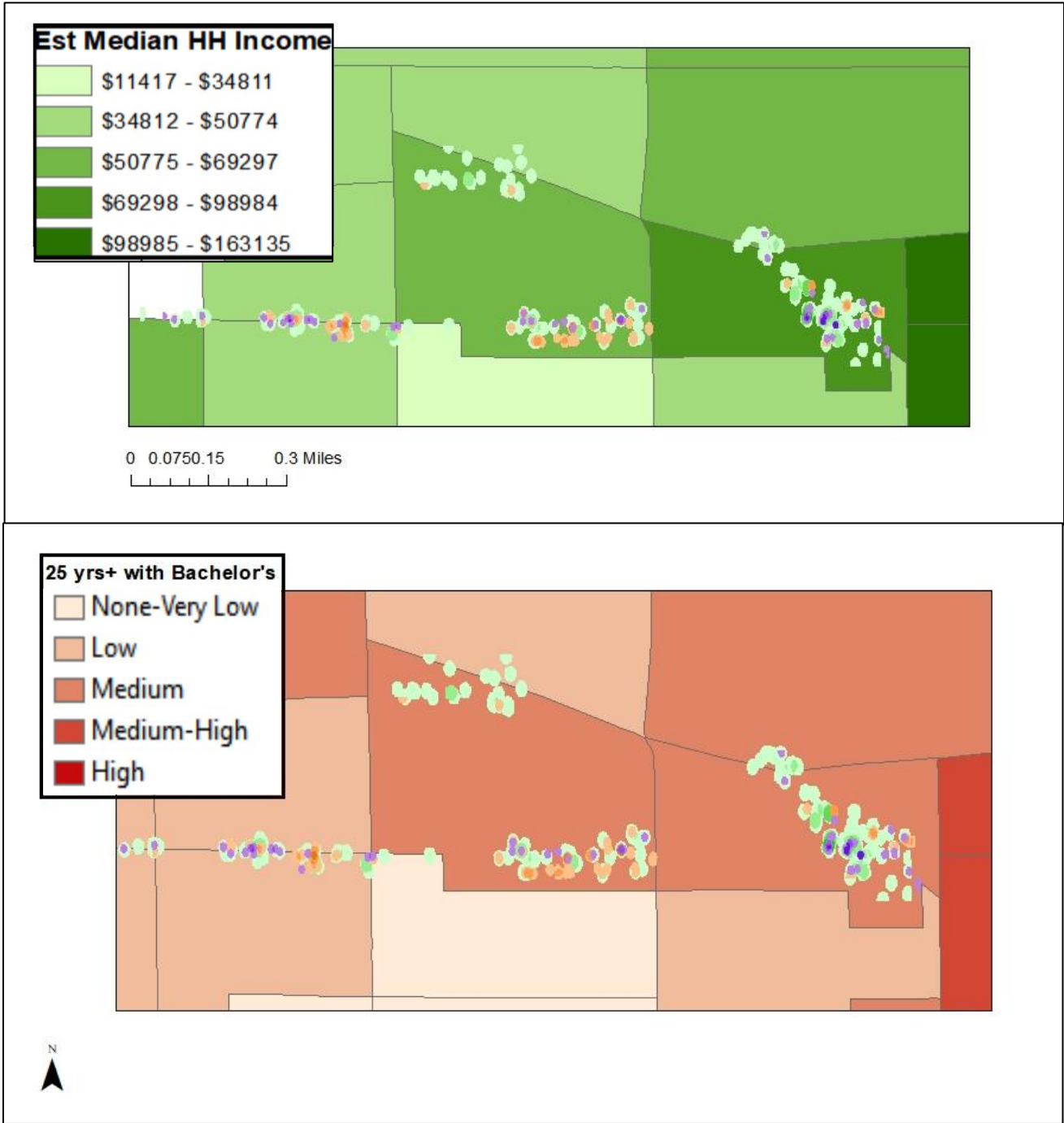Guerilla Marketing in Eastown. Source: Author, 2018.

Figure 5.3: Graffiti Writing, Street Art and Cover-ups in Eastown by Median HH Income (top) and Educational Attainment (bottom). Source: Author, 2018.

Graffiti writing styles made up over half of the data collected, with 79.8% (419) of those

points being tags. This is consistent with the subcultural norms of gaining infamy through

prolific and visible tagging. The spatial analysis of graffiti writing between 2014 and 2018

revealed several insights. The first was a noticeable gap in data collection from the 2014 dataset

(Figure 5.4). The second was higher instances of graffiti writing in East Hills in 2018 compared

to 2014, and the patterns of graffiti placement in Eastown proper have remained similar.

Another observation is the increase in graffiti writing on one particular abandoned building on

Wealthy Ave. and James St. (Figure 5.5), an area of interest which will be discussed later. The

final area of interest is an alley (Figure 5.5) where the volume of graffiti writing has remained

about the same, however there has been a complete turnover in writers (judging by their tags,

ability, and style).

The spatial distribution of street art (Figure 5.6) revealed some interesting trends as well.

No instances of street art were recorded in East Hills, a somewhat notable absence. There were

also several instances of street art that had survived from 2014 to 2018 (Figure 5.7), even as other

vandalism, mostly graffiti writing, was cleaned up around them.

Guerilla Marketing, almost entirely in the form of stickers, was found in the same spatial

places as graffiti writing and street art. These marketing stickers often found themselves sharing

street signs and utility boxes with graffiti tags. Despite their abundance, there were only two

incidences of stickers being covered up with paint (Figure 5.8). It could not be determined

