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**Adolescent Graffiti Vandalism:  
Exploring the Root Causes**

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By

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
The Problem of Graffiti Case Study - Literature Review .....	5
Research Design & Methodology .....	16
Results & Analysis .....	19
Summary & Conclusion .....	27
Recommendations.....	30
Acknowledgements .....	34
References .....	35
Appendices .....	38
Professional Survey Sample.....	39
Youth Survey Sample.....	40
Professional Data Responses.....	41
Youth Survey Part II Response.....	44

## **Abstract**

The city of Oxnard, California and its battle against graffiti vandalism is the subject of this case study. Oxnard is a microcosm of what many cities are being forced into nationwide in the perplexing battle for graffiti-free communities. With so many taxpayer dollars at stake, understanding the root causes became a priority for cities. A survey was prepared asking professional individuals who work with graffiti vandals to list five factors they believe cause kids to become involved in graffiti vandalism. From those survey results, a youth survey was prepared to ask young people involved in graffiti vandalism why they felt kids become involved in graffiti vandalism. The two groups of survey results were then compared and analyzed. The results of the two surveys were almost the exact opposite of each other. The professionals see graffiti as a parental control issue and the youth see it as a peer or social activity. What causes the conflict between the two groups is the criminal aspect of graffiti, which is the destruction of property. If the criminal vandalism issue of graffiti was removed, there would be nothing to debate.

## **Introduction**

Graffiti is an economic and environmental crime against a community and its residents. It decreases property values, needlessly absorbs taxpayer dollars, creates blight, and attracts other forms of crime. Graffiti is an international epidemic that costs governmental entities billions of dollars each year and has become the most common form of vandalism.

Graffiti vandals know no boundaries, committing their crime wherever an opportunity presents itself. This crime has progressed beyond the use of a common spray can. For example, offenders now add corrosives to paint which permanently etches into concrete and glass. These acts of vandalism are extremely destructive to the business community. In many cases it results in costly repairs or replacement of the business' windows. Another of the newest trends is called "slap tagging" and refers to vandals applying adhesive stickers to street signs, poles, windows, utility boxes, and a host of the other surfaces. These stickers are difficult to remove and often require the replacement of street signs, adding one more level of cost to taxpayers.

The social and personal consequences to the victims of graffiti vandalism run deep and are far reaching. It strains the connections that bind a community and define generations. "There is also an enormous human cost. The victim of vandalism experiences a sense of having been singled out by an unkind fate, a heightened sense of vulnerability, of not being safe even on his own grounds...The victim of vandalism becomes more alienated from his neighbors..more fearful..and more hostile and suspicious of strangers, especially young people" (Goldstein, 1996, p. 11. Reilly 1978).

It is believed a wide range of factors contribute to adolescent involvement in graffiti vandalism. A United States Department of Justice study on graffiti states motives for some types of conventional graffiti may include anger and hostility toward society, and the vandalism fulfills some personal psychological need. It goes on to state that graffiti may arise from boredom, despair, resentment, failure, and/or frustration, in which case it may be vindictive or malicious

(Weisel, 2002, pg 7). Other causes may be peer pressure, lack of adult supervision, notoriety, claiming territory and gang or tagging crew affiliation. Another study states that young people get involved in graffiti for socializing or belonging and that it is a positive experience of complex emotions rather than malicious acts that motivate some young people (Halsey and Yonug, 2006, pg. 283).

The difficulty with graffiti is that there is no single motive or influence in life that motivates these vandals to act. Each young person involved in graffiti is an individual with various complex emotional needs and reasons for their participation in graffiti crimes. In addition, the combination of home life environment and psychological factors that may influence these young people will vary like the fingerprint that identifies each of them as a separate individual. Therefore, any potential solution to address or manage the problem of graffiti for governmental agencies will not be one size fits all.

The focus of this case study is graffiti and the city of Oxnard's efforts to combat graffiti vandalism in the community.

### **The Problem of Graffiti Case Study – Literature Review**

Graffiti is a subject that triggers emotional ire in the minds of governmental officials and residents everywhere. Nationwide, communities are being forced into spending scarce resources to defend their neighborhoods against the ill effects of graffiti vandalism. In many cities graffiti vandalism is ranked high on the long list of public safety priorities right next to homicides, drugs, and gangs.

“Walls covered with graffiti suggest tears in the fabric of society. It's synonymous with a loss of control. It says that there is a group of people who can and will destroy property and who can show how ineffective security is”, says James O. Gibson, a senior associate with the Urban Institute (Henderson, 1994, pg. 1). It is for this reason graffiti vandalism will remain a priority for many communities and its residents.

The subject of graffiti polarizes the generations. It is viewed as urban art and spoke of as a form of expression by the young people familiar with some graffiti activities (Halsey & Young, 2006, pg. 284). Yet it is criminal vandalism to adult society. Even within the graffiti culture there is a split in the definition of graffiti. Some graffiti participants believe it is true urban art while others within the graffiti culture see certain participants as talent-less vandals. What determines the difference is the complexity of the graffiti itself. The artists consider themselves graffiti writers and taggers are considered graffiti vandals.

For society, it is the placement of graffiti that determines the difference between graffiti art and graffiti vandalism Goldstein, 1996, pg. 21. This split in the definition of graffiti within its own culture also reveals an even larger variation in the motives for this type of predominantly teenage activity (Kan, 2001) (Horowitz & Tobaly, 2003). Boredom, anger, peer pressure, a sense of satisfaction, social belonging, lack of parental interaction and many other factors have been explored in recent years. Governments and scholars continue to probe and investigate the reasons for this activity in an attempt to stem the loss of financial resources and to prevent this perplexing crime.

The Internet has helped to spread the knowledge of graffiti from both a positive and a negative perspective. From a negative perspective, graffiti vandals use it to spread information about their activities. From a positive perspective, professionals use networking as an important method of developing solutions to complex problems and the subject of graffiti is no exception. The NoGraf Network Incorporated at [www.nograffiti.com](http://www.nograffiti.com) connects legions of international anti-graffiti professionals, vendors and program administrators all focused on the common goal of a graffiti free environment. The network's President and Executive Director Randy Campbell is a retired California Highway Patrol Officer who has been involved in several high profile graffiti investigations since 1988. The network's mission is to contribute to the creation of safe and clean communities, the healthy development of youth, the improvement of quality of life and the

prevention of graffiti vandalism. Mr. Campbell has gained considerable expertise in the field and is a respected keynote speaker on the subject of graffiti. This network provides a forum for professionals working in the field of graffiti prevention to share information on a national and international level.

By 2005 the damage caused by graffiti vandalism had been increasing and graffiti was becoming more prevalent in the city of Oxnard, California. By 2007, the cost to the taxpayers of the city of Oxnard to remove graffiti was over **\$985,000**. Oxnard's city code defines graffiti as follows, "Any inscription, word, figure, or design that is marked, etched, scratched, drawn or painted on any real or personal property of another without the prior written permission of the owner of the property"(City of Oxnard Code of Ordinances).

The city of Oxnard covers 25.3 square miles and with a population of 192,997 it is the largest city in Ventura County. Approximately 31 percent of the city's population is under the age of 18 years of age (2000 U.S. Census). Nationally, the at-risk age group for graffiti crimes is young males between the ages 15 to 23 (Weisel, 2002, pg.10). In 2008, there were 417 individuals arrested for graffiti vandalism in the city. It is estimated that 84% or 347 of these arrests are committed by juveniles less than 18 years of age.

According to the Oxnard police graffiti unit, there are 413 active tagging crews operating in the city with a tagging crew membership totaling 4,663. There are 1,677 "oners" or individuals that have no affiliation with a tagging crew or gang. Also contributing to Oxnard's vandalism problem are some six documented street gangs that actively engage in graffiti crimes; these individuals typically deface property to intimidate others and to promote the image of their gang. The appearance of gang graffiti can leave residents feeling uneasy and unsafe (Ross & Jang, 2000).

