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**GRAFFITI ART AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION: WHERE ART AND
COMMUNICATION CONVENTIONS CONVERGE AND DIVERGE**

by

Rebekah Miner

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Professional and Technical Writing
in the Department of English**

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Logan, UT**

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Abstract

Graffiti Art and Professional Communication: Where Art and Communication Conventions Converge and Diverge

This thesis describes professionals in the areas of art and professional communication and their text and interview discussions of the professional presence of graffiti art influence in social media, marketing, and advertising. A review of these interviews coupled with field research creates a third space of professional communication where graffiti art becomes its own genre of art and communication when used professionally. I will describe the contexts of art, professional communication, and graffiti art; their differences and discourse from professional interviewees on the subject, and the explanation of a new third space—or genre—of professional communication through graffiti art.

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Graffiti Art and Professional Communication: Where Art and Communication Conventions Converge and Diverge

Introduction

Technology has changed dramatically in the last several hundred years since the invention of photography by Louis Daguerre and the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg. Daguerre created the first step in photography. Before that, Gutenberg was “the first European to use the printing press and movable type in Europe” (Sivulka). With these two inventions and many others, we now live in a society filled with art, colors, photographs, advertisements, and countless works of written and visual arts. Technical writing, graphic design, communication, branding, marketing, and advertising are at an all-time high. With the emergence of more and more communication methods, professionals in the art and professional communication vocations have seen a rise in graffiti art’s influence in marketing, advertising, and social media. My thesis engages this intersection.

Since beginning the Technical and Professional Communication major at Utah State University, I have developed a love not only for communication and writing, but also design and art. I have seen how both interconnect and are present in marketing and advertising—specifically through graffiti and street art. I’ve studied art, graffiti art, and professional communication for years and will discuss my thoughts on these and their interdependence and relationships. To backup my research and 15 interviews with professionals in many fields, I’ve also traveled throughout several of the United States as well as the countries of Chile, France, and England while documenting my encounters with graffiti and street art. I will describe what art, communication, and graffiti art consist of, while using my own background and research alongside those interviews amongst artists, professional and technical writers, graffiti artists, professors, and an illustrator, journalist, and graphic designer. My thesis will consist of three main arguments. One is to discuss the push-back of graffiti art from these professions and why. Another is the successful emergence of graffiti art in the communication world. And finally, I will argue for a third space of art and communication where graffiti art can be considered a new genre of professional communication. This new genre will specifically focus on the presence of graffiti art—or its influence—in marketing, advertising, and design.

In 1996, Susan Phillips gave the definition of graffiti art itself as “institutionally illicit marks...[establishing] some sort of coherent composition: such marks are made by an individual...upon a wall or other surface usually accessible to the public” (para. 1). She stated graffiti art was found around the world such as in Rome, Tivoli, Tikal in Mesoamerica, but especially in “20th century urban environments” (para. 2). She argues that the purpose of the art is to state an opinion or opposition to a movement, organization, or government entity, to “appropriate public space” or gain recognition. 20 years later in 2016, the professionals I interviewed unanimously felt the influence of graffiti and street art in professional communication methods whether in their vocations or in their environments. Their comments will be discussed throughout this thesis. Most of these professionals are in professions related to multimedia from fine art to journalism.

Interviewees

1. Graphic Designer 1
2. Professional Communication Professor 1
3. Professional Communication Professor 2
4. Illustrator 1
5. Technical Writer 1
6. Technical Writer 2
7. Graffiti Artist (“Swinj”)
8. Journalist 1
9. Journalism Professor 1
10. Technical Communication Professor 1
11. Technical Communication Professor 2
12. Fine Artist 1
13. Fine Artist 2
14. Art Professor 1
15. Pop Artist 1

Before I arrive at my main argument, I want to provide the reader with background to professional communication and then introduce the interviewees into the discussion. After that, I will also discuss graffiti and fine art alongside the professional’s views of each and their relationship to professional communication. The discussion will focus on my two main arguments featured above. Concluding this thesis will be where I speak mainly about a “third space” of professional communication—or new genre of communication through graffiti art.

Basis for this Thesis

(The Debate between Professional Communication and Graffiti Art)

I will now discuss professional communication, my background with it, and professional opinion on the interviewees on the subject in relation to graffiti art. As I mentioned, there is pushback from professionals in professional communication as graffiti is somewhat different from what a professional and technical communicator usually does for work.

A conversation in one of my first technical writing courses struck me and has since stayed with me. My professor mentioned that students in my field either go the “artsy” route through design and photography and the rest usually choose the “communication” route in writing and editing. I, however, have always seen art and professional communication as one and the same, and I focused on graffiti art as my example. From my experience in this field, I define professional communication as the various forms of writing, speaking, listening, responding and expressing in the workplace (electronically or in person). Professional Communication Professor 1 explained to me professional communication in his current workplace. This included emails, memos, documents, books, reports, scholarly journals, advertisements, posters and fliers made for clients, notes to students, and to other faculty. Whether collaborative large projects with other technical writers, or small forms of communication such as a written note, it was professional communication. In my research, I have set out to understand what exactly is “professional communication” and what is not. How closely is it related to art? And more specifically, is art

that incorporates messages, social commentary, advertising, and simple words considered professional communication? I will discuss my findings on their interdependence and relationship in communicating professionally.

Unlike professional communication, art is more difficult to define, however. For my purposes, I will say that fine art is art made for aesthetics and beauty whereas graffiti and street art are made to express feelings and emotion, induce thought and action in the public, stake a claim, state a message, and evoke action overall. I realize that these definitions would be contested by different kinds of artists, but for the purpose of this thesis, will use this definition.

In essence, my other research purpose was to understand how graffiti is perceived and defined in the professional and nonprofessional world, particularly in relation to art and professional communication. There has been push-back from fine artists in defining the new genre as “art,” and there are many that would say it’s not professional communication despite its success around the world (Fine Artist 1, Graphic Designer 1). I believe that graffiti and street art can be professional communication—when used purposefully in social commentary or in marketing and advertising.

Graffiti however, must not be defined simply as art or solely as professional communication, or even worse, vandalism and nothing more. It must fall into a new genre of communication; one where it is separate from both fine art and professional communication, but yet, it takes on the quality of each of these and is not just markings on a wall. Graffiti art is debated between the art and communication worlds as whether it is an acceptable genre within the workplace. Communication and art can be very different workspaces completely, and many professionals have guidelines to what their work is considered. Advertising, marketing, and social media are already using elements of both communication and art through graffiti and because of this, we can put graffiti art into a new genre involving both art and communication. I will discuss this new third space of communication towards the end of this thesis to culminate the research and interview commentary that is presented.