whether those stickers were guerilla marketing oriented or not.
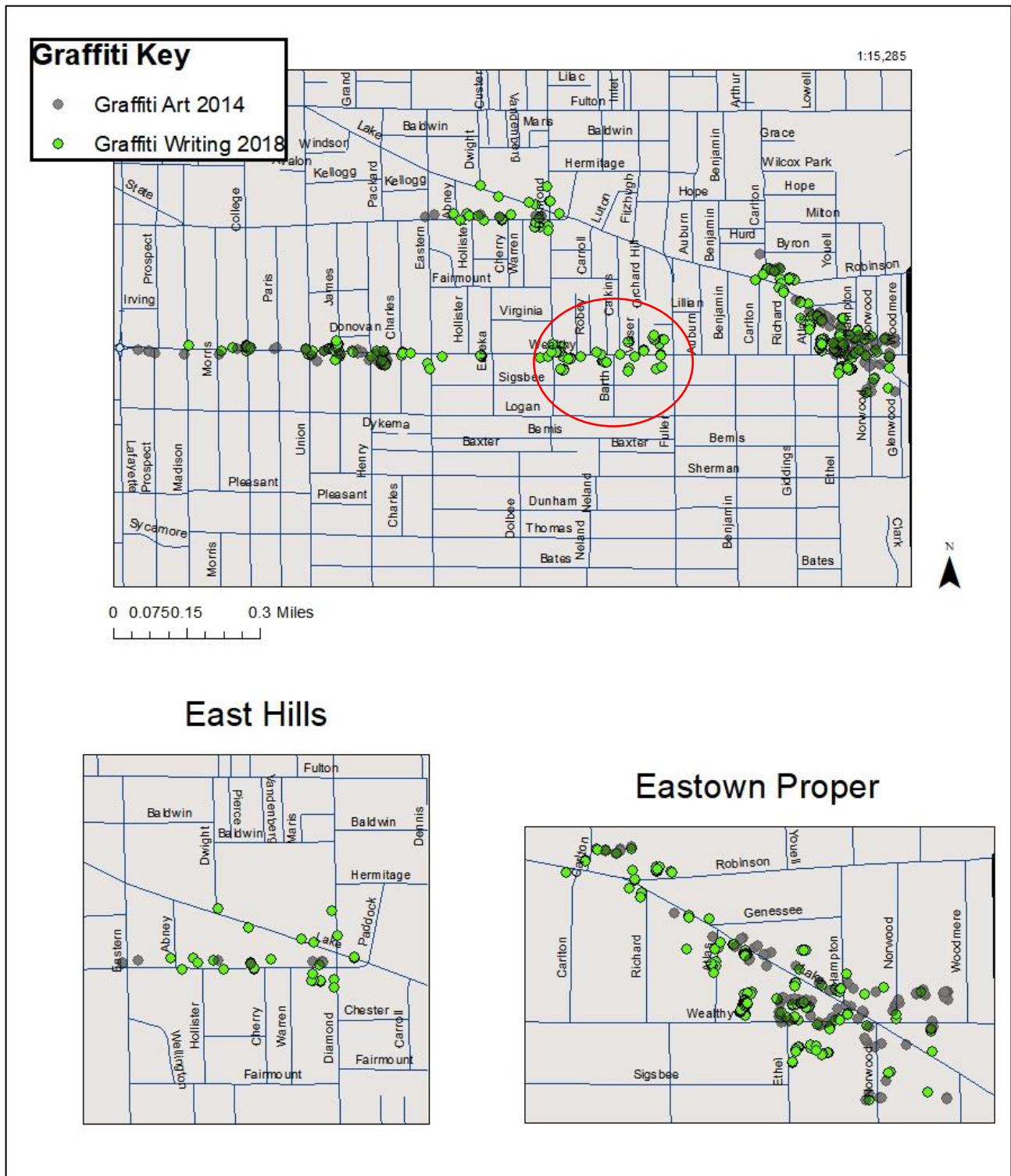
Figure 5.4: Spatial Distribution of Graffiti Writing in Eastown in 2014 and 2018. The data gap from 2014 is in red. Call out boxes are centered around each neighborhoods respective business district. Source: Author, 2018.
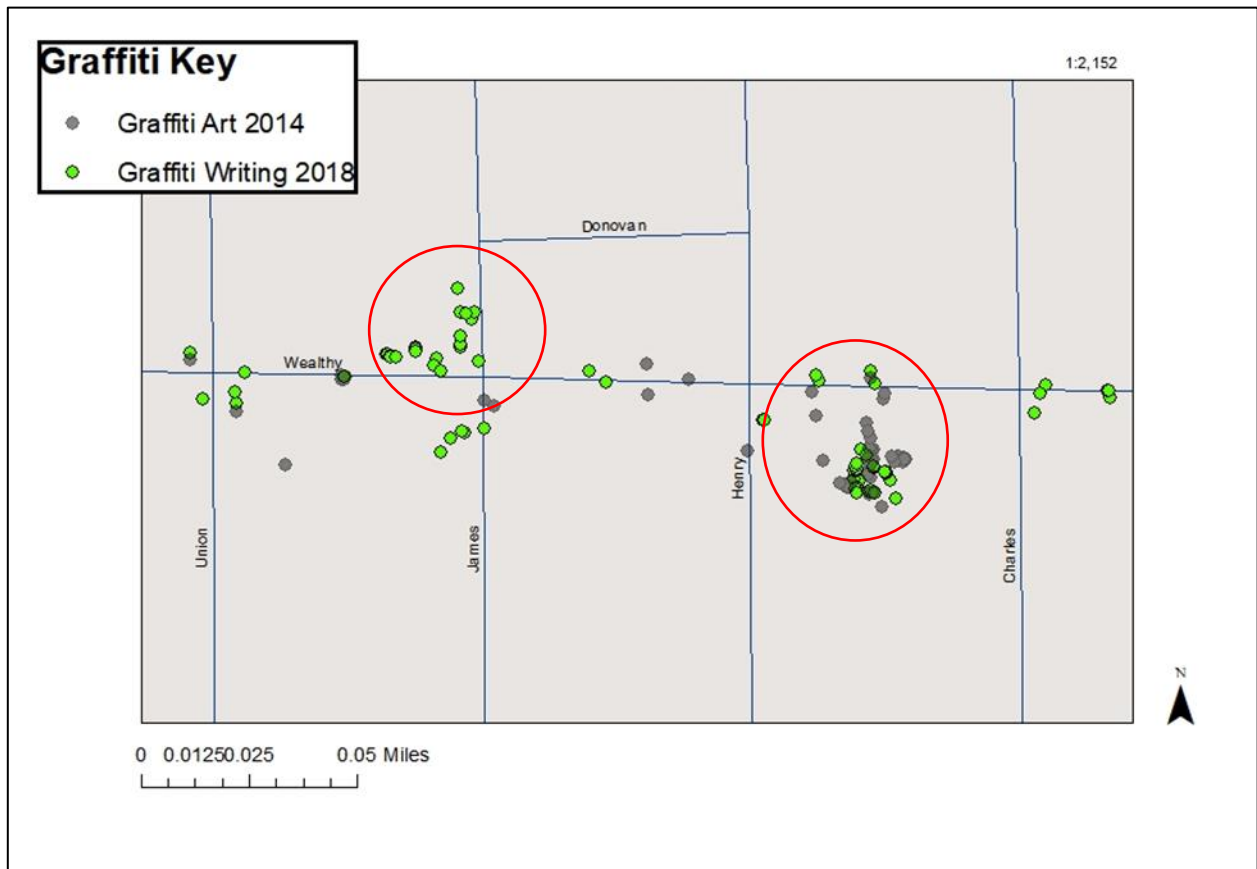
Figure 5.5: Spatial Distribution of Graffiti Writing in Eastown. The Abandoned Building (left red circle) and the Graffiti Alley (right red circle). Source: Author, 2018.