The Oxnard Police Department has recognized an emerging trend within the city that links the activities of tagging crews with criminal behavior normally associated with criminal

street gangs. This recent trend includes alliances between criminal street gangs and tagging crews. *Tag banging* (Henderson, 1994, pg. 2), composed of tagging crews whose behavior goes beyond vandalism and into the realm of violent crime is becoming more prevalent. *Tag-bangers* participate in violent initiation activities that are typically associated with criminal street gangs. This violent behavior also manifests itself in other forms, which includes violent felonious assaults between taggers, often including the use of bats, knives, and firearms. Research indicates that adolescents are more likely to engage in delinquent and violent behavior as they become more involved in peer culture and associate in groups that use alcohol and illegal drugs and participate in delinquency activity, such as vandalism. Violence is learned and developed through peer interaction in the same manner as other forms of delinquency (Daane, 2003, pg 6). Since the year 2006, there have been at least three homicides in the city of Oxnard that were directly attributed to taggers. In order to prevent graffiti crimes from growing, Oxnard identified dedicated law enforcement resources to investigate and track these crimes. Graffiti cases by nature are complex and difficult to investigate. The dedication of law enforcement resources has increased arrests and convictions for graffiti crimes in the community.

When it comes to graffiti a picture is not worth a thousand words. The graffiti evidence photographs do not do justice when it comes to quantifying the damage that is caused or the more expansive consequences to the surrounding area such as additional crime or economic losses. Evidentiary photographs also do not reveal the true financial impact to the city or the amount of effort needed to keep this crime in check. The residents of the city of Oxnard were tired of seeing the scars of graffiti vandalism in their community. Just covering or removing the graffiti from sight was no longer sufficient. For the city of Oxnard, the challenges were to identify and mobilize a variety of resources needed to create a comprehensive and coordinated approach to eradicate graffiti in the city. The city's response was the formation of the *Graffiti Task Force* and in doing so provided the leadership to address graffiti vandalism not just in

Oxnard but throughout Ventura County.

In March of 2005, the Oxnard City Council made the eradication of graffiti one of its top priorities. By resolution it formed the Graffiti Task Force to create a comprehensive, multidisciplinary plan to address graffiti in a coordinated citywide effort. The *Graffiti Task Force* mission is, to create clean, safe, prosperous and attractive neighborhoods by eradicating graffiti in the city of Oxnard through Prevention, Intervention and Enforcement. The Oxnard City Council felt it was equally important to hold the parents of the graffiti vandals financially accountable for the damage their children cause and the resulting waste of taxpayer dollars.

The task force assembles city and community stakeholders on a monthly basis to address graffiti efforts in the community. The stakeholders included are:

- City Manager's Office (Task Force oversight)
- City Attorney's Office (Graffiti legal issues)
- Police Department (Enforcement)
- Graffiti Action Program (GAP) (Graffiti removal)
- City Corps Youth Leadership Program (Community service supervision)
- Code Compliance Division (Enforcement of City Ordinances for graffiti)
- Various Divisions of Public Works (Support graffiti removal efforts as needed)
- Residents

The task force meetings are chaired by the Mayor and a city council member serves as Vice-Chair. All meetings are open to the public and expanded to include the attendance of important partner agencies such as the Ventura County District Attorney's Office, and the Ventura County Probation Agency.

As a first step, the city reviewed and updated all city ordinances and fines involving graffiti vandalism. The ordinances now include specific definitions, removal criteria, and increased civil penalties for graffiti violations. Oxnard's Code Compliance Division plays a key role in enforcing the city's revised anti-graffiti ordinances.

On July 14, 2005, the city held a public kick-off rally to present the *Graffiti Task Force* "You Spray..You Pay" anti-graffiti campaign. This event was to let the community know that the

city was taking a zero tolerance stance against graffiti vandalism and to empower the community into action in support of this effort. A community grass-roots effort has the strongest chance at succeeding in empowering a community to address an issue (Perkins, 1995, pg. 768). The task force created a multi-dimensional community outreach effort. To begin with, the city created a professional community outreach video created entitled “Graffiti Hurts”, to educate residents about the city’s graffiti prevention efforts and how they can get involved. This community outreach video won a bronze Telly Award at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Telly Awards in 2007([www.tellyawards.com](http://www.tellyawards.com)). The city’s “Graffiti Hurts” video currently airs on the city’s 24-hour government channel in an effort to continue to invite our residents in become involved. In conjunction with the city’s Graffiti Hurts video, the city created a 24 hour hotline to encourage residents to report graffiti vandalism. The city’s Graffiti Hotline number is publicized as part of the Graffiti Hurts video so that all residents could become familiar with this hot line number as a source of graffiti information.

The *Graffiti Task Force* website at [www.oxnardwatch.org](http://www.oxnardwatch.org) serves as a comprehensive resource for our residents, business community, and partnering agencies by providing access to all of the task force informational materials. All *Graffiti Task Force* outreach materials are printed in English and Spanish in an effort to reach all our residents. In addition, the publications are available to download from the website for use by schools or neighborhood watch groups.

The fact that graffiti is a multi-layered issue means that governmental agencies will have to take a multi-layered approach to addressing the problem (Martin, Richardson, Bergen, Roeger and Allison, 2003). The task force created a comprehensive three-part approach to eradicate graffiti in the city. The city of Oxnard’s three-part plan to eradicate graffiti can also be looked at as a three step approach to deterring young people from the path of graffiti vandalism. The *Prevention, Intervention, and Enforcement* plan is outlined below:

## Prevention

Prevention is the first step. The city works to keep kids from becoming involved in graffiti vandalism. The core of prevention is community outreach and education. The outreach campaign has two objectives: 1) Educate residents about graffiti, to gain their support, and to encourage their participation, 2) Educate our young people about the connection between their actions and the consequences of graffiti vandalism, and teach them to make better choices.

The *Graffiti Task Force* identified all residents, city of Oxnard employees, school districts, the Ventura County Probation Agency, the District Attorney's Office, the Ventura County Superior Court, and our surrounding cities as necessary partners in our prevention campaign. The Graffiti Task Force Chair, Vice-Chair, City Manager, and Assistant Police Chief arranged a series of meetings with all the agencies listed above to begin a dialog on the severity of graffiti vandalism, the city's approach to the problem, and to enlist their help as partners in our cause. Simultaneously, other task force stakeholders provided presentations to the city's neighborhood councils, service groups and school district representatives. Interest grew as word began to spread about the city's "You Spray..You Pay" anti-graffiti campaign in Oxnard.

The city partnered with two school districts and mailed 30,000 single page flyers to all parents within the districts. The flyer detailed the city's zero tolerance for graffiti, provided resources for assistance, and informed parents that they could be held financially accountable for the graffiti vandalism damage their children caused. In addition, the *Graffiti Task Force* began "Measure Up" Anti-Graffiti campaign presentations at the elementary and middle school level. "Measure Up" encourages elementary school children ages K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade to respect property, identifies graffiti as a crime, encourages kids to avoid getting involved in acts of graffiti vandalism, and illustrates what happens to neighborhoods as they become vandalized by graffiti.

The Graffiti Task Force actively sought the participation of residents and subsequently

created the Graffiti Action Kit or GAK. The kits are provided free to residents, and include basic safety equipment, instructions, and supplies for removing simple incidents of graffiti. GAKs also include the city's graffiti hotline telephone number to report larger areas of graffiti for removal. GAKs are intended to empower our residents to take back their streets from graffiti vandals one neighborhood at a time.

The City of Oxnard has had a graffiti removal program since 1995. Under the Graffiti Task Force these efforts would be expanded to improve and expedite graffiti removal. Oxnard's Graffiti Action Program (GAP) is dedicated to removing graffiti throughout the city. The City's GAP vehicles patrol the community and remove graffiti sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. Studies show that if graffiti is removed within 24 to 48 hours, it is less likely to reoccur (Weisel, 2002, pg 23) Residents call the graffiti hotline to report graffiti locations for removal. GAP is a valuable resource for our residents and assists them with graffiti prevention methods. GAP is also responsible for photographing the graffiti thus and thus; providing the evidence needed to prosecute graffiti vandalism crimes.