Many have told me that art (specifically graffiti art) doesn’t fit into the professional communication workplace, while others beg to differ. What happens when there are no limits to the workplace though? Can art—specifically graffiti art—ever be considered professional communication and how? What degree is graffiti art related to both art and communication professions? The acceptance by some and the rejection of others is the reason why I decided to break down professional communication, graffiti and street art, and fine art, while putting them all into a third space (or new genre) in my conclusion, that incorporates both art and communication and is professional. I will have conversations on each of these areas in this thesis, starting with the interviewees.

Professional Communication in Graffiti Art **(What the Professionals Say)**

15 professionals were interviewed as a major part of my research. Many of their comments are found in this document and all contributed to my knowledge on the featured topics throughout these pages. I am aware of the limitations of interviewing a small group of professionals, but were this a larger project, more would have been interviewed. However, interviewees gave very

similar answers on many questions asked. From their answers, I was able to deduce many of my findings from common opinions among the professionals.

Speaking with Graphic Designer 1, Fine Artist 1, Journalist 1, and Professor of Professional Communication 1, I learned that there are defining factors of professionalism in the fine art and professional communication worlds. In writing this thesis, these experts stated that fine artists are very serious in their craft; that art viewed outside of the fine art arena (such as street art) is not considered “professional art” due to its uncontrollable, unstructured nature, and “vandalism aspect” (Graphic Designer 1). Professional communicators view their trade as professional when it is legal, commissioned, and in the workplace such as communication within colleagues, on projects, for companies, and for clients (Professional Communication Professor 2).

A major component between professional communication and street art and street art compared to fine art is that both fine art and professional communication are widely accepted, legal, commissioned, and considered a normal part of society (Technical Writer 2). This is opposed to the uncommissioned, uncontrolled nature of graffiti and street art that’s done in the public and on public property. Works of art such as street intervention pieces, chalked sidewalks, spray-paint pieces, and art of the like were not considered “professional” unless commissioned by a business, organization, or movement for a specific purpose (Technical Writer 1). Most professionals interviewed focused on the central idea that the communication was “professional” because it took place within the workplace and had a central message and purpose to the tasks at hand. This is part of the reason for pushback when comparing professional communication and graffiti art.

Many of these professionals, however, believed that graffiti and street art *can become* professional communication if done in a professional context—such as for advertising, marketing, propaganda, and discoursing on social commentary (Professional Communication Professor 1). Uncommissioned works can be professional if there is a positive reaction by the public. One example is the graffiti artist Banksy, whose works are illegal and uncommissioned, but have become so widespread and popular with the public, that they have been accepted as professional and even fine art (Journalism Professor 1). Positive public response does not always equal legality, but it can equal acceptance, as has occurred with Banksy’s works. His pieces became professional art and communication at the same time due to their volume, reach, and success in the public. Pop Artist 1 said that success made the “illegal aspect of it go unpunished in many cities.”

The technical writers and educators interviewed spoke about their professional communication experience. Professional communication is “communication that succeeds in its purpose. It achieves what the creator is intending, so whatever method allows you to do that is professional communication. It depends on how people learn and assimilate that information, ...your target audience and goals for that audience” (Technical Writer 1). There has to be words, symbols, or some other method communicating meaning effectively for it to be considered professional communication. Professional Communication researcher Brent Faber has stated that professional writing is “writing that takes place within a profession or something that has been defined as a profession. So medical writing for example, would be any writing that takes place within medicine or healthcare” (Professional Communication Professor 1).

Technical communication scholar Rebecca Burnett gives us a similar definition as she states that “professional communication encompasses written, oral, visual, and digital communication within a workplace context. [It] focuses on the study of information and the ways it is created, managed, distributed and consumed” (1). Burnett explained that communication is branching into many new genres. There are similarities in the marketing world in 2016 as many advertisers use graffiti art methods in their campaigns.

To avoid a high level of pushback from the professionals, graffiti art needs to have some of the qualities of professional communication. Professional communication incorporates all forms of writing, really. In my experience, it is a *blend of many* different majors, disciplines, and techniques. In my work, I’ve been a web designer, graphic designer, writer, editor, user-experience designer, communications specialist, marketer, brander, videographer, newspaper writer, and a reader, among other roles. There are a wide variety of areas of expertise that a professional communicator (or tech writer) needs to develop skills for. My studies have involved making advertisements for organizations and businesses using design programs, writing programs, coding, and other software to accomplish my goals. Other projects have involved me sketching design after design, creating markups and first drafts, creating e-books, and advertisements. I’ve used artwork and photos of graffiti art to make resumes, business cards, and stationery. All of these works were considered “professional” because of how I used them to create messages, professional office materials, and advertisements.

Professional Communication Professor 1 says it must take place in the workplace, Technical Writer 1 says it must succeed in its purpose, and Artist 1 and Graphic Designer 1 regard graffiti art as a “low-brow” art (meaning “unprofessional”). How it’s used in the public realm is what determines its professionalism. Major corporations have seen the boom in graffiti and street art in recent years and many are even using street art to advertise. Microsoft, Starbucks, and Smirnoff are several examples of major corporations using street art to advertise. Corporations are even breaking outside of the regular mold of spray-paint graffiti and are using “clean graffiti” to advertise, thus taking away the vandalism and “low-brow” art aspect (Technical Writer 2). Clean graffiti is a way of taking a dirty wall or sidewalk in a city and professionally cleaning it into the corporation’s design without paint and without vandalism (Daniel). The result is successful marketing, and its communication tactics are the same used in marketing in magazines, billboards, and most other professional communication campaigns. As an example, The Savage Way (thesavageway.com) has created an entire company based on environmentally-friendly ways of marketing and advertising, one of the main methods being clean graffiti. Their “outdoor messaging was used in 11 cities for 21 clients,” and they’ve branched from NYC to the southeast just in 2015. With more companies using graffiti art and its methods, the pushback is beginning to fade from professional arenas, and graffiti itself is emerging successfully in marketing and advertising, and the communication world. Success here, is used in terms of graffiti art succeeding in meeting the requirements of professional communication.