Figure 5.6: Spatial Distribution of Street Art in Eastown Area, Author, 2018.

Figure 5.7: Spatial Distribution of Street Art in Eastown. Red circles indicate street art that has endured throughout the time lapse. Source: Author, 2018.

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Figure 5.8: Spatial Distribution Guerilla Marketing (top) and dot density of cover-ups with instances of guerilla marketing (bottom). Source: Author, 2018.

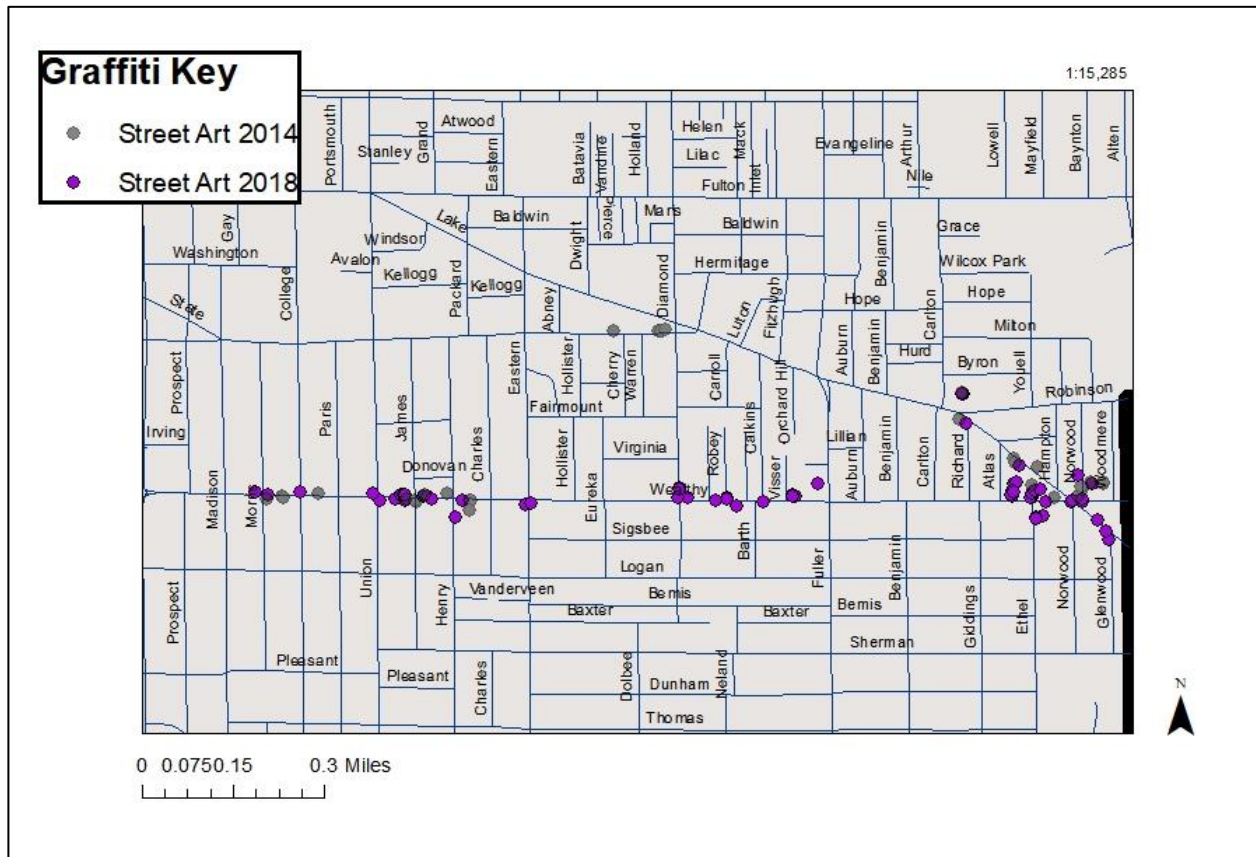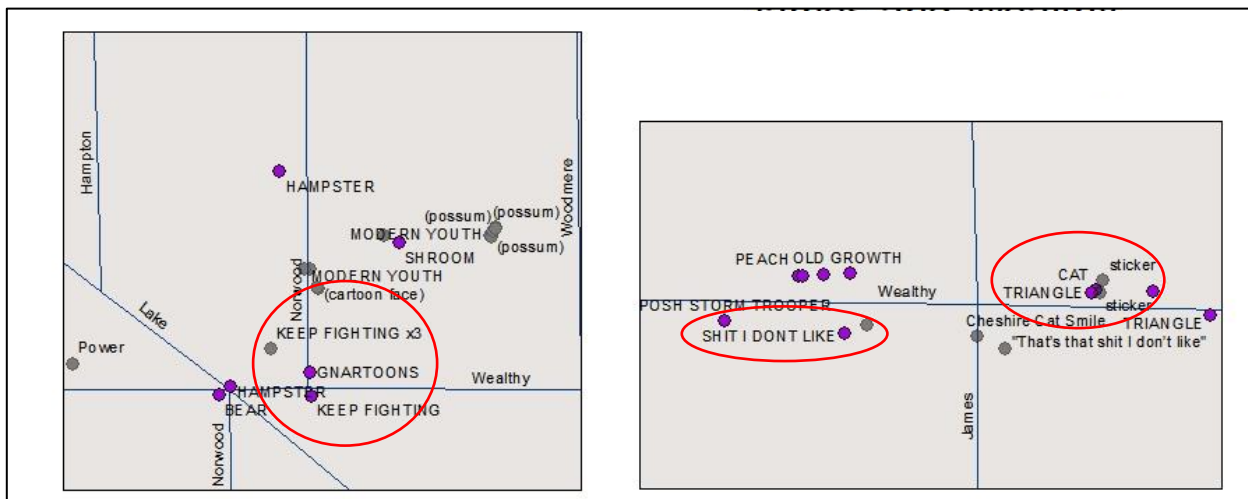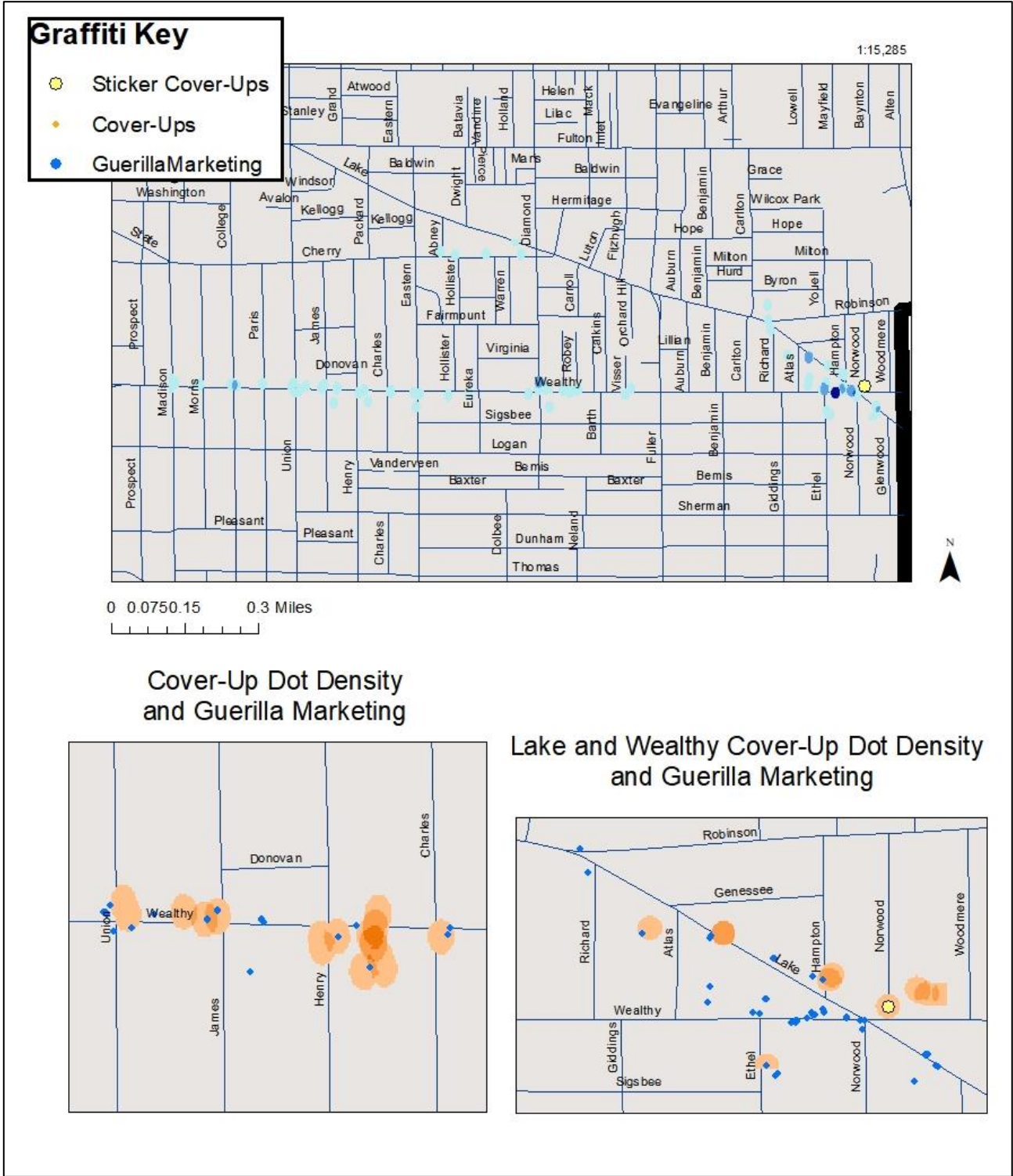Two local graffiti writers were interviewed for this research; Rev and 2ND. Both writers are white males, and both were born on the east side of Michigan, near Detroit. Rev moved to Grand Rapids at age 6 and began his graffiti career about a decade later. 2ND tells me that he picked up his first spray can at 15 but didn't take graffiti writing seriously until several years later when he started "hitting things" (creating graffiti upon things). Both have been painting for roughly 20 years, which puts them in the 35-40 years old range. Rev and 2ND's demographic information already places them outside of the male minority youth stereotype.