### **Intervention**

The second step is Intervention. Once a young person has been identified as being involved in graffiti vandalism, the city works to break the young person's ties to future acts of graffiti vandalism by re-directing their activities through City Corps leadership and community service program. At City Corps, these young people are given an opportunity to learn important leadership and jobs skills, participate in peer counseling groups, and to complete their required hours. Positive experiences generate positive outcomes. Community service hours for graffiti vandals are an important component in the city of Oxnard's graffiti eradication effort and the redirection of our young people. It is an avenue for young people who have been convicted of graffiti crimes to redirect their energy and give back to their community. The Ventura County Probation Agency refers Oxnard's juvenile graffiti vandals and their parents to the Oxnard City

Manger's Office for a meeting. A *Graffiti Task Force* member talks to the youth, their parents or guardian about graffiti vandalism and the process for serving the court ordered community service hours with City Corps.

Social networks and text messaging has become a staple in daily adolescent communication. As part of the Measure Up school outreach, the Graffiti Task Force established a MySpace page in order to provide information to young people at their level. The goal of the MySpace page is to provide a one-stop source for free or low costs activities for young people to enjoy as alternatives to risky activities such as graffiti. On this page, flyers for festivals, dances, sports events, sports league sign ups and information on careers in local government are posted from a variety of community sources. It also contains information about the city's anti-graffiti efforts.

Convicted graffiti vandals can participate in the monthly Graffiti Task Force Operation Neighborhood Uplift events. The city of Oxnard believes graffiti attracts trash and trash attracts crime. This concept is similar to the famous broken windows study in community policing. This study states that if a window in a building is broken and is left un-repaired, soon all the windows will be broken. Untended property becomes fair game for mischievous behavior and crime (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). The *Graffiti Task Force* sponsors these neighborhoods clean ups and focus on the areas in the city which are deemed to be a prime target for graffiti vandals. Poorly lit alleyways tend to attract trash, illegal dumping, drug dealing, and are often used as a hang-out for young people. The city's Graffiti Task Force Administrator, the Police Department's Beat Teams, and the community work together to identify these problem areas in the city. The areas are then scheduled for clean up by a variety of resources, including community volunteers, in an effort to rid the area of graffiti, trash and other quality of life issues. These events bring resident volunteers together for a common cause and result in positive social connections in the community for all generations (Ross & Jang, pg. 404).

The Operation Neighborhood Uplift events serve several purposes in the community. At these clean up events, the young people serving community service hours work side-by-side with residents, police officers, city staff, and other volunteers. These events give these young people a different perspective on their graffiti vandalism activities. They see the damage it causes and the effort needed to clean it up. They also see that residents care about their neighborhoods. The interaction with police officers allows a different perspective, less on the level of law enforcement, and more on the level of caring about their community. Hopefully, this positive interaction will influence the choices these young people make in the future. There is an average of ten young people who serve their community service hours participating in the Operation Neighborhood Uplift events. The city of Oxnard and the Graffiti Task Force continue to search for ways to redirect our young people into more positive choices. This benefits both our young people and our community.

The Ventura County Probation Agency teaches a mandatory monthly Graffiti Offender Class for all first time graffiti vandalism offenders. If the offender is under the age of eighteen, they must be accompanied by a parent. At the invitation of the probation agency, the Graffiti Task Force has been able to reach out to the source of graffiti vandalism by providing a presentation on the city's anti-graffiti program, the financial responsibility for the damage, and the consequences for the young people if they continue graffiti activities. This is the most important presentation the task force participates in. It is an opportunity to encourage our young people to make better choices and for them to make a connection between their actions and consequences.

### **Law Enforcement**

Law Enforcement is the third and final step. The city of Oxnard does not want to see any of its young people end up as part of the judicial system. For this reason law enforcement is the final step. For some young people, it takes the intervention of the judicial system or a brush

with law enforcement to break bad habits such as graffiti vandalism. The *Graffiti Task Force* also works with its partner agencies to help them better understand the impact of graffiti vandalism on our community and the necessity to work together for better solutions.

The Oxnard Police Department has added two new methods to deal with graffiti vandals in our community. Though a graffiti picture is not worth a thousand words, it may mean a thousand dollars out of some offender's pocket. Oxnard's first form of enforcement is the civil citation process. If the preponderance of evidence is not sufficient for a criminal case, the graffiti vandal may receive a civil fine for each occurrence of graffiti vandalism or possession of graffiti implements. A majority of young people and their parents do not associate acts of graffiti vandalism with a monetary cost. For some, the correlation between scarce financial resources and actions is enough to prevent these young people from continuing their graffiti activities. It is a potential wake up call for parents to take more interest in their child's activities both inside and outside the home.

For the most difficult cases, the method the Oxnard Police Department utilizes is the use of the California Street Terrorism Enforcement Prevention (STEP) Act to deal with criminal street gang members who commit graffiti crimes. The STEP Act is part of the 1988 California Victims Bill of Rights. Under the requirements specified in the STEP Act, tagging crews who meet specific criteria by demonstrating their involvement in criminal activity make them subject to sentence enhancements upon conviction. The Oxnard Police Department has successfully established the predicate acts to qualify three Oxnard tagging crews to fall under the provisions of the STEP Act. This means that when convicted, gang-related graffiti vandals are subject to more severe penalties, thus keeping them off the streets longer.

It was important to the residents of Oxnard that graffiti vandals and/or their parents be held financially accountable for the damage. The Graffiti Task Force established a method to collect restitution payments from convicted graffiti vandals or their parents for the full cost of the

graffiti removal by the city's Graffiti Action Program (GAP). The sole existence of GAP is to work with the residents to remove graffiti from throughout the city of Oxnard through a variety of methods thus restoring the community's pride. In the criminal justice system, restitution is intended to require the offender to reimburse the crime victim for the losses. Restitution has ensured that some of the taxpayer dollars used for the graffiti removal efforts by GAP are returned to the residents of Oxnard.

### **Research Design & Methodology**

It has been said that a child is a product of their environment. This home life and social environment has many layers and can influence a child's behavior well into their adult lives (Mennemyer & Sen, 2006) (Le Sage & de Ryter, 2008). Rather than randomly select various influential risk factors, a survey was developed to seek input from various professionals in Ventura County who work directly with juvenile offenders specifically involved in graffiti vandalism on a daily basis. The voluntary survey asked these individuals to anonymously submit five factors, based on their experience, that they felt were influential risk factors in the lives of juveniles involved in graffiti vandalism. These individuals are all from Ventura County and have worked with the City as part of the City's anti-graffiti efforts or are involved with the juvenile justice system at various levels. The surveys were handed out during meetings or e-mailed to specific individuals in the target group.

The influential risk factor survey was also e-mailed to the International NoGraf network membership. This network is comprised of an international group of the same type of individuals with the same anti-graffiti focus as the local professionals who participated in the survey. The intent was to compare the local professional survey (Group A) results to the international professional survey (Group B) for possible common factors. The results could substantiate a correlation between the reasons why young people commit graffiti vandalism on an international level, thus further supporting the local survey results.

Another factor that has surfaced in many conversations regarding young people and their activities is access to technology. Their access to technology is greater than ever whether it be text messaging, electronic games or the Internet. It would be interesting to see the extent that Internet and electronic games have in lives of young people involved in graffiti vandalism. Most studies try to prove or disprove a connection to the use of video or computer games and juvenile violence or delinquency (Daane 2003) (Colwell & Payne, 2000). A point to consider is whether or not the competitiveness and adrenalin rush that almost all electronic type games offer factor into their involvement in graffiti vandalism. Many kids spend hours a day playing some form of computer or on-line games (Lachlan, Smith & Tamborini, 2005) (Kaiser Foundation Study, 1999 & 2005). Do these young people then seek to repeat the adrenalin rush, the competitiveness and the sense of accomplishment these types of games can offer in their real world day to day lives by participating in risky behavior such as graffiti vandalism? Is there a correlation between the influential risk factors identified by the survey and the time young people spend playing electronic games to involvement in graffiti vandalism?

