Original Paper

Analysis of Marginal Discourse: Identity Construction in Campus Wall Graffiti

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Abstract

Campus wall graffiti plays a significant role in the identity construction of graffiti artists as a form of marginal discourse. However, due to its long-standing perception as a destructive activity and the unique cultural environment, graffiti research in China has been relatively underdeveloped, with a focus on theoretical investigations. This study collected a total of 391 textual and pictorial graffiti samples from a language university in China as the corpus. From the perspective of identity construction, this study analyzed the characteristics of campus wall graffiti, as well as the methods and content of identity construction. The findings revealed that campus graffiti exhibits characteristics such as informality, anonymity, and counter-culturality. The language behaviors and symbol usage in graffiti include both one-way output and two-way interaction, the employment of textual and pictorial symbols, and the use of metaphors and symbolism. The construction of identity in graffiti primarily involves cultural identity, social identity, and creative identity among others. Lastly, in terms of campus graffiti management, this paper proposes effective strategies from the aspects of discourse power allocation and management, as well as feedback and reconstruction of identity construction. These strategies aim to transform disorder into order and foster an open and inclusive campus culture.

Keywords

Campus wall graffiti, Identity construction, Graffiti management, Discourse governance

1. Introduction

In contemporary university campuses, graffiti serves as a common yet informal form of expression that is widely present in public spaces such as classrooms, libraries, and corridors. It has become a distinctive means for students to express their personal views and emotions, engage in social interaction and communication, demonstrate cultural expression and identity, and provide information

and prompts. On one hand, graffiti is considered an alternative discourse form that stands in opposition to formal education and mainstream culture. Compared to formal academic discourse or verbal expressions, graffiti on campus walls possesses characteristics of informality, involvement in counter-mainstream culture and marginal topics, anonymity, informal modes of dissemination, and involvement of marginalized creators and audiences (Ding, 2015). On the other hand, graffiti carries the voices and pursuit of identity construction for individuals and groups within the campus community. As a form of marginal discourse, it reveals hidden aspects of identity and social marginalization. In campus communities, graffiti is often created by a minority or specific group of students who may come from different cultural, ethnic, or social backgrounds. Their voices and perspectives are not fully represented in formal education and mainstream culture. The non-traditional discourse features of graffiti provide students with a spontaneous and free creative space to express their thoughts, emotions, and identity (Brown, 1978). The words, symbols, and images in graffiti can be regarded as important elements of identity construction, reflecting students' personalities, cultural backgrounds, and social concepts.

Therefore, conducting an in-depth study on how students use wall graffiti for identity construction and the formation of multiple identities using the framework of marginal discourse analysis within the critical discourse analysis can contribute to understanding the process of identity formation for marginalized groups, the interweaving and conflicts of multiple identities, and the power dynamics and resistance within marginal discourses. From a theoretical research perspective, this study interprets non-typical pragmatic phenomena from a cultural perspective, not only innovating research paradigms in pragmatics but also expanding the scope of discourse studies and enriching the diversity of campus research. It is conducive to promoting inclusive research. From a social practice perspective, by studying identity construction in graffiti, insights into the interaction patterns, sense of belonging, and shared values within the student community can be gained, leading to a better understanding of the social marginalization of these marginalized groups in the university environment and their contributions and challenges to the campus community. This, in turn, can provide valuable insights for campus management and educational policies, promoting positive social interaction and group identification.

Taking a language-focused university in Beijing, China as an example, this study analyzes the ways and content of identity construction in campus graffiti using the theoretical and methodological framework of marginal discourse analysis. It interprets the identity construction process, reflecting identity recognition and social marginalization, and provides constructive suggestions for the governance of campus graffiti discourse, aiming to enhance the understanding of the diversity and complexity of university campus communities and promote the construction of an inclusive, diverse, and democratic campus culture.

2. Literature Review

In this part, the author will review the existing literature on graffiti and identity construction research, in order to identify the current research gaps and develop a framework for conducting marginal discourse analysis on identity construction in university campus wall graffiti.