Graffiti Art

(Its Background and Qualities)

So why the interest in graffiti art with design and advertising? I’ll discuss graffiti art itself, its history and demographic, and discuss graffiti art’s successful emergence in multimedia marketing. Illustrator 1 studied graffiti and told me, “There are two types of graffiti. One is

merely the markings of gang vandalism and the other consists of artwork that artists use to express an idea. Most of the general public disregards graffiti as art because they can only see these markings as intimidating or the presence of cult activity.” However, even though the public sees graffiti this way, designers (especially graphic designers), marketers, and advertisers pull their inspiration from art and street art in many cases (Graphic Designer 1). I will focus on graffiti’s art and design aspect in this thesis as art and design are major components of professional and/or technical writing, and marketing. Graffiti artist “Swinj” stated in an interview with me that many graffiti artists call themselves “writers” or “artists,” and that these can be used interchangeably.

From my research, I deduce that graffiti and street art are ways of *communication outside the formal structures of control*. Graffiti art is in essence street art, but it is all encompassing (in a way) of art we see on the street. And it’s successful as professional communication if used professionally in marketing, advertising, and media. From my interviews and years researching, I define graffiti art as text-based or message-based public art published in the streets. This art form sends messages through words, shapes and color, claiming an area with a name or word, or features social commentary. I believe that street art and graffiti go hand-in-hand, as they are just about the same exact thing. They’re the sword blade and the hilt, but you need both together to wield it properly. Graphic Designer 1 and Journalist 1 explained to me that the difference between the two is that graffiti started off as tagging and “wildstyle” and then, the more momentum it gained, the more art forms and techniques began to emerge. So graffiti morphed into it’s term “street art,” with these artful elements introduced. Tagging, though, was a means of writing a name or a signature on a wall with paint. Wildstyle was the signature or phrase but made so intricately that only the learned in street art could interpret it. Staking a claim with a word eventually was more than a line on a wall. That tag branched into colors, shapes, people and pictures—morphing into an art form of its own. Because this art took place in the streets, it became known as “street art.”

In her 2010 book *Space Invaders*, Jaklyn Babington argues that “the activities of street art were merged with those of graffiti: the act defines ‘marking graffiti’ as anything that ‘sprays, writes, draws, marks, scratches or ‘defaces’ property by any means so that the result cannot be cleaned off with a dry cloth’” (64). With street art itself, there is a sense of “...rebelliousness that is at the center of this new visual culture” (25). Journalist 1 argued that graffiti originated in New York City and was known as ‘New York Style’ graffiti for years. The movie *Beat Street* brought dancing and graffiti art into the same arena, so graffiti art was largely associated with ‘hip-hop’ as well (Journalist 1). Tags were first noticed in the 1960s, where the signatures eventually became “pieces” of art. These “pieces” (a painting of graffiti) soon became bigger and better, and were short for ‘masterpieces’ (Jenkins 4). More images were then used in conjunction with words and different styles of typography (Manco 9). The graffiti art that began in New York quickly spread to major U.S. cities such as L.A. and Chicago, as well as internationally to Europe, Australia, and the Middle East. The art has only branched out from there and can be seen in most states and countries around the world.

Graffiti art wasn’t always this way though. Since it is a communication and art form, it has evolved from its infancy. Babington writes that graffiti art is not what it was first known as in the 60s and 70s. “When we speak about a work of art created in or for the street today, it is usually

not graffiti at all, but its descendant—neo-graffiti, post-graffiti or, more commonly, street art” (19). The art has evolved from a simple tag to an art form that gains inspiration from fine artists, comics, punk music, surrealism art movements, and popular culture. It can be seen in the forms of stencils, stickers, street intervention pieces, murals, sculptures, fliers, videos, propaganda pieces, and simple spray-can paintings. Most importantly, there is almost always a message or call to action in a graffiti-art piece. Through tagging, bombing, and fighting against the usual structure of government control, “street artists have mounted a second wave of attack, successfully storming new territory, recolonizing city streets and—most recently—penetrating the walls of numerous commercial and public galleries” (Babington, 19). This third space of art and communication has become an “international communication system,” which once had been abhorred but is now becoming popular and even highly collectible (Babington 19). This popularity has contributed to the successful emergence of graffiti art in communication and marketing.

Street art is complex and vast. Street art has evolved over the years and decades from just graffiti writing to street art as an entire genre of public art. So think of it just as that: a new genre in its own sphere. One that involves both professional art and professional communication. This genre will be discussed more towards the culmination of my thesis, but I will continue to mention graffiti art as a genre of its own to help the reader connect it to art and communication, but also to recognize that it belongs in its own sphere as well. This art and communication genre has changed from basic forms and techniques to a vast array of art that has dipped itself into graphic design, advertising, marketing, communication, propaganda, branding, corporations, and the like. Graffiti artists also come from backgrounds such as in fine artist, graphic design, illustration, drawing, marketing, designing, and technology (Journalist 1). Many graffiti writers are those who also have a knowledge of illustration, graphic design programs, and computer software programs, and they use these in conjunction with their spray-can artistic abilities (Journalist 1). “Graffiti...is a vast subject with its own references, languages, and forms. ...Graffiti art, as an idea, has always existed alongside other artistic endeavours, the difference being that it is a mode of self-expression using methods that are seen as criminal, or outside the conventional art world, rather than specifically sanctioned or commissioned art” (Manco 9). Graffiti art itself is complex in that it is a form of art used in marketing and advertising, but alone, it is an art and communication form done without permission and in secret. It can induce the same effect as successful, expensive marketing campaigns do, but it is not sanctioned, regulated, or appropriate at times with its content. But just like marketing and advertising, it is out in the public sphere. The fact that some graffiti art is deemed professional enough to stay on public walls and other pieces are not depends completely on the city or state regulations as well as its popularity among the public. As fine art and professional communication have evolved and emerged in marketing, advertising, and design though, graffiti art has successfully followed with it.

One such graffiti artist and graphic designer who is an example of this success is Shepard Fairey. He wanted to design, but in an area where he could create outside the controls of what society deemed acceptable. The most popular form of his street art is the “OBEY” sign (all caps intended) that is closely associated with his stencils of the wrestler Andre the Giant. His art became so popular that he owns his own company OBEY that produces clothing and street art paraphernalia, as well as his own graphic design studio named Studio Number One. They are “A Creative Agency” “dedicated to building and reinforcing bold, disruptive brand narratives across

all media” (Faurey). His Obey Giant website contains a manifesto, perfectly discussing an awakening sense of the environment and public space. Their campaign focuses on “Phenomenology... The process of letting things manifest themselves” (Faurey).