For the purpose of this paper, the focus area is the city of Oxnard. The top five survey results from the professional surveys were used to create a youth survey to test the results from the professional group to that of the young people involved in graffiti crimes. Using the professional survey results, youth volunteer participants were asked to circle the reasons why they felt they and their peers engaged in acts of graffiti vandalism. They were given the option to circle one or as many of the risk factors they felt applied. The category of “other” was added to give the young person an opportunity to express a different reason other than those listed by the professional survey results if they felt none of those listed applied. They were also asked to give the number of hours they spend each day playing some form of electronic game which included computer based, cell phone, gaming systems, and Internet. Text messaging was not included because at the time this thesis was being developed, it had yet to reach the teenage

popularity level of today. A copy of both the professional survey and the youth survey are included in the appendices.

The Ventura County Probation Agency's monthly graffiti class discusses parenting skills, the impact of graffiti on its victims, the community and dangers of continuing their involvement in graffiti crimes. The survey was available in English and Spanish and was handed out to the young people during the class. They were asked to voluntarily complete the anonymous survey but include their age and gender. In addition, the Ventura County Probation Agency asked the young people they came in contact with and are involved in graffiti vandalism if they would complete the volunteer survey also.

The results of the professional survey were compared to the youth survey to determine any differences or similarities between the two groups. The purpose of this research is to identify influential risk factors that may contribute to young people becoming involved in graffiti crimes and testing those responses in a survey of a group of young people involved in graffiti vandalism. These results may indicate a trend or common elements that could then identify young people as being at risk for involvement in graffiti vandalism. Early identification may then lead to young people being provided the necessary social services or re-direction to prevent them from becoming graffiti vandals. It is also important to note that these influential risk factors are not necessarily an indicator of the risk of involvement specifically in graffiti vandalism. These factors could also be an indicator for a young person to be at risk for involvement in other risky behavior or escalating criminal activity in general.

“Aggression whether toward persons or property, is primarily learned behavior. Youngsters break windows or break noses because, through either direct or vicarious (modeling) experiences, they have learned that such behaviors are likely to be rewarded and unlikely to be punished. If peer adulation follows vandalistic feats, striving for more adulation through the same or escalated means is thus

made more probable” (Goldstein, 1996 pg.2).

While the city of Oxnard’s stepped up efforts have noticeably decreased the visibility of graffiti vandalism within the community, it has not stopped graffiti vandals from continuing their daily assaults. The city spends nearly a million dollars a year to keeps its neighborhoods graffiti free. With so many taxpayer dollars at stake, the importance of examining the root question of why young people choose to become involve in graffiti vandalism and can no longer be ignored.

**Results & Analysis**

**Professional Survey Results**

The survey responses were gathered, entered into a database and tallied. The results were subdivided into tables for further analysis. Table 1 indicates the combined overall responses to the survey for both local (Group A) and international (Group B) professional respondents. A summary of the top five responses is listed below with the complete list of survey responses attached in the appendix. Some of the responses were tied in ranking thus, increasing the number of professional responses to test from five to six overall. A total of 56 surveys were returned and each survey identified five influential risk factors.

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>Professional Survey Overall Raw Data Results</b>	<b>Group A</b>	<b>Group B</b>		<b>Overall</b>
	<b>Local</b>	<b>International</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home	27	7	34	1
Substance abuse by young person	20	6	26	2
Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression	19	4	23	3
Peer pressure	17	5	22	4
Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom	15	7	22	4
Addicted to thrill/excitement	13	4	17	5

The overall results clearly indicate the individuals who interact with young people involved in graffiti vandalism feel very strongly that home life and too much free time are the overriding factors for involvement in this type of crime. Substance abuse, peer pressure, and

unsupervised time all relate to a young person's use of their time. Without a connection to positive activities a young person's chances of becoming involved in risky behavior will increase. Combine the lack of positive activities with absentee parents or frustrations in the home and the potential for a young person to become involved in risky behavior multiplies exponentially. The more opportunities for trouble, the more likely a young person is to find trouble.

Of the total responses, 23% felt a young person's home environment was the number one influential factor. Studies show the more parents are involved in a child's daily life, the less likely they are to become involved in risky behavior. Parents also have a tremendous influence on a young person's use of free time. They are often instrumental in getting their kids involved in sports leagues, social groups or clubs and volunteer efforts (Huebner and Mancini, 2003).

The lack of positive social activities or outlets for expression, are important not only as alternatives to risky behavior but are also important for positive social development. As important a factor this is to address, the cost to provide these activities can be overwhelming. No one single activity, for example dance classes, is going to capture the interest of all kids. A wide range of activities would allow more opportunities to try to meet the needs of as many young people as possible. Many times these activities will fulfill the thrill or excitement a young person may be seeking through participation in risky behaviors. Winning a basketball game and accomplishing a physical challenge is both an outlet for emotion and produce a thrill of excitement. The important points to note are: make positive activities available to young people, provide easy access and support for their involvement.

The subject of substance abuse by young people is a much deeper and more complex issue than this paper can address. Substance abuse by young people captured 18% of the professional survey results overall and it ranked second on their list of influential factors. Based on the remaining four factors in the survey, an assumption was made that the young person's

substance abuse may be related more to lack of parental involvement and too much free time. However, it is necessary to mention that substance abuse can also be caused by a variety of other reasons such as mental health issues or having a parent who is a substance abuser in the home. The presence of the substance abuse factor in the life of a young person is significant. It can lead to a host of other problems in school and involvement in other types of crime.

Table 2 and table 3 indicate the individual responses from the two groups of professional surveys. The top five responses identified in the Local Professional Survey (Group A) are summarized in table 2 and the top five responses from the International Professional Survey (Group B) are summarized in table 3. The complete list of responses for table 2 and 3 are listed in the appendices by group.

<b>Table 2</b> <b>Local Professional Survey</b>	<b>Group A</b> <b>Local</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home	27	1
Substance abuse by young person	20	2
Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression	19	3
Peer pressure	17	4
Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom	15	5

<b>Table 3</b> <b>International Professional Survey</b>	<b>Group B</b> <b>International</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home	7	1
Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom	7	1
Substance abuse by young person	6	2
Single parent household	6	2
Peer pressure	5	3
Recognition/fame	5	3
Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression	4	4
Addicted to thrill/excitement	4	4
Need to belong	4	4
Laws or codes are not enforced for juveniles/low or no penalties for juveniles	4	4
Low self esteem	3	5
Lack of after school programs	3	5

It is surprising to see the number of survey results that tied for a position in top five responses in the International Professional Survey. This could be because there were not a sufficient number of respondents to significantly influence specific risk factors. However, when comparing the two tables, it is very important to note that the top five responses for the Local Survey all appear in the top five responses for the International Survey and the number one factor is identical. This would indicate common beliefs among the local survey participants with their counterparts involved with graffiti on a global level. By surveying two independent groups, it provides support for the survey findings whether viewed from the local level or from the international level.

Table 4 and 5 are an index of survey respondents by profession.

<b>Table 4</b>	
<b>Overall Sort By Profession</b>	<b>%</b>
Law Enforcement	26
Probation	19
Corrections/Courts	2
Social Services	4
Local/County/State/Federal Governmental Administration	3
School District/Education	0
Other	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>

<b>Table 5</b>	<b>Local Results</b>	<b>International Results</b>
	<b>(Group A)</b>	<b>(Group B)</b>
<b>Sort by Profession &amp; Survey Source</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Law Enforcement	16	10
Probation	19	
Corrections/Courts	2	
Social Services	4	
Local/County/State/Federal Governmental Administration		3
School District/Education		0
Other		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>15</b>

The majority of respondents were from the law enforcement profession. On a local level the number of responses from the probation profession had a slight edge over the law enforcement responses. It is logical that these two professions would produce the most local survey responses since they are the two professions the City of Oxnard's Graffiti Task Force interacts with the most. The results also indicate that both the local law enforcement and the probation professionals share common beliefs regarding the influential risk factors in the lives of young people involved in graffiti crimes.