2.1 Graffiti Research

Etymologically, the term "graffiti" derives from the Greek word "graphein," meaning "to write," and the Italian word "graffio," meaning "scratch" or "etching" (Reisner, 1974). Initially, graffiti referred to illegal drawings, paintings, or markings made on public places such as walls, bridges, or other structures. Over time, the concept has evolved to encompass a broader range of expressions, including street art, murals, and other forms of creative communication. Scholars have further categorized graffiti into public graffiti, which refers to anonymous markings in public spaces like building facades, transportation facilities, and fences, and private graffiti, which includes concealed markings within buildings, although these categories are not mutually exclusive (Abel & Buckley, 1977; Schwartz & Dovidio, 1984). In this study, the term "graffiti" specifically refers to the textual and pictorial graffiti found on the inner walls of classrooms.

Graffiti's origins can be traced back to ancient times, even as far as the Roman era, where similar forms of carving and marking were observed. Graffiti has long been a subject of interest for researchers due to its complex nature. Research on graffiti is more active in foreign countries compared to domestic research, partly due to historical conditions and relatively liberal socio-cultural environments. Particularly in the 1970s, with the rise of street culture and youth subcultures, graffiti emerged as a unique art form that expresses individual and collective viewpoints, emotions, and identities, with notable examples found in the hip-hop culture of New York. Early graffiti research focused on studying graffiti as an art form. According to Plesch (2002), graffiti inscriptions found on sacred images inside churches in Italy and elsewhere were regarded as acts of devotion, where pilgrims left graffiti to record their visits and express their desire for longevity. It was believed that writing someone's name in a holy place would grant them a longer-lasting existence than the fleeting nature of life, symbolizing "eternity."

However, current graffiti research primarily focuses on graffiti as a form of property damage and illegal behavior, rather than an artistic technique. Scholars have conducted research on graffiti from various perspectives, including its classification, functions, and causes, spanning disciplines such as linguistics, cultural studies, history, psychology, anthropology, art, and communication. For instance, Gach (1973) classified graffiti into six categories based on their characteristics: Latin graffiti, public graffiti, tag graffiti, historical graffiti, folk inscription graffiti, and humorous graffiti, providing categorization for different areas of graffiti research. Hanauer (2004) views graffiti as a specific form of communicative behavior. He argues that graffiti serves three functions: allowing marginalized information to enter public discourse, providing individuals with opportunities to openly express controversial content, and enabling marginalized groups to express their opinions publicly. The discovery of the social

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communicative function of graffiti opens up new avenues for its application in various fields. Many studies have linked graffiti research to political protests, social activism, and urban identity. Pietrosanti (2010) states that political groups use graffiti as a communication tool. The main themes of political graffiti relate to labor conditions, freedom, political power, unemployment, religious ideas, and civil rights. Muth (2014) found that in the capital city of Chișinău, Moldova, official street signs were presented in Romanian (Latin script), while next to them, Russian (Cyrillic script) street names were painted as graffiti on the walls. This graffiti expressed the writers' dissatisfaction with the marginalization of the Russian language and the official policy of Romanian as the sole official language, reflecting how graffiti serves as a means for individuals or groups to challenge existing discursive order and express political and rights claims, often driven by strong political motivations. With the introduction of the concept of language landscapes, graffiti has received attention as a form of atypical language landscape. Karlander (2019) explores the relationship between space and semiotics, suggesting that the cleaned-up graffiti landscape acquires a new symbolic meaning, deepened through the act of cleaning. The act of cleaning itself, like the act of graffiti, holds symbolic meaning, and the cleaned-up graffiti can be seen as a manifestation of strict management and power over space and location. In domestic graffiti research, due to cultural differences in the social environment, studies often focus on analyzing the paradigm of graffiti from a theoretical perspective. For example, Shang Guowen and Zhou Xianwu (2020), based on relevant foreign studies, summarized the types, characteristics, and research perspectives of atypical language landscapes, including graffiti, clarifying their value and functions as social symbols.