“Things are so taken for granted that they are muted by abstract observation. Because people are not used to seeing advertisements or propaganda for which the product or motive is not obvious, frequent and novel encounters with the sticker provoke thought and possible frustration, nevertheless revitalizing the viewer’s perception and attention to detail... Many people who are familiar with the sticker [graffiti art sticker, easily pasted to a surface] find the image itself amusing, recognizing it as nonsensical, and are able to derive straightforward visual pleasure without burdening themselves with an explanation. The PARANOID OR CONSERVATIVE VIEWER however may be confused by the sticker’s persistent presence and condemn it as an underground cult with subversive intentions. Many stickers have been peeled down by people who were annoyed by them, considering them an eyesore and an act of petty vandalism, which is ironic considering the number of commercial graphic images everyone in American society is assaulted with daily... Whether the reaction be positive or negative, the sticker’s existence is worthy as long as it causes people to consider the details and meanings of their surroundings.” — Shepard Faurey, 1990

This is a company dedicated to working against normal corporation regulation standards in that it fights against them. Society is so used to professional advertising that those advertisements blend into our environment. They notice the difference between advertising and street art as there is a different style between it and graffiti. Much of graffiti (if not all) is meant to make a statement and evoke emotion, whereas advertising tries to get you to take a certain action or buy a product. Technical Writer 2 argues that “street art paints a pretty picture and graffiti states a message.” Graffiti artists have similar motives as writers—to break free of the normal standards. Advertising and street art use the same method of communicating with the public, using both art and words to do it, but advertisers have done their work legally while street artists usually have not. Journalist 1 explained that many writers do what they do to take back the public space from professional corporations or to break out of what society tells them to do. This pairs perfectly with the Obey Giant tagline of “Manufacturing quality dissent since 1989” (Faurey). Graffiti-art professionals are sending “quality” messages—just in a different form. So why isn’t this “quality” art called “art” by the fine art world?

Fine Art Compared with Graffiti Art:

In this section, I go back to discussing the pushback from professionals (in this case fine art professionals) and graffiti art’s relation to fine art, as well as its success in the fine art world. Fine art is “created primarily for aesthetic and intellectual purposes and judged for its beauty and meaningfulness.” (Dictionary.com). Many of the interviewees felt there is a difference between fine art and graffiti art. Technical Writer 2 explained to me that “fine art is solid and once it’s created, then the process is done. Graffiti art is fluid and meant to evoke action and movement and continual transition to newer ever-changing forms.” Fine art is put to canvas or paper—never to be erased—whereas graffiti and street art are meant to be temporary forms of art, always being washed away, torn down, covered up, or saved. Fine Artist 2 argues that a photograph is the most permanent form of graffiti or street art ever existing in a certain place, whereas the fine-art painting stays relatively permanent. Illustrator 1 stated, “Today modern art or fine art is defined

as portraying the world or not portraying the world at all. It is largely accepted because it embraces a wide variety of movements, theories and attitudes of art.” Street art embraces the same method in its production, but it is not as widely accepted as fine art. Technical Writer 2 stated that “fine art seems to show beauty while graffiti art shows reality and current culture.”

Fine art can be hard to decipher for some. Artist 1 and 2 stated their goals were to represent nature and people but in a “beautiful way.” They wanted to evoke beauty rather than social commentary. “Paintings can bring forth emotion, but the focus usually stays with the painting instead of branching out” (Artist 1). Graffiti art on the other hand usually defines its purpose through word or action. “If the message is not clear in the spray-paint piece, zine, sticker, or stencil, then the artist or website associated with it generally states the purpose (Swinj).”

Art Professor 1 stated that graffiti was a type of art but it wasn’t what the fine art world would define “art.” Graphic Designer 1 works for companies and corporations on projects such as vinyl record covers, stickers for snowboarding gear, and art for his university. He differentiates graphic design from art, yet there are still elements involved in both. His ideas for designs are pulled from street art and advertising he sees in his community, in magazines, and artists as well. “Design isn’t so concerned with fine art, it’s just concerned with visual communication. Designers accept [almost all] forms of art and communication and appropriate them.” (Graphic Designer 1). Design for him was all-encompassing of art and communication, whereas fine art focuses on aesthetic and looks down on graffiti as a “low-brow” art because it doesn’t follow the same styles or rules. “Many artists...don’t want their artwork to be limited by the political and artistic connotations of graffiti. What connects all the artists, however, is innovation, originality and an appreciation of the medium” (Manco 91). Limiting artists themselves—or the genres within which they work—is one reason I argue that graffiti art falls into a new genre of art and communication where works are not limited by certain connotations or rules.

But what happens when graffiti artists become popular and their works become valued at thousands of dollars? Graffiti art has begun to emerge successful in the fine art world. The before-mentioned Banksy is one of these successful writers. Writing and painting on the streets for a decade or more, he has gone from an ignored stenciling and graffiti artist, to having his pieces viewed and sold around the world. Documentaries and books have been made about him and his pieces have become so famous that people take down entire city walls to preserve his work. Another example is the graffiti artist Blek. He is an artist similar to Banksy, as his canvas art usually ranges between \$10,000 and \$50,000 a piece. Babington argues that this price range puts them in the “category of luxury items and divorcing them from their connection with the street. This is indicative of the massive increases in the sale value of street art works around the world since 2007” (63). From my research, I can conclude that social commentary was a main element in the success of these artist’s pieces. The works had a message, a purpose, a plan, and a design instead of just a pretty picture, differentiating it from just fine art.

Seeing the boom in popularity of graffiti and street art, galleries such as the National Gallery of Australia have recognized the realm of graffiti and street art as very valid forms of fine art, and ones to be displayed. In 2004, the National Gallery of Australia was, “asking artists to print their street stencils on paper” in order to preserve and display them. Babington states that “these

works of art essentially become important documents or records of imagery originally intended for the street” (45).

It would not be unusual to walk into an art gallery in 2016 and see some form of graffiti art. Some of these include The Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), The Brick Lane Gallery (London), National Hellenic Museum (Chicago), Gallery 69 (New York), and many others across the globe. Although the fine art world mostly frowns upon graffiti and street art as an illegitimate and illegal form of art, it can still be found in galleries around the world. For those that don't feature this artwork, Journalism Professor 1 says “they either do not accept the form or do not understand what to do with it”.