### **Youth Survey Results**

A total of 77 youth surveys were returned out of the one hundred printed during the one month survey period. Of the 77, 69 of the respondents were male, six were female and two did not respond to the gender question. The age range of the respondents was from 10 years old to 20 years old, with the median age being 17 years old or 26% of the survey results. The age range and the prominence of the male gender in the survey results supports the national statistical data stated previously in this paper regarding the demographics of graffiti vandals. The results of Part 1 of the Youth survey are displayed in Tables 6 and 7 of this section for further discussion. A complete summary of the responses from Part 2 of the Youth Survey are attached in the appendices.

Part 1 of the Youth Survey asked the participants about the number of hours a day they spend on the Internet for other than school activities and the number of hours a day they spend playing gaming consoles. The purpose of these questions in this research was to test for a possible correlation between the Internet and computer gaming consoles activities to involvement in graffiti vandalism. Part 1 also asked the youth respondents to respond to the results from the professional survey for comparison. The comparison results are presented in Table 7 of the next section.

Part 2 of the youth survey asked for a response to two open ended questions about graffiti vandalism. These two questions have no basis for this study other than it was a window of opportunity to gather information about graffiti from a variety of young people who participate in graffiti vandalism in the target area. The first question asked, why do you think kids become involved in graffiti vandalism? The second question asked, what would keep kids from becoming involved in graffiti vandalism? A complete listing of the responses to these questions is included in the appendices for review. In general, their responses to the first question indicate a relationship to peers and seem to be in line with their responses in Part 1 summarized in Table 7. The majority of responses to the second question appear to reference the use of their free time.

### **Part 1**

Of the overall respondents, 50% indicated they spend more than 2 hours a day on non-school related activities and 30% stated they do not spend any time at all on the Internet for non-school related activities. The survey did not ask what type of non-school related Internet activities they engaged in. The addition of that question may have produced a clearer correlation between Internet activities and graffiti vandalism. It is common knowledge among anti-graffiti professionals that graffiti vandals post pictures of their tags and discuss their activities on the Internet and social web sites.

In addition, 56% of the respondents stated they did not spend anytime playing computer gaming consoles such as Xbox or Wii. Therefore within the context of this research there does not appear to be a relationship between non-school related Internet or computer gaming activities and graffiti vandalism. (See Table 6 below for the complete summary of the responses to the questions in Part 1). An assumption could be made that both of these questions related to indoor activities and graffiti vandalism is strictly an outdoor activity. Therefore, no relationship would exist. Another assumption could be that an overwhelming number of the respondents, a total of 80%, are between the ages of 15 and 18. This is an age that prefers interaction with peers,

potentially holds a part time job or is usually involved in other activities outside the home. Therefore an assumption could be made young people this age are not at home enough to participate in the activities related to the Internet and computer gaming.

<b>Table 6</b>			
<b>Part 1 Youth Survey Results</b>			
<b># of hours a day spent on Internet activities other than school or work</b>			
0 (none)	24	31.17%	
less than 1 hour	5	6.49%	
1 hour	9	11.69%	
2 hours	16	20.78%	
3 hours	8	10.39%	
4 hours	7	9.09%	
5 hours	5	6.49%	
6 or more hours	3	3.90%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	
<b># of hours a day spent playing gaming consoles (Xbox, Wii, etc)</b>			
0 (none)	43	55.84%	
less than 1 hour	7	9.09%	
1 hour	6	7.79%	
2 hours	9	11.69%	
3 hours	6	7.79%	
4 hours	4	5.19%	
5 hours	1	1.30%	
6 or more hours	1	1.30%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

It does appear the two questions were not specific enough to make a direct correlation to the amount of time spent on non-school related Internet activities and computer gaming consoles to graffiti vandalism. A relationship between the thrill of Internet activities, computerized gaming consoles and graffiti vandalism cannot be established based on the data from Part 1 of this survey. However, it is important to note that ‘Addition to thrill and excitement’ tied for second in the responses by the youth who participated in the survey. This would indicate a link and a possible reason for involvement in graffiti vandalism in general.

### **Survey Comparison Results**

Table 7 is the comparison results of the top six risk factors from the professional survey (group A & B) to the responses from the youth survey Part 1.

<b>Table 7</b> <b>Comparison Data</b> <b>Professional Survey vs Part 1 of Youth Survey</b> <b>Overall Raw Data Results</b>	<b>Professional</b>  <b>Overall Ranking</b>	<b>Youth</b>  <b>Overall Ranking</b>
Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home	1	3
Substance abuse by young person	2	5
Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression	3	4
Peer pressure	4	1
Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom	4	2
Addicted to thrill/excitement	5	2

The response results between the two groups (professional versus youth) are almost in the complete reverse order from one and other. The professionals identified Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustration at home as the most important risk factor. By contrast the youth survey ranked it third. Of the youth that responded, peer pressure ranked the highest and it was forth on the professional survey.

In analyzing the six survey responses in Table 7, the responses can be divided into two sub-groups. The first three risk factors having an association to the young person’s home life and the last three responses having an association to the young person’s free time with friends or peers. Therefore based on the survey results and using the two sub-groups, professionals see graffiti vandalism as a crime with a root cause for involvement based in home life risk factors. Whereas the youth see graffiti vandalism’s root cause as a social or peer based activity. There is empirical data cited in this study to support both views which is way graffiti is such a difficult crime to deter.

From the data in Table 7 it is clear that there is a generational difference on the subject of graffiti. The adults see it has a parenting issue or lack of parenting. Society believes parents should be held accountable for their child’s anti-social behavior (Le Sage and de Ruyter, 2008). Studies prove parental involvement in a child’s life has a direct correlation to problem behavior that can lead to issues like graffiti vandalism (Hueber and Mancini, 2003). Adult society asserts

that parent involvement in a child's life has a major influence on to deterring delinquency, substance abuse and involvement in positive extra curricular activities. The empirical studies listed in this case study support that assertion.

The responses show that the youth in this survey see graffiti has a peer or social activity. To them, graffiti is a form of social activity or expression influenced by their peers. It is about being visible in an adult world where they are invisible (MacGillivray and Curwen, 2007) (Hueber and Mancini, 2003). The empirical studies listed in this case study also support this assertion. By chance, a deeper view of the thought process of the youth who participated in this survey may be found in the response to the first question of Part II of the Youth Survey. The question asked, "Why you think kids become involved in graffiti vandalism?" A majority of the responses to this question made a reference to being cool or because it is cool. This would indicate a need to belong or fit in with peer groups or friends who may be involved or who are superficially involved in graffiti vandalism.

In the middle of these two views are the property owners and communities who pay the financial and economic consequences of graffiti vandalism.

### **Summary & Conclusion**

The difference between graffiti as a form of expression and graffiti as a crime is its physical placement in society. Graffiti is a perplexing crime with the victim being society in general. Graffiti vandals see it as a form of expression or social activity. More and more governmental agencies are being forced into spending scarce resources to combat graffiti vandalism.

The City of Oxnard's case study is a microcosm of what is happening in cities nationwide. Residents do not want to see graffiti in their community and they want someone held accountable for the damage. Oxnard's Graffiti Task Force attempts to erase the problem of graffiti through grass roots community empowerment and neighborhood renewal. The city has

educated its residents and its youth about graffiti vandalism and the consequences to themselves and the community. It has also stepped up enforcement efforts to keep the criminal element in check and to keep graffiti vandals from expanding into other criminal activities. The purpose of this case study was gather information about the root causes of graffiti vandalism in the community and if there were other opportunities or other issues the City could address to deter graffiti vandalism with the limited resources available.

This data from the participants in this case study found no correlation between the amount of time spent on non-school Internet activities, the use of computer gaming consoles and participation in graffiti vandalism. The youth study did indicate a link to thrill and excitement as a reason why kids become involved in graffiti vandalism in general.