From the existing literature, although there is a substantial body of research on graffiti, the majority focuses on public graffiti outside of campuses, with limited attention given to the graffiti behavior and works of university students within campus environments. Moreover, the existing studies on graffiti within campus settings primarily reflect the graffiti motivations of adolescent groups. Koon-Hwee (2001) provides an explanation of adolescents' involvement in private and public graffiti from a psychological perspective, based on an anonymous survey of 50 adolescents in a small community in the Midwest of the United States. The study found that participants engaged in some form of graffiti, particularly when they felt bored or under significant stress at school. Therefore, the desire for adolescent graffiti is difficult to control, as society deems it illegal, making them more susceptible to being attracted to such activities. This highlights the need for graffiti research. However, due to the relatively limited presence of graffiti in the Chinese social and cultural context, where it is considered an informal and illegal expression conducted in public places, it has often been overlooked. Thus, there remains a research gap that needs to be filled regarding the study of wall graffiti in Chinese university campuses.

2.2 Identity Research

Post-structuralism suggests that individual identities are not fixed or eternal; instead, they are characterized by fluidity, uncertainty, temporality, multiplicity, and hybridity, increasingly displaying

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fragmented features. The construction of each identity is a specific social practice and a temporary confluence of discourses. In the field of pragmatics, identity construction research focuses on the close relationship between pragmatic behavior and individual and group identity formation. Scholars explore how pragmatic behavior reflects and shapes identity and how language use expresses and constructs individual and collective identities. The theory of identity was proposed by social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1979) in his work *Individuals and Groups in Organizations.* This theory primarily investigates how individuals form and develop their identities within society and examines the impact of identity on individual behavior and social interaction. Identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging and identification with oneself and others, and through pragmatic behavior, individuals can demonstrate and embody their identification with specific identities. Researchers analyze aspects of language use such as language choices, expressions, and discourse styles to study how pragmatic behavior reflects and shapes individual and group identity. Additionally, some studies in the field of sociolinguistics also explore the relationship between identity construction and pragmatic behavior. Sociolinguistics examines the influence of social factors on language use, including social identity, social relationships, and social status. Researchers analyze language variation, interactional styles, and language attitudes to study how pragmatic behavior reflects and shapes individual and group identity.

In recent years, research on identity construction in graffiti has tended to focus on theoretical interpretations in a general sense. For example, Ding Jianxin (2020) argues that discourse, identity, power, and subculture are the core issues of marginal discourse analysis, and analyzing contemporary Chinese graffiti from the perspective of marginal discourse analysis can better deconstruct the identity construction and identification of adolescents in graffiti subcultures, thereby enriching research on marginal discourse. This connects graffiti research, marginal discourse analysis, and identity research, opening up avenues for integrated research in these three areas. However, these studies have not started from the specific phenomenon of graffiti in a particular context to explore how graffiti created by specific groups in specific environments contributes to identity construction and what kind of identities are constructed. Therefore, to further deepen our understanding of identity construction in campus graffiti as a marginal discourse, it is necessary to collect a substantial amount of authentic language data from real-life contexts and conduct in-depth analysis.

2.3 Brief Summary of Literature Review

In conclusion, the author believes that while it is undeniable that graffiti activities cause damage to public facilities and the overall landscape, the meanings conveyed by graffiti patterns themselves are valuable. Ding Jianxin (2010) was the first to introduce the concept of "marginal discourse" in China and systematically introduced Han Lide's discourse on "counter-language," which had long been neglected in the domestic academic community, attracting attention to marginal discourse analysis. He pointed out that marginal discourse analysis, adopting the perspective of critical discourse analysis, views discourse not as a discourse or text but as a social practice and a way of generating meaning. As a form of expression, graffiti holds significant significance as a marginalized discourse within the

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context of mainstream culture. As part of socio-cultural phenomena, graffiti should not be ignored or simply viewed as destructive behavior. Furthermore, participants in campus graffiti are primarily university students who are in a stage of personal expression, with basic-formed values but not yet fully mature. From a social psychology perspective, campus wall graffiti is a form of expression that students choose to engage in despite being in a non-permitted state, representing their authentic and specific socio-psychological manifestations. Through the study of campus wall graffiti, it is possible to explore students' underlying cognitive activities and bridge the opaque parts between students and the school, parents, and other stakeholders. Research on campus graffiti helps focus on and understand the psychological states of adolescents, contributing to the alleviation of conflicts they face with the external world. Additionally, with regard to graffiti governance, it is worth noting that previous research indicates that relying on compulsory removal and institutionalized prohibition does not solve the graffiti problem and may even exacerbate students' defiance. Students may seek alternative outlets due to the failure of this expressive avenue, which is not beneficial for campus management and may even pose greater risks.