Graffiti art itself can be successful in the expression and inspiration it evokes in the creative process. Graphic Designer 1 argued that street art provides the inspiration needed for fine artists, designers, and marketers to gain successful inspiration in their own designs. Designers, fine artists, graffiti artists, and technical writers can all draw inspiration from the street (Technical Writer 2). The area that bridges the gap between art and communication is graffiti art. It's a different genre of art and a different genre of communication, but graffiti art combines the two.

Babington states that “street art is both an expression of our culture and a counterculture in itself. ‘Communication’ has become a modern mantra: the city streets shout with billboards, fly posters, and corporate advertising, all vying for our attention. They almost invite a subversive response” (1). Babington discusses advertising platforms and the ability of street artists to advertise emotions and thoughts on the same playing field as major corporations. Their art is in the streets, using the literal surfaces of the earth to disseminate messages and invite response from the public. No other art form is like street art. This stems from the lack of structure or controlled attributed to it, so creators are free to do just that: create. “What we are witnessing...is the meeting of popular culture and high art—a mix that has never sat comfortably with the art world despite decades of exhaustive debate” (Babington 45). This mix in graffiti art is becoming popular and successful in professional communication methods and design.

Professional Communication Related to Graffiti Art

(Commonalities and Differences Between the Two)

Many of the interviewees related graffiti art to professional communication by the stylistic procedures used in making graffiti and its design qualities. Journalism Professor 1 related graffiti art to social media—just one form of communication, but one that's “highly stylized.”

Professional Communication Professor 1 told me that a message takes crafting, care, and special tools. “I think anyone can write on a wall, but for it to be professional, it's usually something you're paid to do. Not a lot of graffiti artists are paid—but there is definitely art, skill, and technique there.”

Most street art pieces are produced to convey an argument and a message. The form of “wildstyle” for example, is a form that many people cannot interpret unless they have been accepted into the culture of street art. Professional Communication Professor 1 said wildstyle is intended to be highly stylized so it resists outsiders understanding the message. “It's interesting to push forms of communication in non-traditional ways that make people think about why we do things a certain way”. Just as in fine art, photography, social media, marketing, etc., there are

rules, guidelines, and knowledge that must be known to understand how a genre functions and communicates.

I personally speak Spanish fluently. Before I had learned the language, I remember many people speaking around me in Spanish and all the words seemed like gibberish to me; fake words with no meaning whatsoever. Listening to something I couldn't understand made me ignore it and put my attention elsewhere. Only after I learned the language, was I able to understand conversations and meaning. Street art is much like this. Once a person learns how to read wildstyle graffiti or graffiti messages, the practice become recognizable, comfortable, and easy. Those who can't interpret the strokes, colors, lines, and direction might just ignore it. The point of graffiti art is to make meaning of what's around us in the public sphere. That might take actually learning the language of graffiti art to fully understand it's purpose, just as any other language. Just as Spanish once meant very little to me, it made incredible sense to me after taking the time to learn and understand it.

Communication in Stencil Graffiti Art

(A Graffiti Art Example)

In my experience, one of the best examples of street art conveying messages—or using professional communication—comes through stenciling. I realize that this is only one perspective, but I would also add that stenciling is one of the most popular forms of graffiti art there is (Babington, 1). A stencil is a template that can be sprayed or painted on many surfaces time after time. Stencils can also be mass produced in poster form and is a popular medium for social commentary and opposition to governments and institutions. The art of stenciling relates directly to professional communication as it focuses on shapes and messages in this form. It can be reproduced rapidly, just like current marketing advertisements. An analogy of this reproduction is similar to that of magazines that are reproduced monthly or weekly, reaching a large portion of the population. The same idea is used by corporate entities and street artists alike in disseminating their message to as many people as possible.

Babington writes that “stencil art in the early 2000s was largely political. It gave rise to sardonic slogans and altered imagery, heavily referencing the signifiers and appropriating the techniques of corporate communications to question political corruption, crime, and class economics” (75). Early stencil art was a way of appropriating conventional forms of news media and advertising, and then using the same exact methods, words, and the advertisements themselves to create a different meaning. An additional example is another form of street art that recycles and recontextualizes typography and imagery of advertisements. This recontextualizing art will take apart a billboard, cut it up, and puzzle it back together to make a new advertisement—usually in opposition to the corporation that put up the original. Stenciling does this as well, saturating a city with images and messages. Stenciling is one of the most effective modern forms of graffiti and street art by the sheer volume of people it can reach in a short amount of time.

About stenciling, Manco writes that graffiti creates opposition and an opportunity “for people to question the meaning of image and its place in public space. ...Ultimately, stencil [graffiti] art operates as an intervention in the mass saturation of advertising and infotainment on the street” (75). If the writer is skilled, an advertisement can be changed so professionally that the public can't tell it's been tampered with. Stencil art communicates similar to professional

communication methods in marketing, advertising, technical communication, branding, etc., including the fact that usually the individual author of the piece is unknown.

It's All in a Name

(Signing Our Names in Art and Design)

Journalism Professor 1 spoke about professional communication and compared it to the anonymity of graffiti art work. He believed graffiti art takes on many of the qualities of not only art but also the professional genres relating to media, communication, and advertising. One of these is the importance of the name.

Journalist 1 believed that tagging, wildstyle, art pieces, and more really come down to the same concept of why we post what we did during our day online or blog about our life. "It's the same [driving force] that a kid growing up in the early 80s and 70s in New York would tag a train for. It's self-expression—that we have a need to live on somehow."

Journalist 1 explained that centuries ago art was commissioned by the wealthy, and one of the only groups that had money was the church (such as the Church of England). The art was considered a glorification to God and not the artist. Because it was artwork for "God," associating artist names on the paintings would have "taken away from the glory of God. The signing of the name came about with the Renaissance and the new boom in art forms" (Journalist 1). Now, it is very common and quite expected for artists to sign their names on any work they do. Whether it is a famous artist, designer, professional, or average citizen, the work we produce is almost always associated with our names. Our product is who we are and what we represent. As a professional, everything I make must be quality, because what I produce is how I will be viewed by the professional world. This was one of the first things I learned when I began my studies in Professional and Technical Communication. Journalist 1 focused on the concept of the signing of an individual's name because of its professional significance. Signing a name is common in the fine art world. The professional communication world usually signs a name, but the name is that of a corporation. Journalist 1 told me that graffiti art bridges the gap between the two as writers and artists sign their name, but it is usually a pseudo-name or one that represents an entire group. It varies between a personal name and a collective name, thus putting it in a new sphere that still connects to both art and professional communication practices regarding names.