Rev identifies as a graffiti writer and defines a writer as someone who is "accomplished in all three aspects of the art," tagging, bombing, and piecing. He got started in graffiti "just by being around hip-hop culture." He wasn't necessarily trained by a more experienced writer, but rather collaborated with other writers and ran with crews, learning more as he went. He tells me that it was the work of others that influenced him to get better at his craft.

> Really, the cats that really got me to step up my game were SYC, who was my partner for a few years, and the ATF crew really coming to life in 2004-2005…When ATF was established, it became more organized. Older tattooers and writers in that crew really influenced all of us to turn it up.

Rev went on the explain that before ATF, writers from Kalamazoo and Traverse City were doing the most work. He knew these others by their tagger names and hinted at a much wider and connected subculture, extending across the state.

2ND, on the other hand proved to be more of a lone wolf. While he has run with crews and travelled the state strictly for graffiti writing opportunities in the past, he explains that the process of meeting other writers unnerves him. He prefers to stick to the shadows unknown. He describes his introduction to the subculture as a welcomed feeling of anonymity. 2ND explains, "This is something that I can do and no one will know its me." He learned his craft primarily from books and the early websites of the internet. 2ND is primarily a bomber and a piecer, but says tagging just comes with the territory. If you're a bomber, you're a tagger. 2ND also does commissioned murals and artwork, which he does not classify as graffiti art. For 2ND, murals are something he does for the community.

Commissioned murals and free walls contribute to the community aesthetic. If there is a big piece that is an asset [to the community] no one will hit that. You just don't go over something that someone has put a lot of time and money into… Besides, I love it. I have a creative outlet and I won't get arrested.