This paper aims to fill the research gap in the study of campus wall graffiti in China by employing marginal discourse analysis as a theoretical framework to explore the ways and content of identity construction in campus wall graffiti, thereby enriching research in this field. This study aims to address three main questions regarding graffiti on campus walls:

(1) What are the characteristics of marginal discourse in graffiti on campus walls?

(2) What multiple identities are constructed through campus wall graffiti and how are they constructed?

(3) How can effective campus graffiti management be approached from the perspective of identity construction?

This study is based on the collection and analysis of authentic graffiti data on the campus walls of a foreign language university in Beijing. The research process includes steps such as research design, data collection and analysis, and result discussion. During the data collection phase, a total of 307 instances of textual graffiti and 84 instances of pictorial graffiti were collected. Due to the informal nature of graffiti texts and their inherent complexity, manual transcription was primarily employed. The following analysis and discussion integrate the transcription results with relevant theories, focusing on two main aspects: identity construction in wall graffiti and the transition from identity construction to discourse management.

3. Identity Construction in Wall Graffiti

Wall graffiti, as a form of marginal discourse, plays a crucial role in identity construction. Its characteristics, including informality, anonymity, and counter-culturality, create a space for free expression and resistance. Graffiti utilizes language behaviors and symbol usage to achieve information output and two-way interaction, employing textual and pictorial symbols, metaphors, and symbolism to construct identity and meaning. In this process, multiple identities are constructed through graffiti,

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including cultural identity, social identity, creative identity, and rebellious identity. The identity construction in wall graffiti reflects not only individuals' self-identification and recognition but also their attitudes and resistance towards society, culture, and power structures.

3.1 Characteristics of Graffiti as Marginal Discourse

Graffiti, as an informal form of expression, possesses several distinct features, including informality, anonymity, and counter-culturality.

3.1.1 Informality

The informality of graffiti refers to its expression form and content being typically unconstrained by formal rules and standards, presenting a sharp contrast to formal academic discourse or oral expression. It is primarily manifested in its modes of expression, creative environment and medium, as well as content and theme selection. From a linguistic perspective, campus graffiti often employs informal language and colloquial expressions. It may include slang, popular vocabulary, simplified grammar structures, and abbreviations that differ from formal academic or written language. This informal linguistic style makes campus graffiti more relatable to the everyday lives and communication styles of students. Such proximity allows college students from different grades and backgrounds to engage in communication within the same context and identity stratum, thus eliminating traditional factors such as age, cultural background, and social status that may restrict genuine communication intentions. In the graffiti collected for this study, students used informal expressions in their expressions.

Example 1: I don't want to learn English anymore, it's so damn frustrating! (Chinese slang)   Damn it! (English slang)

Example 2: 栓 Q (shuan Q), No zuo No die (internet slang)

Example 3: nb666 (Chinese Pinyin abbreviation + internet slang)

Example 4: 语言学 boring (Translation: Linguistics, boring) (simplified grammar)

From a linguistic perspective, these examples highlight the informal nature of graffiti. In example 1, the use of "TM" represents a common Chinese slang term that conveys a sense of annoyance and anger. Similarly, "damn it" is an English slang phrase learned from exposure to American TV shows or reading English publications, expressing a burst of emotions when reaching a certain level. Example 2 features popular internet slang, combining English and Chinese language characteristics. "栓 Q" is derived from the pronunciation of the English phrase "Thank you," but in the Chinese context, it is used sarcastically to indicate disagreement with someone's behavior. "No zuo No die" is a direct translation of the Chinese phrase "不作死就不会死" (bu zuo si jiu bu hui si), which means a person who deserve the trouble if he does something terrible himself, with "作" (zuo) preserved in Chinese Pinyin. These internet slang expressions, which are directly translated, are primarily aimed at Chinese readers and humorously convey traditional life philosophies, making the underlying formal values more easily accepted. Example 3 combines Chinese Pinyin abbreviation and internet slang to create a distinct expression. Example 4 demonstrates the simplification of language in graffiti by omitting the copula verb, directly conveying an attitude and opinion towards the subject of linguistics.