The data does indicate a completely different perception of the root causes of graffiti between the two surveyed groups. The professionals surveyed believe the root causes of graffiti vandalism are home based, while the youth who participated in the survey believe graffiti is a peer based social activity. In analyzing the two different views, the question of peer pressure would warrant additional study. Based on the comments from the youth who participated in the survey, there could be a differing option on the definition of “peer pressure.” Adults may see it as being verbally influenced by, coaxed or persuaded into doing something by a peer or peers. Whereas the youth may see peer pressure simply more as the pressure to “fit in” or be cool.

There were limitations with the design of the youth survey. The opened ended questions in Part 1 of the survey were not specific enough to indicate a correlation to graffiti vandalism. Additional questions should have been added to ask about the specific activities being engaged while on the Internet and the type of computer games being played. With the popularity of cell phones amongst the age group who participated in this survey, cell phone text messaging could have replaced the questions about computer based gaming and Internet usage. Both the Internet and games can be obtained through the use of a cell phone in addition to text messaging

communications. However, the most violent video games are more prevalent as a computer based activity and this was the correlation the Part 1 questions sought to answer in this study.

Part 1 of the Youth Survey listed six factors as possible factors which could contribute to the reasons why youth become involved in graffiti vandalism. They were asked to circle as many of the factors as they felt applied or none if they felt none applied. These six factors were the results from the professional survey. The survey also left a space below each factor for a comment. The addition on the comment space left participants with a choice rather than only to select from the list of six risk factors. Some of the youth participants chose to write a comment about the risk factor, rather than select a risk factor itself.

This case study did not address ethnicity or socio-economic factors into consideration. A majority of the literature included in this paper indicate that the average graffiti vandal is male and gives a target age range between 15 and 23 years of age. However, ethnicity and socio-economic factors varied in the literature. This would indicate that graffiti vandals are present in every community but may be more common in some communities with certain demographics according to the literature reviewed for this paper. It would then be reasonable to assume that the ethnicity and socio-economic factors of graffiti vandals would have a direction relationship to the demographics of the community in which they live. Therefore, it was more important to try to identify root causes of graffiti vandalism within the city of Oxnard other than ethnicity and socio-economic factors.

The empirical data in the literature review seems to support the city of Oxnard's grass roots effort to heighten awareness of graffiti with the community. It would also support the outreach efforts to educate the youth in the community and help them make the connections between graffiti vandalism and the consequences. Within the city of Oxnard, there are a wide range of positive alternatives for youth to fill their free time with friends. The city of Oxnard has stepped up its efforts to educate the youth in the community about those alternative choices with

the addition of the Graffiti Task Force My Space page which is full of free or low cost activities available to them. Where the city may fall short is in educating parents about the significant impact they can have on the activities of their children and how they can prevent them from becoming involved in delinquent activities.

This case study only highlights the differing points of view as to root causes and only scratches the surface of so many more complex sociological and psychological factors that play a role in graffiti vandalism. Further research on the differing views between the professional survey results and the youth survey results may reveal a converging point between the two points of view. This convergent point may be key to finding a solution to graffiti vandalism that may satisfy both root cause view points of graffiti vandalism generated by this study.

During the literature review on the subject of graffiti vandalism, a study titled, Family and Individual Characteristics of a Community Sample of Adolescents who Graffiti, by Professor Graham Martin and others from the University of Queensland was the only other study found that actually looked at the root causes of graffiti vandalism by using a group of young people actually involved in graffiti vandalism within that community. Where this thesis and that study differ is that the University of Queensland study is a clinical study of contributing behavioral factors in adolescents involved in graffiti vandalism. It also looks at adolescents and the independence of graffiti vandalism from other anti-social behaviors. This thesis project is a case study of the root causes of graffiti vandalism within the city of Oxnard. While this study does not look at other anti-social behaviors, such as the ones documented in the University of Queensland study, there is agreement among the professionals surveyed in this case study that they do exist in some graffiti vandals.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research results from this thesis, there are differing views of graffiti vandalism by those who participated in this survey. The professional survey results indicate a

root cause in the home as a parental control issue. The youth survey results indicate the root cause as a social activity for excitement. Using the results of this study, the city of Oxnard could provide the leadership to affect change within the community to further address in issue of graffiti vandalism.

The city of Oxnard's Graffiti Task Force could alter the focus of the current outreach presentations to parents to include additional information that concentrates on parental involvement as a deterrent to risky teenage behaviors. As a result, young people may make better choices with their free time. The presentations to parents should include information on how activities in the home influence a child's behavior outside the home. If parents are more involved in the lives of their children, they are statistically less likely to become involved in risky activities such as graffiti vandalism. This additional information should help parents understand the significant influence they can have in their child's life that will prevent them from becoming involved in potentially dangerous activities. Helping parents understand that, over time, their influence over their children can be stronger than that of their children's peers. Simple acceptance, reassurance and support by a parent can give a child the confidence to make better choices when they are with their peers.

Addressing the issue of peer pressure as it relates to graffiti vandalism and social based activity is more difficult. The reasons for graffiti involvement can vary greatly among peer groups. For example, the motives for the use of graffiti by tagging crews are different than if graffiti was used by a group of bored teenagers. Graffiti is also becoming more main stream and teens are exposed to it through various advertising media outlets. It is becoming an excepted part of the teenage culture through main stream, video games, advertising, clothing lines and music. The Graffiti Task Force could add information, using teens to convey the information to their peers, which makes a clear distinction between graffiti, has an art form and graffiti vandalism.

The youth need to understand that placing graffiti on property without permission is a crime and not art. Removing the damage caused by graffiti vandalism is expensive for cities and diverts money from youth-based park projects, recreational programs and community development. Young people need to understand even if the very definition of the word graffiti encourages its application as a crime; it is not acceptable or cool to be destructive. A longer term solution may be to form a teen peer to peer program to utilize peer pressure to move the acceptance of graffiti away from property destruction.

For governmental entities, simply ignoring graffiti has a growing main stream presence in the teenage culture may not be the best approach to curbing the issue of illegal graffiti vandalism. If the youth in the community see graffiti as a form of social activity, then providing boundaries for the youth to participate in legal forms of graffiti could channel their efforts in a positive non-destructive direction. Thus, allowing kids to learn the difference between property destruction and art with their peers. The Graffiti Task Force should explore supporting a graffiti based art program to emphasize legal uses of graffiti by getting young people involved in creative community projects. It is also important to demonstrate to young people that they need to show respect for others in order to gain respect. Instead of illegally placing graffiti on property all over town, the city could sponsor a graffiti program utilizing various artistic mediums that focuses on the legal uses of graffiti and respect of property. The resulting projects could then be displayed in a public place such as the city library. By supporting art programs the city has the ability to direct the behavior and help participants understand the difference between art and vandalism. This also signals acceptance by adults and allows participants to publically display their work thus gaining the notoriety and acceptance some young people desire.

Graffiti damage is an expensive problem which will require long term solutions. The solutions to graffiti vandalism are not a “one size fits all”. Each governmental entity must assess what will work for their community. The recommendations suggested in this paper will work to

deter some kids while others will continue until stopped by the law. What is unsettling is that there are some whose sole motive is the destruction of property in the name of graffiti; and others who are profiting from the media appearance of graffiti being cool. Advertising media companies should be more socially responsible and make the distinction between legal and illegal forms of graffiti within their advertising. It is a small act that could have a huge impact on the behavior of young people and graffiti vandalism.

Governmental entities should acknowledge and use the division in the graffiti culture that already exists between criminal graffiti vandalism and the non criminal aspect of graffiti. Not all young people see graffiti as a crime or want it to be. There is only one aspect of graffiti that makes it a crime. What makes graffiti a crime is its illegal placement. If the intentional property destruction was taken out of graffiti, then there is no issue to debate. It is the criminal vandalism of graffiti that is the problem. This is the point that needs to be emphasized to the young people.