Journalist 1 argues that graffiti art "acts very similar to professional communication, especially when that communication is sending messages to an audience, and that audience is feeling or acting from it." Journalist 1 spoke to me about Ralph Cintron's book *Angels Town*, which discusses his study of graffiti art in the 80s in an area just south of Chicago. "He looks at the different gang symbols and names and they are very clearly marking territory. Those messages are meant to convey, 'this is my workplace...this is my territory and not yours'" (Professional Communication Professor 1). Name markings outline territory under dispute by rival gangs, and it's something similar to professional licenses between professionals and the workplace. Journalism Professor 1 states that marking a territory, or saying that somebody was here—"John was here," or "Sally was here—" they are staking a claim that they've traveled somewhere or seen something." He explained that vikings were marking territory and writing on walls 2000–3000 years ago. This goes along with United Kingdom burial grounds where viking graffiti was also found and deciphered. Many markings were from people who lived hundreds or thousands

of years ago and yet they were stating that they were there and they existed. Professional Communication Professor 1 states that “this idea of the signing of the name—or personal branding—has much to do with graffiti and street art in our day.”

The interesting concept of signing a name is that graffiti artists don't usually leave their own name, rather one they've created as I mentioned. The writing of the name— “like saying, ‘John was here—’ is this distillation of that renaissance idea of the individual where the name itself is the art” (Journalist).

Names and Corporations

Regarding names, there are at least two different components. You either work for your personal name and brand or for another person. For example, I can make my own commercial products and start my own company naming it after myself, “Miner Enterprises,” or some such title. Everything I create and those below me will be attributed to my brand name. I could be a digital marketer for Apple and all the work I do for them goes by their logo and the Apple brand itself. This example would be common for a professional communicator, as many work for a corporate name or brand. This is much like graffiti art. Many artists paint their names (usually pseudo names) and build a following stemming from that. Many don't sign a name at all and their work must be interpreted by its unique design or not interpreted at all. Many professional communicators work seemingly in secret, much like graffiti artists by the sheer fact that much of the work that goes on behind the scenes of a major corporation, business, website, or even phone application, is all done out of public view. An example would be Banksy's stencils. The style of his stencils all are very similar, so a person would recognize a piece as being Banksy's or someone trying to copy his style. Many of his stencils will have a spot of red paint somewhere in the piece and others might have a blek-le-rat picture (a rat painting) that is notably Banksy's.

With popularity and talent though, some from the crowd can become known for their individual work, and when that happens, they are now called by their own names. An example would be Tony Hawk. He is not just a skater, but he is THE skater for many teenagers who look up to him. Is this not the same with street art? You have hundreds and thousands of street writers all over the place, many whose names we will never know. But those who stand out and whose work captivates many with its message and design, are the ones that become famous. Shepard Fairey is an artist that gives his name to the OBEY stencils and street art seen around the world. In the case of Banksy, all the public know is the Banksy name instead of his actual name. Banksy himself has never revealed his face to the public either, so his pseudo-life and name is famous while his real life and name remains a mystery.

Being a professional communicator and technical writer has helped me to see the correlation between professional communication and graffiti/street art in many variations. Professional communication and graffiti use similar methods, but are in different genres because there are variations in their designs. Both are areas of design in some form, and go through many of the same processes. Ideas are bounced between these genres and both flourish. I'm not just a graphic designer or a web designer, and I'm not just a writer or an editor. I do both, just as graffiti art exhibits may exhibit design and writing. From a graffiti artist's point of view, they might not be a fine artist, yet they are creating art in a different form; one that's full of color, life, messages, meaning, and sometimes just aesthetic appeal. For a professional communicator, they may

complete many projects for organizations, groups, and companies, yet their name is not always associated with what they actually do or the product they've produced; it's associated with the company that has hired them.

Fine art, graffiti art, and professional communication all target certain audiences and that focus is what drives a piece to be successful. Technical Writer 1 stated, "I definitely think graffiti and street art communicate. I think it depends on if your audience can translate the communication. Some graffiti art, I think it's very clear what they're trying to communicate." In order to be understood, one must have some sort of history or understanding with the genre. Without understanding, graffiti art is ineffective. The same is true if a corporation is trying to sell themselves but they don't understand their audience. Technical Writer 1 spoke to me of her time spent in New York City and her encounters with graffiti and street art there. She had to Google several images she saw on walls to figure out what they were—the meaning behind what was written. Once she was able to do that, those writings became effective communication for her. She understood. "If the [artist's] purpose was to attract attention, or to try to evoke a feeling—that can happen even if you don't know what their true purpose was. No matter what, I think it goes back to, 'is the creator achieving their goal?'" (Technical Writer 1). If it's effective communication, then the goal of the creator will be met by the audience understanding.

Corporate advertising and campaigns focus heavily on audience and how to communicate to them. In Chile, political campaigns advertise by painting the candidate's names on walls. The more walls that were spray-painted with their names, the more the locals knew them and wanted to vote for them. Do we see how this is related to corporate advertising? Both take place on the street and both are very effective; one is just commissioned and another is not. According to Chile though, this is an acceptable, effective, and legal means of advertising. Sanctioned graffiti and unsanctioned graffiti may look identical, but depends on the area of the world to whether it is accepted or not. In the United States, graffiti and street art is considered illegal and a misdemeanor, but more commissioned areas for graffiti art are popping up around the globe. As mentioned, there is a push-back from many state and local officials, but as graffiti gains popularity, attitudes towards the genre are changing and graffiti art is becoming more accepted and successful in the professional communication arena.

To better relate this to my first points of corporate advertising, I'd like to say that in both situations, the graffiti or billboards were all put up *without* the people's consent. In Chile, painting was done without the resident's permission and were very hard to take down by the locals, but it was an accepted form of advertising there and not illegal. Locals understood that the writing was done every year and many accepted that if they had a wall blank that they owned, that it was free to the public to use. In corporate advertising in the United States, we see billboards and advertisements plastered everywhere, but they are sanctioned and legal unless explicitly placed on someone's owned, private property. Whether these advertisements are a nuisance or not, many are never asked permission to have them in their public space even though they are not within their public property. Now are those advertisements graffiti art? No, but they can be assaulting to our eyes. "If I'm a mother driving with my small children and I pass a huge advertisement featuring a half-naked model, is that fair that my children see that too? Was I prepared to see that, or did it just jump out at me, like it was intended to do?" (Journalism Professor 1). These advertisements may not be graffiti, but they can invoke the same feelings of

someone personally writing on your wall or marking their territory without your consent. Advertisements and graffiti use the same methods and are successful, but are different genres of communication.