2ND was already practicing graffiti when he moved to Grand Rapids and said that writing on the city's walls helped him acclimate to the city. He told me that with writing you learn a lot more about the city than "normal" people ever will. You go places that most people will never go or have long forgotten about. Essentially, you come to appreciate your city in ways that are impossible for non-writers to understand. You have a love for the places they have left behind. As 2ND puts it, "It's the ugly spots I try to make pretty." When he was arrested on charges of malicious destruction of property and vandalism, he explained to the judge that malicious implies ill intent. What he was doing on those walls when he was arrested was not

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done out of malice, but a type of love. The judge, recognizing sincerity, reduced the sentence and removed the threat of jail time.

When asked how they chose spots to hit, 2ND and Rev replied as many writers before them; places that are accessible and the least likely to get erased, the higher and more impossible the better. Rev responded:

> Experienced writers always chose visibility relative to risk. Tags are the quickest, so that's all you really want to do with high visibility. Medium exposure for bombs (rooftops, alleys, etc.). And low for piecing since it's a must to bring some 40's [40 oz. beers] and a hot'n'ready [pizza].

The neighborhoods that 2ND used to bomb in, "used to be a ghetto, but now it is all boutiques and galleries, but like expensive galleries." He has seen the gentrification of this neighborhood and has mixed feelings, "You have a society of people that were here for generations, but then you're just moving people out and moving a whole new group in." At the same time he believes it is good for the area economically. I asked him about choosing locations to tag or bomb in a gentrified area. He responded that there would be less staying power on a recently renovated building versus an abandoned one. He also reminded me that he wanted to make ugly things beautiful, not iminish things that are already nice.

2ND stresses that graffiti writing is a crime and he does not condone it or pretend that it should not be a crime. He mentions that it is possible to get involved in other things through graffiti, such as drinking and drugs. He also recognizes that graffiti writing does not look beautiful to everyone. He notes that just the word "spray can" tends to irritate the general

public. The rattle of a shaking spray paint can will put them over the edge. Both Rev and 2ND mentioned the broken windows theory, though in very different contexts. Rev said that even though he spent most of his life writing in Grand Rapids, he occasionally moves out for a while to places where his "art is seen as more than just broken windows theory." 2ND, on the other hand, understands that what he does costs the taxpayers money and may bring down the property value. He understands why graffiti writing is viewed as "a curse or a blemish," rather than art more often than not.

> Graffiti gets a mixed reception. I mean, some people hate it and maybe people with a less conservative outlook may see it as an [creative] outlet. Honestly, I think some people are just undercover jealous because they see what I do, but they don't have the stones to go out and do it…The older generation hates it no matter what. Many attribute it to gangs, but I've never been involved with gangs in my life. They may see that back alley or [train] car as a stain, or like the police are not doing their jobs. Like they have no presence.

2ND believes that a graffitied alley looks beautiful, but that graffiti writing does not have the same appeal as street art does. 2ND has never been a stenciler. While he notes that some bombers have "huge" problems with it, he does not. Rather, it just isn't his thing. When I asked him if he thought street art was a commercialized version of graffiti, he agreed, and added:

> Stencils are more accessible [than graffiti writing]. Street art is a whole different animal. Graffiti is more beautiful, more difficult, and it takes more skill. Stencilers either don't know how to do it [write], or have tried and failed. Or it might be that

stenciling feels more safe. It doesn't require a lot of time to throw your premade

cut-outs on the wall and spray and then your done.

2ND notes that it is hard for a lot of bombers to respect stencilers because of how easy it is. He

does not view it as bad, especially if you can make money doing what you love, as some street

artists do. He notes that many graffiti artist transitions into other creative pursuits, which he

supports as long as what they sell isn't called graffiti. He also does not like to see graffiti writing

in gallery spaces. He sees bombing as "narcissistic," something he does for himself and to feed

the adrenaline addiction associated with it. He also associates graffiti writing as a form of self-

advertisement that takes space away from commercial advertisement. "There is a difference

between an entrepreneur and a bomber," 2ND tells me, "To put your [graffiti] name on a t-shirt

to sell it is kinda weird."

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Graffiti cannot be fully defined or preserved without becoming purified and killed; a quality it shares with urban character and place identity.

Dovey, Wollen, and Woodcock, 2012: 40.

A sentiment often heard during casual conversations with curious neighborhood residents was an inability to understand why someone would feel the need to write their name all over the city. One elderly man summed it up, "It doesn't make much sense. I mean you can get arrested and everything. Why not write in a notebook or something instead? Or your own property?" The man has lived in the same house at an Eastown intersection for more than 40 years and says he has seen a lot of change happen around him in his time there. He hollered vigilantly at my assistant and I from his porch because he thought we were vandalizing the street signs. I had to explain that we were in fact documenting instances of graffiti in the neighborhood, not creating them. His response gave the impression that this was a silly way to spend a beautiful summer day.

Just like nearly all the residents I bumped into on the streets of Eastown, he directed me to the train yard where I would find "the good stuff." This implies both an aesthetic preference as well as a spatial preference for graffiti writing. Regrettably, the train yard is outside the confines of the study area. 2ND spoke with enthusiasm about the "museum in motion," as he called it, where you can find works by everyone from toys (inexperienced graffiti writers) to kings and send your work around the country.

Impermanence has always been the legacy of graffiti writing. Writers create high volumes of tags in hopes of increasing the staying power of their claim to the city and generating fame. Others spend hours crafting intricate and stylized masterpieces, mostly for their subcultural community. These graffiti writers create a cultural of their own in those spaces and physically claim it. Graffitists do so knowing the general public doesn't "get it," and their art is generally frowned upon. The writers I have spoken to both acknowledge they are spoken of as a perpetuator of blight, a most dreaded urban disease.

Street artists on the other hand are creating their works for a wider audience. Image driven stencils, wheat pastes, and stickers offer the public a chance for interaction and reflection on a level of comprehension that eludes the untrained who may happen upon the notoriously cryptic graffiti writing. The literature suggests that street art is highly commodifiable and garners the appreciation of a much larger subset of the public than graffiti writing ever could. Stencils and other street art, though illegally placed, are sometimes protected by the community and property owners, indicating a value to the places they are found. Street art lends an impression of "cool" or "hip" to urban spaces without the questionable intentions or exclusivity of graffiti.