Just like society in general, there will always be those who continue to participate in the criminal vandalism aspect of graffiti. For those who continue to victimize others, there is the law. Tougher federal, state and local laws, as well as financial accountability for the damage, will work to deal with those individuals who chose to participate and encourage graffiti as a destructive crime. Within each community, governmental entities should begin to educate the youth that the destruction of property under any circumstances is not acceptable or cool; it is a crime. Only then can governmental entities begin to bend the curve and to eliminate graffiti vandalism.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Master's Thesis Survey

### **Adolescent Graffiti Vandalism: Exploring Root Causes**

Rather than randomly select potential root causes or risk factors for young people involved in graffiti vandalism, I am seeking the assistance of those professionals who work closely with juveniles involved in Graffiti Vandalism.

Please list the five risk factors in the lives of juveniles you have dealt with who are involved in graffiti vandalism. For example: substance abuse by the juvenile, single parent family, boredom. The point is to try to identify common risk factors in the lives of graffiti vandals in an attempt to understand why they are involved in this type of crime. Getting a sense of why these young people are involved in graffiti crime can be very helpful to those of us who have the responsibility of defending our communities against these graffiti vandals on a daily basis.

The responses I receive will be collated and the four to five most common factors will be used for future research in this thesis paper. Responses are anonymous but I would like to know which sector you are employed in. All information gathered for this thesis project is confidential.

Please list the five risk factors in priority based on your experience.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the area you are currently employed in.

- Law Enforcement
- Probation
- Courts
- Social Services
- Local/County/State/Federal Government Administration
- School District/Education
- Other

Thank you for your very important input on this serious subject.

**Research project title:**

**Adolescent Graffiti Vandalism:  
Exploring Root Causes**

The answers and information you provide may be used to help governmental agencies understand the reasons why kids become involved in graffiti vandalism. Understanding these reasons may help those agencies provide the needed services to prevent kids from becoming involved in graffiti vandalism or to help kids channel their energy into more positive outlets.

*This survey is strictly voluntary. Your name is not required therefore your identity is confidential. Your voluntary participation in this survey is appreciated and your opinion matters.*

**PART I** Please provide the following general information so we can better understand your answers. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M or F

How many hours a day do you spend on Internet activities not related to school or work? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours a day do you spend playing gaming consoles (xBox, Wii, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

If any of the statements listed below are a reason for becoming involved in graffiti vandalism, please circle it. You may circle as many of the statements that apply or none at all if you feel they do not apply. A comment line is provided below each line if you would like to add a comment about the statement. If none of the statements below apply please go to Part II and add your own response.

- *Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustration at home(No communication with parents)*

Comment:

- *Substance abuse (Use of drugs or Alcohol)*

Comment:

- *Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression (No recreational programs. Dances-Art Classes-Sports Activities)*

Comment:

- *Peer pressure (Encouragement by friends to participate)*

Comment:

- *Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom (Nothing to do)*

Comment:

- *Addicted to thrill/excitement (Looking for a thrill or excitement)*

Comment:

**PART II**

Why do you think kids become involved in graffiti vandalism? \_\_\_\_\_

What would keep kids from becoming involved in graffiti vandalism? \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Professional Survey Overall Raw Data Results</b>	<b>Group A Local</b>	<b>Group B International</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Overall Ranking</b>
<i>Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home</i>	27	7	34	1
<i>Substance abuse by young person</i>	20	6	26	2
<i>Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression</i>	19	4	23	3
<i>Peer pressure</i>	17	5	22	4
<i>Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom</i>	15	7	22	4
<i>Addicted to thrill/excitement</i>	13	4	17	5
Establish/defend territory	11	1	12	
Need to belong	8	4	12	
Lack of father figure/role models	9	2	11	
Single parent household	5	6	11	
Recognition/fame	5	5	10	
Uninvolved in school/lack of academic success/frustrated with school	8		8	
Low self esteem	4	3	7	
Gang/Crew affiliation	5	2	7	
Differential association (learned criminal behavior from family members)	7		7	
Ignorance or apathy of parents involvement with child	6		6	
Laws or codes are not enforced for juveniles/low or no penalties for juveniles	1	4	5	
Belief graffiti is art/expression as art	3	1	4	
Behavioral issues (anger/hyperactivity/issues with authority)	4	1	5	
Lack of after school programs	1	3	4	
Substance abuse in household (parents)	2	2	4	
Mental Health Issues/personality disorders	3	1	4	
Sense of entitlement/lack of respect of property	2	2	4	
Social isolation/anti-social	1	2	3	
Need for respect	1	1	2	
Emotional/physical abuse	2		2	
No connection between actions and consequences	2		2	
Lack of discipline	2		2	
No self control	1		1	
Political ideology		1	1	
Possession of weapons	1		1	
Parents not held accountable for child's behavior		1	1	
<b>Total number of responses</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>280</b>	
<b>Total number of survey respondents</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>56</b>	

<b>GROUP A</b> <b>Local Professional Survey</b>	<b>Group A</b>		
	<b>Local</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
<b><i>Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home</i></b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13.17%</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Substance abuse by young person</i></b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9.76%</b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression</i></b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9.27%</b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Peer pressure</i></b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8.29%</b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom</i></b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7.32%</b>	<b>5</b>
Addicted to thrill/excitement	13	6.34%	
Establish/defend territory	11	5.37%	
Need to belong	9	4.39%	
Lack of father figure/role models	8	3.90%	
Single parent household	8	3.90%	
Recognition/fame	7	3.41%	
Uninvolved in school/lack of academic success/frustrated with school	6	2.93%	
Low self esteem	5	2.44%	
Gang/Crew affiliation	5	2.44%	
Differential association (learned criminal behavior from family members)	5	2.44%	
Ignorance or apathy of parents involvement with child	4	1.95%	
Laws or codes are not enforced for juveniles/low or no penalties for juveniles	4	1.95%	
Belief graffiti is art/expression as art	3	1.46%	
Behavioral issues (anger/hyperactivity/issues with authority)	3	1.46%	
Lack of after school programs	2	0.98%	
Substance abuse in household (parents)	2	0.98%	
Mental Health Issues/personality disorders	2	0.98%	
Sense of entitlement/lack of respect of property	2	0.98%	
Social isolation/anti-social	2	0.98%	
Need for respect	1	0.49%	
Emotional/physical abuse	1	0.49%	
No connection between actions and consequences	1	0.49%	
Lack of discipline	1	0.49%	
No self control	1	0.49%	
Political ideology	1	0.49%	
Possession of weapons			
Parents not held accountable for child's behavior			
<b>Total number of survey responses</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

GROUP B International Professional Survey	Group B		
	International	Percentage	Ranking
<i>Lack of parental involvement/guidance/frustrations at home</i>	7	9.33%	1
<i>Unsupervised time/too much free time/boredom</i>	7	9.33%	1
<i>Substance abuse by young person</i>	6	8.00%	2
<i>Single parent household</i>	6	8.00%	2
<i>Peer pressure</i>	5	6.67%	3
<i>Recognition/fame</i>	5	6.67%	3
<i>Lack of positive social activities/outlet for emotions/expression</i>	4	5.33%	4
<i>Addicted to thrill/excitement</i>	4	5.33%	4
<i>Need to belong</i>	4	5.33%	4
<i>Laws or codes are not enforced for juveniles/low or no penalties for juveniles</i>	4	5.33%	4
<i>Low self esteem</i>	3	4.00%	5
<i>Lack of after school programs</i>	3	4.00%	5
Lack of father figure/role models	2	2.67%	
Gang/Crew affiliation	2	2.67%	
Substance abuse in household (parents)	2	2.67%	
Sense of entitlement/lack of respect of property	2	2.67%	
Social isolation/anti-social	2	2.67%	
Establish/defend territory	1	1.33%	
Belief graffiti is art/expression as art	1	1.33%	
Behavioral issues (anger/hyperactivity/issues with authority)	1	1.33%	
Mental Health Issues/personality disorders	1	1.33%	
Need for respect	1	1.33%	
Political ideology	1	1.33%	
Parents not held accountable for child's behavior	1	1.33%	
Uninvolved in school/lack of academic success/frustrated with school			
Differential association (learned criminal behavior from family members)			
Ignorance or apathy of parents involvement with child			
Emotional/physical abuse			
No connection between actions and consequences			
Lack of discipline			
No self control			
Possession of weapons			
<b>Total number of survey responses</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