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From the perspective of creative environment and medium, the aforementioned graffiti examples were captured in less conspicuous areas of classroom walls. These areas are considered spaces for free expression, where graffiti artists can freely create without formal approval or permission. Additionally, as students can also use classrooms for self-study outside of regular class hours, these graffiti may have been created during free time or after class. This informal creative environment and flexible time frame increase student engagement and freedom in creation.

In terms of content themes, graffiti often encompasses student life, campus culture, social issues, and personal expressions. In addition to the examples mentioned earlier, which reflect the challenges of language learning, philosophical reflections, praises for others, and complaints about courses, graffiti also express desires for love (e.g., "好想谈甜甜的恋爱" - "dreaming to have a sweet love"), admiration for celebrities (e.g., "朱一龙 娶我" - "Zhu Yilong, marry me"), comments on campus policies (e.g., "空调放在那里不开当摆设呀" - "Why is the air conditioner placed there and not turned on? It's just for show"), and participation in popular culture (e.g., "EDG NB"-EDG is awesome). These themes are often related to student interests and concerns, reflecting their personal voices and thoughts.

From a creative perspective, informal texts have unique advantages over formal texts in expressing individual emotions, thoughts, and attitudes. They can rapidly convey ephemeral concepts in various forms and protect creativity. Many writers and artists have created timeless works by capturing instant inspiration. For example, the brilliant physicist Albert Einstein was particularly skilled at capturing instant inspiration, with spontaneous graffiti traces found throughout his home. However, such graffiti records are highly accidental, and the recorded content may not always be useful. For public graffiti, standardization is still necessary, and creative alternatives should be explored instead of damaging public environments.

3.1.2 Anonymity

Graffiti artists often choose to remain anonymous and do not disclose their personal identities. They commonly use pseudonyms, symbols, or codes to hide their true identities, preventing them from being traced back to specific individuals.

Example 5: 希望**我**的 4 月 11 日不是二战的开始. (Translation: Hoping April 11th is not the beginning of my second time to prepare for the postgraduate entrance examination (First-person self-reference)

Example 6:

我当下很忧郁，因心中有伏空

我心比天高 命比纸薄 但我命由我不由天

我时常妄想 痴语

愿明天无忧 惬意

我喜欢醒绿

不为争气 只求心安

我要结束学生时代了

怀念或许是最好的告别

—2011 级 过客 (Translation: **Passer-by**) (Self-selected name)

Example 7: Fuck this shit!~ by **Eden** (English name)

Example 8: I love myself, what about you? - **CA** (Chinese Pinyin abbreviation)

Example 9: by ~ 2014, 1.1 (Symbol)

Example 10: 平和二越したことはない ヒトユ (Foreign language cipher)

As shown in the examples, graffiti artists employ various methods to conceal their identities. In example 1, the use of a first-person perspective not only serves as self-suggestion but also signals that this graffiti belongs to an individual. Example 2 is a short poem where the author, uncertain about the recognition of their work, establishes an identity for themselves based on their creative needs, naming themselves "a passer-by." Example 3 utilizes the more common use of an English name as a way to anonymize their identity. Example 4 represents a common method in Chinese culture, using the initials of one's name as a nickname, resulting in multiple possibilities, making the real name difficult to guess. Example 5 directly uses symbols, clearly intending to omit any personal identification. Example 6 demonstrates the use of a foreign language, commonly employed by language learners. Due to the low recognizability of less commonly studied languages, using such languages as an anonymous tool provides higher encryption, limiting the knowledge of the graffiti artist's true identity to a specific group of people.

The anonymity of graffiti allows artists to reduce social pressure and constraints. It provides a safe and private space for students to freely express their thoughts and emotions without concern for judgment or repercussions based on personal identity. In particular, when discussing non-conformist topics or venting profanity, graffiti artists can temporarily assume their "second identity" within the realm of graffiti while maintaining their public image in real life. Anonymity also fosters unity and a sense of community among graffiti artists. When everyone conceals their true identities and places themselves under the broad identity category of "graffiti artists," open and honest communication and interaction can flourish. This contributes to the formation of a supportive and encouraging community, fueling creativity and self-expression.