Setbacks of Deviant Subculture Research

Graffiti practitioners are notoriously elusive, which they proved to be during the course of this thesis work. These graffiti Writers leave their name across the urban landscape. Any possibility of connecting that name to a face represents danger for the graffiti writer. Fines and other legal penalties can be steep, and the consequences may increase with every instance of

graffiti the writer can be connected to. This ultra-cautious mentality was a barrier for this thesis

work. The shorte time frame (relative to other researchers), the necessity of formalized

documentation in the form of HSIRB informed consent forms, and the time lapse between initial

contact and final HSIRB approval resulted in a limited number of interviews being conducted.

While the responses from graffiti writers in other scholarly work contains a great deal of

overlap, this study would have benefitted from higher numbers of interviews. Future research

should strive to make early contact and build a strong trust relationship with the graffiti

community by maintaining that contact regularly. I also suggest lessening as many formalities

as possible. It may also help to explain in advance that there will be formal things associated

with the interviews, and make sure your participants can find a level of comfort with that idea

before presenting them with something like an informed consent form.

My initial application to HSIRB (Appendix III) did not include a line on the consent form

for a signature from the subject. It is quite clear that a signature requirement would make

members of a deviant subculture reluctant or unresponsive. The initial application was rejected

due to the absence of the signature line. I applied again, insisting that I not be required to

include a signature line due to the potential harm to my subjects should the data somehow be

breeched. After some back and forth, I was able to secure a waiver of signed consent but was

still required to provide subjects with an informed consent document. This document proved

fatal to several interview attempts. It is not my intent to diminish the utility or necessity of such

precautionary measures from HSIRB. However, it would behoove future researchers seeking to

interview graffiti writers to be aware of the setbacks that such requirement may present so they

can act preemptively and not suffer a loss of potentially rich qualitative data.

Gentrification and Graffiti

Grand Rapids has been working diligently over the past few decades to recast its image and offerings to attract and retain the class of creatives and young professionals. The changes in the Eastown area have been swift. The area has turned from a place people avoided to the "hipster jewel" of the city in a little over a decade. The area is in the throughs of gentrification, as more and more establishments and housing options are oriented toward the middle class. Abandoned store fronts have been revived and filled with Pinterest worthy displays and chic curving fonts on chalkboard signs. Wealthy Street is now lined with yoga studios, craft breweries, trendy restaurants, and upscale salons. New wayfinding signage has popped up in recent years to encourage visitors to recognize they are in a special place. Several large-scale murals have been commissioned to deter graffiti and to add to the "unique" neighborhood aesthetic.

Within this swiftly shifting sociocultural environment, several types of graffiti can be found clustered in the business districts, making use of the high pedestrian traffic and visibility. According to the literature, graffiti and street art clash in claims over space with graffiti writers viewing street art as unworthy of their subculture due to it commodified nature and the ease with which it can be created. On the flip side of this quest for spatial primacy, the general public identifies more readily with street art visually utilize it to connect with the urban landscape. In so doing, they allow for street art to act as nonnormative place-making mechanisms by becoming part of what they desire for their community, even as it is accomplished through

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Figure 6.1: Stencil on Sidewalk, 2014 (left) and 2018 (right) Figure 6.2: Source: Author.

illegal channels. While deviance fluidity allows for vying levels of public acceptance, the

intention is self-consciously deviant and illegal under formal laws.

The gentrifying neighborhood is a consumption driven space, and the fact that the

readily commodifiable street art styles are found in Eastown, and further that some of the same

pieces of street art remain after a four-year period is not unexpected. Even while the graffiti

writing has been removed several times over, several stencils and stickers remain (Figure 6.1

and Figure 6.2). Further, no attempts have been made to remove the large amount guerilla

marketing stickers from the locations shared with graffiti writing and street art. Perhaps it is the

consumer-oriented intentions of marketing stickers that allow them to blend in with such a

landscape without offending anyone as outright vandalism. Just another advertisement in a sea

of many.

Deviance fluidity can be observed and documented on the urban landscape. This

research has shown that street art has staying power, graffiti writing has less, and no attempts

have been made to remove guerilla marketing stickers. In the city of Grand Rapids, the city only addresses perceived vandalism if it is reported. The placement of all three of these types of vandalism are equally illegal under the law, yet their level of deviance is hardly equal given the different responses to them.

The aesthetic quality of graffiti writing has an effect on residents' assessment of it and their subsequent attitude toward where it should and should not be. The idea that graffiti is "the good stuff" when it is relegated to the train yard and not the neighborhood walls is telling. Graffiti tags are often seen as promoting a negative image of lawlessness and blight. Meanwhile, a stencil on the sidewalk claiming, "That's that shit I don't like," has remained unscathed for at least 4 years (Figures 6.1 and 6.2). Another stencil of the iconic Star Wars stormtrooper in a tuxedo directly across the street from the abandoned building discussed in the next section (see Figures 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7) is commented on as "cool" and "fun." These varying reactions to different forms of vandalism reinforce the sociological concept of deviance as a social construct.

Nonnormative Placemaking

In Eastown, the incoming middle-class is bringing ideas about what they want the Eastown neighborhood to be. In mixed and gentrifying neighborhoods, the incoming residents actively engage in normative placemaking. This can include cultivating a community that reflects middle class sensibilities, a walkable, trendy neighborhood with a mix of historic homes, swanky condos, and boutique businesses. Graffiti and street art are covered up in this neighborhood because they contradict ideas about normative middle-class placemaking. The

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fact that areas of the community have had complete turnovers in graffiti writing works, while

street art has endured shows a leniency toward street art styles in the course of middle class

placemaking. However, not all street art has endured, and not all graffiti writing had turned

over. Municipal criminalization of graffiti has placed it squarely against the norm, yet when

viewed in the right context (a train station, for example) graffiti writing also becomes acceptable

and even celebrated by the same people who would eradicate it from the urban walls in the

neighborhood context. This reflects the element of deviancy fluidity that helps to explain the

varying reactions to vandalism. This idea of a proper "place" for graffiti writing and an

acceptance of street art contributing to the neighborhood aesthetic indicate that these

unsanctioned markings contribute to the making of place, for better or worse. A creator of these

markings, even if the work is generally appreciated, will only create them under the auspices of

self-labeled deviance. The markings cease to belong to the subculture once they are sanctioned.

In this manner, both creator and their product conflict with the normative middle-class

placemaking methods and ideas suggested by Elwood, Lawson, and Nowak (2015).