Graffiti Art as a New Genre (The Point of this Thesis)

Throughout this thesis, I have focused on three main areas while providing commentary from interviews and research alongside my claims. One has been to discuss the push-back of graffiti art from professional and technical communication professions and why. Another was to discuss the successful emergence of graffiti art in the communication world despite that pushback. My third—and one to be discussed more fully here—is my argument for a third space of art and communication where graffiti art can be considered a new genre of professional communication. This genre specifically focuses on the presence of graffiti art—or its influence—in marketing, advertising, and design.

Illustrator 1 learned from Aristotle that, “art is an expression of an individual’s culture”. Art goes hand and hand with the written word and communication in many forms. In most instances, the interpretation of a design, advertisement, note, or a picture cannot be interpreted without the written communication of its meaning. For successful design, art and communication are inseparable, and many times—if not all—meaning is enhanced by combining the two forms. Speaking from what the professionals interviewed said, all considered graffiti art as a type of professional communication. Each interviewee discussed with me that acceptance of graffiti art varies though depending on each profession and its presence within that profession. Graphic Designer 1 told me artists gain inspiration from street art and also that marketers, advertisers, technical writers, and more gain inspiration from graffiti art communication methods. Both art and communication professionals are influenced by street art but they just don’t know what to categorize it as (Technical Writer 1, Journalist 1, Art Professor 1). From my research and personal experience in all art, graffiti art, and professional communication, I thought to categorize graffiti art in it’s own new genre. This is a third space where art and communication are working together in the public sphere but the work is not necessarily considered “fine art” or “professional communication” all by itself. A new genre allows graffiti art to flourish without fine artists or professional communicators losing their own specific sphere of what their work is considered.

Technical Writer 1 came to one conclusion that I did: “I think you have to be both [an artist and communicator]! As a successful professional communicator, you have to be able to cross different genre lines and adapt to what your audience needs. This concept of the genre is the most important of all. According to Google, a genre is “a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style or subject matter.” A genre is a classification of some sort; a category, class, a group, or a set. Graffiti and street art bridge the gap between professional communication and fine art as a new category. Having a new genre—and recognizing it as such—is the way for professionals to accommodate new ideas and rules in design and communication, while using both to their advantage.

I’ll use an example of binaries to illustrate this third space. The Merriam-Webster dictionary states that a binary is “something made of or based on two things or parts.” This can be

something such as a binary star or a binary number system. A binary-star system is when two stars revolve around one another due to their gravitational pulls towards one another. And example is also a Venn diagram where a white oval on one side overlaps a black oval on the other to create a gray area in the middle. Graffiti and street art is just that: the gray area where street intervention pieces, advertisements, multimedia designs, social media, and more could fit in the area of professional communication.

In my interviews, one spoke of author Carolyn Miller and what she wrote about “genre” in technical communication and rhetoric in general. A genre is “a typified response to a recurring social situation” (Professional Communication Professor). So if we take graffiti and street art for example, this style of art and communication began in New York from basic tagging and evolved into murals and pieces of art with accompanying words. As the art began evolving even more with typography, basic principles of design, graphic artistry, and crossing the boundaries of states, continents, and cultures—it became a genre. It’s something people do for a living. It’s something many people see on a daily basis and react to. It’s so widespread that it’s regulated and must be in a category by itself—a new genre of art and communication in the design world.

Graffiti artist Phase 2 wrote that graffiti has reached all around the world. “When has something else had an impact like that on every ethnic group in the entire world? You don’t even have to be able to talk English. All you gotta do is get a spraycan and paint something” (Jenkins 91). Graffiti art is still considered vandalism in many areas, while it is praised as a beautiful form of art in others. This third space of art comes down to preferences of individuals, societies, and professionals as to if they will consider it professional or not, commissioned or illegal. It’s definitely a genre and it’s definitely a form of art and communication; whether a company uses it, has designs inspired by it, or communicates through it is a major determining factor as well. The public is recognizing street art as a form of fine art once it’s reached a certain popularity or communication level as can be seen by the cost of certain pieces mentioned earlier.

Just as new trends and topics take the forefront in media, graffiti is constantly being changed.

Babington writes that “street artists operate in an environment of constant regeneration, reinterpretation and collaboration, [so] they are accustomed...to the inevitable destruction of their work by natural elements, council workers and other graffiti writers and street artists” (41). Graffiti and street art has become a popular enough genre that there is legislation within states that govern its acceptability, legitimacy, and areas of proper use. If there is enough communication happening on the streets that there’s legislation and rules for graffiti art, then it is definitely in a category of art and professional communication.

Design, art, and professional communication are continually evolving and adapting to different trends. Professional Communication Professor 1 stated “graffiti is definitely a genre, and it’s very artistic. I think this is something we can easily grab metaphors from in terms of its use in social media.” Journalist 1 said art “pre-stages and predates what often becomes popular culture, communication, and the way we live our lives; it’s all first done in art.” As mentioned, this can be related to social media. Technical Writing Professor 1 stated that you could “can break graffiti up into genres and when you do, you will find a genre that matches Facebook”. Many corporations, social media networks and advertising campaigns either use graffiti and street art in

their designs and ads, or they have used concepts from this genre. In relation to social media platforms using graffiti art concepts, I will use Facebook as an example.

1. You can “tag” your friends.
2. You write on other people’s walls and you check what has been written on yours.
3. You accept or decline friends into your social media circle.
4. Your posts are soon covered up by other posts and pictures (regeneration).
5. Sometimes posts from others are unwanted (such as ads).
6. People are free to post anything they want. Offensive material will be reported and covered up or erased in most cases.

These are just a few examples, but they all relate directly to graffiti art. “Tagging” is essentially a street art term. Many work in street art crews that you must be invited into. Artists write on walls and tag their names to attribute their signature to a work. Many works are either left alone or are covered up by other tags, murals, and pieces. You can always go back and find traces of past posts, pictures, and time periods on social media. Relating to graffiti art, many times you can return to a site of a piece and find layers of graffiti art still there although it’s been covered up.