## Youth Survey Part II Summary Question 1

### Why do you think kids become involved in graffiti vandalism?

Survey Number	Gender	Response
1	F	I think maybe they will feel good about themselves. They have too much time on their hands.
2	F	Open legal walls to paint, perhaps designated open areas to be able to paint at.
3	F	They think it's cool.
4	F	More art involvement in the community.
5	F	Because they want to look good in front of friends... they want to show what they rep and they try to act bad...
6	F	Because they want to look good in front of friends. They think they're cool.
7	No Answer	Because they think they are hard.
8	M	No response given.
9	M	No response given.
10	M	No response given.
11	M	No response given.
12	M	Because they want to.
13	M	No response given.
14	M	Spanish: Porque sus amigos le dicen de lo hagan. English: Because their friends tell you what to do.
15	M	Spanish: Porque no piensan en lo que hacen o quieren fama! English: They do not think about what they do or want.
16	M	No response given.
17	M	To have something to do. Had to compete with others and look cool.
18	M	In the game and gangsters.
19	M	Because they think it's cool and down.
20	M	Because they think its fun.
21	M	To express art.
22	M	To fit in also to get recognition.
23	M	To fit in.
24	M	The art of graffiti has been exploited by media thru Hip-Hop. Kids see it on TV, and see it in fashion.
25	M	Because they don't have nothing to do.
26	M	Because it's good in an art kind of way, but people vandalize and get thrill from it.
27	M	To be a part of something or just to break the law.
28	M	Boredom or no parental guidance
29	M	Some kids get involved with graffiti because they love to paint or draw.
30	M	They try to be cool.
31	M	To be kool.
32	M	Fun time and like art.
33	M	Because they like defying the law.

34	M	Because they see that older kids do and they think it's cool and they want to be like the older kids.
35	M	For respect.
36	M	Cause they hang out with the wrong people.
37	M	I don't know.
38	M	Because kids peer pressure them.
39	M	I think because they like the art of it.
40	M	Problems at home.
41	M	Pure pressure, and they are bored, or when they are intoxicated.
42	M	Most of them wanna show off and you can tell from the ones that show off and the ones that is a life for them.
43	M	They might get in it just for the art.
44	M	Because they want to be cool and fit in.
45	M	Because they think they will be cool.
46	M	Because kids start hanging out with the wrong people and later they want to do what the other kids/taggers do.
47	M	Honestly I don't know why they do get involved.
48	M	They have nothing else to do.
49	M	Boredom, skill, and looking for excitement.
50	M	Because there is nothing to do.
51	M	They think it's cool.
52	M	Friends/TV.
53	M	Vandals.
54	M	To be cool or just being dumb.
55	M	Because they probably hang out with the rough people.
56	M	Because they think it's cool.
57	M	I think that kids become involved in graffiti because they think it's cool and don't think they're going to get caught.
58	M	I think because they try to show we have the power.
59	M	Because it's a way to get respect.
60	M	Probably because they like art and colors.
61	M	Because it's cool.
62	M	They get bored.
63	M	To be known as someone else and to be a part of something. Also to make the city more colorful.
64	M	They like the thrill.
65	M	Because there into art of course, but they wanna have their own styles, their own fonts, and details. Usually people that know how to draw will find different art and graffiti seem to be more interesting.
66	M	I think they get involved because it makes them feel like they are somebody. People notice them.
67	M	They are bored or really get into the graffiti art.
68	M	For a variety of reasons, the most common I think are a lack of supervision and a need to fit in (with others who are involved in vandalism, like a gang).
69	M	I think they become involved in graffiti vandalism cause the people they hang with.
70	M	Because of the people they hang out with.

71	M	Because they want to.
72	M	Because of art.
73	M	I believe it is a combination of too much free time and peer pressure created by gang mentality.
74	M	They get addicted to it by doing drawings on the wall. They like it.
75	M	Pranks and a way to spread messages within gangs.
76	M	I don't know.
77	M	I don't know.

## Youth Survey Part II Summary Question 2

**What would keep kids from becoming involved in graffiti vandalism?**

Survey Number	Gender	Response
1	F	I think it depends on the kid. It's up to them if they do, they might feel pressured.
2	F	Opening legal graffiti structures, a lot like skate parks for skaters.
3	F	Have kids in after school programs.
4	F	Kids become involved in graffiti because of lack of art in the community.
5	F	The things that would help prevent them from doing those things is really nothing, because if they want to do it they will. Parents can talk to them... but if they are already tagging and stuff it won't help to talk.
6	F	You can't really stop the kids that are tagging and stuff, because if they are already doing it then they are gonna do it and probably won't listen to any peers.
7	No Answer	The cops.
8	M	No response given.
9	M	No response given.
10	M	School.
11	M	No response given.
12	M	No response given.
13	M	No response given.
14	M	Spanish: Que se junte con personas que no asen vandalism. English: They shouldn't hang out with people that do vandalism.
15	M	Spanish: Mas actividades en la comunidad o mas oportunidades de trabajos part time. English: More activities in the community or more opportunities for part time work.
16	M	No response given.
17	M	I have no idea.
18	M	Not getting in trouble.
19	M	Opening more programs that kids could draw or paint if that's what they like.
20	M	The boys and girls club.
21	M	No response given.
22	M	Spending more time at the house with family.

23	M	Family traditions or activities.
24	M	Kids want attention the less attention graffiti gets, they'll move on to the next best thing. I dislike tagging as much as you do because the history of graffiti is nothing more than history. Kids don't know anything about graffiti; now they just want attention! Thank you ☺
25	M	Fear and encouragement to do other more productive things. Good friends.
26	M	Have a place where it's legal to tag.
27	M	Have a place made for just art or wall to be held!
28	M	Outlets in the community.
29	M	I think programs that have to do with graffiti would help.
30	M	Putting them in art shows.
31	M	More activities.
32	M	Take art classes.
33	M	Legal spots were kids could be artistic but without legal penalties.
34	M	If they knew the consequence that come with graffiti and not hanging out with kids that tag.
35	M	Go to school and keep an eye on your kids.
36	M	Not sure.
37	M	I don't know.
38	M	Like doing sports outside of school.
39	M	Well I tell them it's a waste most of the time. Also they are making their own neighborhood.
40	M	More family time.
41	M	Sports and activities.
42	M	Keeping them away from other kids that are influence. (contagious)
43	M	To kick it with good friends.
44	M	Get into a sport and have something to do.
45	M	I don't think there is an effective way because it's a choice they have to make.
46	M	Sports like mixed martial arts, basketball, soccer, baseball, something positive.
47	M	By creating a place for graffiti like Venice Beach a legal place.
48	M	Hanging out with kids that do it too.
49	M	To make it legal.
50	M	More stuff to do.
51	M	Put them in a Boys and Girls Club.
52	M	No response given.
53	M	Places to do it legally.
54	M	Art class.
55	M	To do sports.
56	M	Getting involved in sports & pay attention in school.
57	M	More Boys and Girls Clubs.
58	M	I think from keeping away doing graffiti, they should keep away from the friends they impulse them to do what they do.
59	M	Take it out of the street "out of sight out of mind".
60	M	I don't know.
61	M	Sports.
62	M	I don't know.

63	M	No police.
64	M	A legal wall that doesn't require a permit.
65	M	Legal walls to do graffiti/art on.
66	M	I think sports or hobbies are good ways to prevent getting involved in vandalism.
67	M	More activities to do during free time.
68	M	Capital punishment.
69	M	They should be themselves and not follow others.
70	M	More things to do. Ex: sports, skate parks, etc.
71	M	I don't know.
72	M	If there was a place you could go and tag where they don't tell you anything.
73	M	A positive parental influence, environment to participate in extracurricular activities and heavier enforcement.
74	M	Parents need to tell them not to.
75	M	Mentoring in elementary school.
76	M	I don't know.
77	M	I don't know.