Further evidence of this is found in the intentions and understanding of place by graffiti

practitioners. As indicated by the ethnographic works of Ferrell, Phillips, Bloch, and others,

tagging occurs in places where the tag has a greater survival rate. This means areas where tags

already exist and areas where tags will have less of a negative impact on the community.

Tagging a newly revitalized building is not going to afford such staying power, whereas

tagging an abandoned building has a higher chance of remaining.

Figure 6.3: Abandoned Building at Wealthy and James St. Source: Google, 2018.

Figure 6.5: Refurbished Building at Wealthy and James St -clear of tags. Source: Author, 2018.

Figure 6.6: Surveillance Notice on refurbished building (left), and Figure 6.7: Advertisements for incoming hip retail (right)source: Author, 2018.

In the study area, an abandoned building (Figure 6.4) stood highly vandalized in stark contrast to the trendy café and bakery across the street (Figure 4.6). I took down the vandalism data for this building in fall of 2017. Shortly thereafter, the building was purchased, and the vandalism was boarded over. Writers were quick to the scene, and the boards were tagged within the week. The building was refinished in December 2017 and has stood graffiti free for months (Figure 6.5), However, the windows are now adorned with warnings of surveillance in process (Figure 6.6) and posters for the incoming businesses (Figure 6.7). This awareness by writers of where their work will stay in place and where it will be deemed out of place further acknowledges their ability to make place in a purposefully nonnormative fashion. Writers and street artists alike are aware of the normative aesthetics desired in the community. They recognize that they will be essentially erased from that place, having wasted their time, resources, and risk. As my interviewee, 2ND, said repeatedly, he only wished to make ugly places beautiful with his work, not worse. Similar sentiments were echoed by writers interviewed in Ferrell (1993) who suggested that curtained areas and communities are too nice for tags, and they had no desire to

place them there. The literature repeatedly suggests that graffiti producers are "actively engaged in place-making like other private interests, they use urban spaces to fulfill their own personal desires, needs, and motivations" (Docuyanan 2000;105). However, placemaking is a term with normative associations that do not adequately describe the illegal actions of graffiti writers and street artists. Merrill (2015) describes graffiti and street art as a "living tradition" defined by its transitory nature and subcultural adherences. Merrill further suggests, and rightfully so, that "continued integration of street art and subcultural graffiti into official heritage frameworks may pose for the authenticity of their traditions related to illegality, illegibility, anti-commercialism and transience" (385).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Human Subject Review Board Letter of Approval

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
FWA00007042
IRB00000254

Date: February 22, 2018

To: Lucius Hallett, Principal Investigator
Alyson Mabie, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 18-01-21

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Deviance Fluidity on the Urban Landscape: Graffiti as an Informal Placemaking Mechanism" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., *you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study"*)." Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: **February 21, 2019**

HSIRB Approved Letter of Informed Consent and List of Guiding Questions for Interviews

Western Michigan University
Department of Geography

Principal Investigator:	Dr. Lucius Hallett
Student Investigator:	Alyson Mabie
Title of Study:	Deviance Fluidity on the Urban Landscape: Graffiti as an Informal Placemaking Mechanism

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "*Deviance Fluidity on the Urban Landscape: Graffiti as an Informal Placemaking Mechanism.*" This project will serve as Alyson Mabie's thesis for the requirements of the Master's Degree in Geography. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
designed to analyze the spatial distribution of graffiti in southeast Grand Rapids, MI and the intentionality behind graffiti and street art placement. The goal of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the graffiti and street art community in Grand Rapids, and to gain insight into the broader graffiti world and its role in creating the urban landscape.

Who can participate in this study?
This study is seeking participants who are part of the graffiti or street art communities, or are muralists working in the graffiti tradition. Persons who are not members of these communities cannot participate in the interview.

Where will this study take place?
This interview will be taking place a public place determined by the participant and agreed upon by the researcher.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The interviews may last from 30-90 minutes total.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to participate in a face to face interview. The interview to be conducted will last between 30 and 90 minutes. The interview will be electronically recorded, and the researcher may also take notes. Your replies will be completely anonymous, so there is no need to say or include your name during the course of the interview. You may choose to not answer any question posed to you by the researcher without rebuke.

What information is being measured during the study?

The information gathered from the interview will be used to determine the relationship that the graffiti community has with place.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

Your identity will be safeguarded to protect against any risk of identification. The researchers will record your information using a pseudonym, either your tagger ID or a randomly assigned letter name, such as "Writer K." The pseudonym will be agreed upon by you and the researcher. There is no need to use your given or legal name during the course of the interview.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The benefit of participating in this research is the opportunity to speak to your craft and represent your craft.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

There are no costs associated with participating in this study.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

There is no compensation associated with participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

The interview content will be transcribed by the researcher and maintained as a word document in an encrypted file on an external hard drive. This file will be housed at Western Michigan University and be accessible only to the researchers listed above. This research will be presented at academic conferences. Your identity will remain anonymous during the course of any presentation or dissemination of the research findings.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent. Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, [Type name here] at [Type phone number here] or [Type e-mail here]. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

Questions for Graffiti Artists:

Logistics and Informed Consent Form:

1. Any questions before we start? I'll also give you opportunity at the end.
2. This interview will last from half an hour to one hour. You are free to end this at anytime.
3. Please read through and sign the consent form.
4. May I have verbal consent now that you are willing to be digitally recorded?

Introduction Questions:

1. How long have you been practicing your work?
2. How did you get started?
3. What styles of graffiti do you practice?
4. Are you a Grand Rapids native? How long have you lived here?

Location Questions:

1. Do you live in the area where you preform graffiti, or do you travel around the city?
2. How do you choose the location for your work? What draws you to a place?
3. Do you revisit the sites of your art? Do you use the same sites more than once?
4. How does your work effect places? Do you feel that your work makes that location a better place than it was (visually)?
5. Do you feel more connected to the city knowing that your work is a physical part of what people see?

Perception Questions:

1. Who do you create graffiti for? Yourself? The public? The graffiti community?
2. How do you feel the public perceives your work? Do you feel there are areas of the city where your work is more appreciated than others? Does this effect your location decision?
3. Do you feel that certain types of graffiti/street art are better received by the public than others?
4. Do you view your work as property damage?
5. What does the word vandal mean to you? How about artist? Where do graffiti writers fall in those terms?