Graffiti and street art were never meant to be permanent forms of art in this third space though. It is uncontrollable in most aspects, and it’s this idea of “semi-permanence” that makes it relevant to design, advertising, and social media today (Journalist 1). When it comes to social media, advertising, or even a tech comm project at work, something only has meaning while it is up. Soon it’s covered by something else. Journalist 1 made the point that “not everything goes on forever, but these are all our feeble attempts as human beings in a quest for immortality. It’s why we post on walls; it’s why we write on walls. It’s a big driving force in all that we do”.

Graffiti art takes on the basic principles of design I’ve learned in my document design and graphic design courses: typography, alignment, shape, color, contrast, proximity, and many others. The process—much like design, art, and writing—involves idea formulation, sketching, a direction and purpose, and the materials and time to construct the project. In many cases now, corporations such as Young & Rubican, Mediaedgencia, Sony, Spin, and countless others have used graffiti and street art in advertising products such as music, tea, energy drinks, clothing, and magazines.

Corporations use street art as a means of marketing and advertising, and designers use trends found in graffiti art when making digital designs, print, and multimedia designs. When it comes to art though, Illustrator 1 made a noteworthy connection that Basquiat taught Andy Warhol and his work is a form of graffiti pop art. Graffiti art is out publicly on the streets to the view of young and old without regards to culture or race. “Whether intimidated by it or not, to teach a subject that students might see as only pertaining to the ‘hoodlums,’ confines them in their ignorance. Instead of ignoring it or banishing it, the most important thing to do is to learn from its stylistic literature and purpose” (Illustrator 1).

With art, there has been push-back throughout the centuries to different art forms in the Hellenistic era, the renaissance, baroque era, impressionism and cubism eras among many others. In professional communication, social media platforms and marketing campaigns can take years

to formulate and become popular such as SnapChat, Twitter, and Facebook. With each genre, there is pushback from many until the genre is better understood. As graffiti and street art becomes more legitimized, more professional entities are seeing the graphic possibilities of the medium and push-back is subsiding. The changing of contexts from the street to advertising, propaganda, and professional design also means a shift from the illegal and punishable to the legal and celebrated.

As a multimedia designer and a technical communication graduate, I would never have gotten to the point I have in my professional experience were it not for my encounters with graffiti and street art and the creativity that has stemmed from its influence. Art students, professional communicators, rhetoricians, marketers, advertisers, and designers alike can all learn from this new genre that combines both art and communication as a means of effective, legitimate communication that crosses the boundaries of companies, countries, cultures, and professional areas of expertise. Graffiti art is continuing to gain momentum in media and advertising through professional communication methods. Graffiti art is not just fine art and it's not simply professional communication. It is its own genre where graffiti art diverges from the normal standards of art but converges with communication, achieving success in marketing, branding, social media, information sharing, and the communication world as a whole.

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Project Reflection

This thesis focused on a topic I was passionate about and was a culmination of several years of work. For the first couple of years of my university experience, I struggled to find what topic I truly wanted to study that actually piqued my interest. I focused on Spanish projects at the time I started at Utah State University, as I was then seeking to be bilingual (and eventually became bilingual). During a study abroad trip to Europe in 2012, I saw many pieces of graffiti art and even was able to view graffiti art in the making by street artists themselves. My interest in this new area of art sky-rocketed, and reached an even higher level of interest during a religious mission I served for 18 months in Latin America (specifically Chile). I saw absolutely breathtaking graffiti art during that year and a half abroad. I learned that many places in Latin America (including Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia that I also visited) used graffiti art as a means of advertising, communication, and campaigning for official village, city, and country office. I had never seen art on a wall used in such a way to communicate and advertise professionally. All I had viewed in Europe and Latin America had me reflecting on my own interests in art and communication, as well as my fields of study in Professional and Technical Communication and Multimedia.

In Professional and Technical Communication, most of my assignments and studies have focused on content writing for organizations, businesses, and for class. Some of the work I've done has been website design, coding, document design, writing reports, grants, manuals, and memos. My major mainly focused on writing and communication. With Multimedia, my projects and studies focused on graphic design, website design (again), videography, photography, sketching, art, story boards, painting, and vivid colors in designs. Both have focused on how to communicate and how to reach an audience through a wide variety of methods, but both have usually involved both art and communication to advertise and market effectively. During my time abroad, I connected graffiti art to marketing and advertising because of the art and communication components that were used to make that advertising successful there. The more I studied graffiti art, the more I saw that advertising and marketing gain inspiration from the new genre. Social media pulls direct ideas from graffiti art and graffiti art terms. Marketing strategies have begun to involve street art tactics and graffiti designs for major businesses and names all across the world.

I decided that because my other honors projects had involved a different language (mostly Spanish), that I would focus on a different language of communication for the thesis. So once I pinpointed graffiti art and its relation to both art and communication as my main interest as an undergraduate, I focused all of my projects and research into that. I took my camera with me in my travels—even as a missionary abroad—to gather photographs of all that I saw. I checked out and bought book after book on the subjects of art, graffiti art, and communication and read many books since July 2014. I gained quite the solid base of understanding on the subject and was very excited to meet with my mentor over the last year and write my culminating thesis. I originally had about 100 pages of content that I wrote for this project, and narrowed that down to about 45 pages that my mentor read. From there, the thesis was reviewed and revised over and over again to get it to the final product of a little over 10,000 words. The process of cutting and revising was actually harder than writing the thesis itself because I wanted to keep so much.

The problems with my thesis topic was that there are many different views and opinions on the subject. In some areas of the world, graffiti art is illegal, and others it is not. Artists, communicators, marketers, advertisers, and designers will all have very different views of graffiti and street art. Everyone I interviewed had varying opinions on every topic I discussed, but they were equal on many aspects concerning communication and art coming together for marketing and advertising purposes. In the end, I had to use all of my research and background to make up my own decision on what I defined as art, graffiti art, and communication, and how to defend my views and positions. All of my research may be completely contradictory to someone else's views, but that is the nature of my topic. Some will agree with what I wrote and some won't, but I have many hours of research and interviews to back up my claims, and that is what matters.

I presented my research at the Student Research Symposium in April 2016 to students and staff members at USU. I have explained and presented my research to many (especially potential employers), and it was an amazing undergraduate experience. Having an interest that I got to pursue in-depth and have it be a part of my university experience was great for me and broadened my skill set, understanding of a different culture, and research, writing, and editing proficiency. Many skills have been developed through my undergraduate experience in the Honors program, and the thesis was the most important component of that experience. I loved the topics I researched and wrote about, and not every student can say that.