Subculture Questions:

1. Are you aware of other graffiti writers in Grand Rapids? Do you know them personally, or just by their tag?
2. How close knit is the graffiti community? Are there crews or turf wars in the area?

3. Graffiti writing is somewhat cryptic and unreadable to the general public. Is this intentional in your view?
4. What do you view as the different categories of graffiti? Does street art count as graffiti to you, or is it something different?
5. Some graffiti writers have described street art as a commercialized version of graffiti art. How do you feel about this? How much does global fame such as Banksy impact your work.
6. Do you work with other graffiti artist in the area?

For Commissioned Muralists:

1. How did you transition from graffiti writer to muralist?
2. How do people approach you to do mural work? Do you advertise or is it a word of mouth process?
3. What reasons to people give you for wanting to commission a mural in a certain place?
4. What sort of feeling does mural work give you versus graffiti writing? How are they similar or different?
5. What do you notice about the places you have painted murals? How do you think your work has affected those areas?
6. How do you feel the community responds to your mural work versus your graffiti work?

Conclusions:

1. Is there anything that you would like to add before we finish up?
2. Can you refer me to anyone else in the community who this research would apply to that would be willing to be interviewed?

APPENDIX IV

Initial HSIRB Responses

Date: January 19, 2018

To: Lucius Hallett, Principal Investigator

Alyson Mabie, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 18-01-21

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Deviance Fluidity on the Urban Landscape: Graffiti as an Informal Placemaking Mechanism" has been reviewed under the **expedited category** of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (HSIRB).

Before final approval can be given, please address each of the following concerns. We expect that you will find the revisions requests to be productive and that you will revise your protocol according to our suggestions or in similar ways. If you think a particular revision is not in the best interest of the human subjects in your study, or you think an entirely different approach to the issue is best, please provide a written explanation and/or call us for consultation.

1. Subject Recruitment section of the protocol outline:
   - Please provide more detail about recruitment.
     - Lay out your recruitment and enrollment procedures in a step-by-step fashion.
2. Informed Consent Process section of the protocol outline:
   - Please explain your consent process more fully.
   - Are you requesting a waiver of signed consent.
     - If so, please justify.
3. Research Procedures section of the protocol outline:
   - Has the interviews already taken place?
     - If no, please revise "November 2017 and January 2018" to reflect the correct timeline.
4. Risks and Cost to and Protections for Subjects section of the protocol outline:
   - Is there any way for subjects to be identified (i.e., description of their word).
5. Benefits of Research section of the protocol outline:

- The benefits of research are unknown until the data is collected and analyzed.
  - Change "will" to "may."
6. Confidentiality of Data section of the protocol outline:
- Data must be stored at WMU.
7. Interview Script:
- You need to allow place on consent document for signature (per #3).
8. Consent Document:
- Please revise to comport with the "Template for Informed Consent Form" found on-line at: http://www.wmich.edu/research/forms
  - When revising, please keep header questions (e.g., what are we trying to find out in this study?).

Please submit your revised protocol with a cover letter detailing the changes. Indicate whether you have made the requested change; addressed the issue in a different way than the one the reviewers suggested; are directing the reviewers to the pages in your protocol that address the issue; or are providing a justification for not making the requested change.

In addition, highlight the changes within the protocol outline, consent document, instruments, recruitment materials, etc. send to the WMU IRB, 251W Walwood Hall (East Campus) or via email to ovpr-hsirb@wmich.edu. **Remember to include the HSIRB project number (above).**

Conducting this research without final approval from the WMU IRB is a violation of university policy as well as state and federal regulations.

If you have any questions, please call the research compliance office at 269-387-8293.

Date: February 13, 2018

Dr. Lucius Hallett, Principal Investigator
Alyson Mabie, Student Investigator for Thesis

Re: Resubmission of HSIRB Project 18-01-21

The following document is a resubmission for HSIRB approval of the thesis project titled, "Deviance Fluidity on the Urban Landscape: Graffiti as an Informal Placemaking Mechanism." The changes made to the submission are highlighted in yellow throughout the document. The list below lays out the changes suggested by the committee after the initial review in the expedited category, and how each was addressed:

1. Subject Recruitment section of the protocol outline:
- *Please provide more detail about recruitment.*
- *Lay out your recruitment and enrollment procedures in a step-by-step fashion.*

More detail was provided regarding the recruitment and enrollment process as suggested. The process was laid out in a step by step fashion.

2.Informed Consent Process section of the protocol outline:
- *Please explain your consent process more fully.*
- *Are you requesting a waiver of signed consent. If so, please justify.*

The informed consent process was explained more fully, as suggested. We are requesting a waiver of signed consent, and it is justified in the document. The informed consent document was revised to include the line, "Please note that by participating in this interview, you are agreeing that the information you provide can be used for research purposes."

3.Research Procedures section of the protocol outline:
- *Has the interviews already taken place?*
- *If no, please revise "November 2017 and January 2018" to reflect the correct timeline.*

The interviews have not already taken place. The dates have been changed to February 2018-March 2018. Additional changes to the procedure were added to reflect the informed consent action process.

4.Risks and Cost to and Protections for Subjects section of the protocol outline:
- *Is there any way for subjects to be identified (i.e., description of their word).*

Without a written or verbal record of the subjects' given or legal name, there is no way for the subjects to be identified. Subjects will be identified by their tagger names, which act as a means

of anonymity for their graffiti and/or street art work. If further anonymity is requested by the subject, the researcher will comply by assigning a random letter to the subject.

5.Benefits of Research section of the protocol outline:
- *The benefits of research are unknown until the data is collected and analyzed.*
- *Change "will" to "may."*

The word "will" was changed to "may" as suggested.

6.Confidentiality of Data section of the protocol outline:
- *Data must be stored at WMU.*

Changes have been made to reflect that data will be stored at WMU.

7.Interview Script:
- *You need to allow place on consent document for signature (per #3).*

We are requesting a waiver of signed consent for the reasons given in the revised Informed Consent section of the proposal. An introductory question was added to determine whether the subject desired a randomly selected letter name, or permits the use of their tagger ID.

8. Consent Document:
- *Please revise to comport with the "Template for Informed Consent Form" found on-line at: http://www.wmich.edu/research/forms*
- *When revising, please keep header questions (e.g., what are we trying to find out in this study?).*

The consent document was revised using the template for informed consent form. Header questions were added to the informed consent document.