3.1.3 Counter-Culturality

Graffiti, as an edge discourse, often embodies resistance and opposition to mainstream culture and power structures. Counter-culturality is another important characteristic of graffiti, as artists challenge and defy the norms and constraints imposed by mainstream culture and authoritative structures through their expressions in form and content.

Campus graffiti often reflects skepticism and protest against mainstream culture. Graffiti artists express their opposition and doubt towards mainstream values, social norms, and power structures by creating patterns, texts, or symbols on walls. This counter-cultural aspect is reflected in their attempts to break conventional thinking, challenge social norms, and present different viewpoints. Furthermore, graffiti artists are unrestricted by mainstream thinking and societal expectations as they express their personal views and emotions. They strive to showcase independent thinking and unique artistic styles in their

creations, breaking away from traditional frameworks and exploring new visual and linguistic expressions.

Example 11: 上你妹的晚自习呀！(Translation: I don't want to study English anymore, so damn annoying!) (Chinese slang)

Example 12: 别报考俄语系, 千万别, 千万别 (Translation: Don't apply for the Russian language department, absolutely don't, I repeat, absolutely don't!) (Expression of dissatisfaction towards a specific department)

Example 13: "F CK, all I need is U" (Utilizing popular slang to convey affectionate intent)

Example 11 expresses a student's dissatisfaction with evening self-study sessions at school. In mainstream culture, evening self-study sessions are designed to help students consolidate their knowledge and develop disciplined study habits. However, for various reasons, the graffiti artist may question this system, possibly due to conflicts with personal arrangements. Example 12 provides reversed advice, reflecting the challenges language learners encounter and passing down course selection experiences to lower-level students. Example 13 employs less commonly used slang, creating a humorous expression that indirectly conveys admiration, showcasing independent thinking and personal style.

The reason behind campus graffiti often being created by students is that they consciously engage in resistance and differentiation from mainstream culture. With certain limitations in their course schedules and choices, students can only express their dissatisfaction through non-compliant graffiti to display their spirit of rebellion. Furthermore, the counter-cultural nature of campus graffiti is influenced by fringe cultures and subcultures. Graffiti is often associated with street culture, subcultural movements, and anti-establishment movements. These cultural backgrounds predispose graffiti artists to express their unique voices, maintaining distance from mainstream culture and power structures. Due to the increasing influence of cross-cultural exposure, students are easily influenced by other cultures they come into contact with, particularly in language-focused institutions, where they unavoidably encounter the influence of other countries' cultures. Example 14 represents students being influenced by the prevalent "aesthetic of despair" in English-speaking countries while studying their culture, mistaking certain slang as the correct expression of individuality. However, the counter-cultural aspect of campus graffiti is also influenced by artistic freedom and the pursuit of creativity. As an informal art form, graffiti grants artists the freedom of expression and creation. This enables them to showcase independent thinking and unique artistic styles in their creations, breaking away from traditional aesthetic standards. In example 14, the expression initially appears to be rebellious against tradition but upon closer examination, reveals the humor intended by the student.

Therefore, counter-cultural aspects carry the risk of corrupting outstanding mainstream culture, but they also hold the potential benefits of enriching diverse cultures. The counter-cultural nature of campus graffiti encourages students to engage in critical thinking, challenging and questioning social norms and power structures. Graffiti artists attempt to provoke observers to contemplate mainstream

culture and social issues, facilitating an understanding and discussion of different viewpoints and values. As an edge discourse form, campus graffiti provides a platform for marginalized voices and perspectives to be expressed and heard, promoting mutual communication and understanding among different groups.

3.2 Linguistic Behaviors and Symbolic Use in Identity Construction within Graffiti

linguistic behaviors and symbolic use play a fundamental role in identity construction within graffiti. Graffiti artists utilize language and symbols to express their viewpoints, emotions, and affiliations, as well as to engage in interactive communication with others. The selection of language styles, symbols, and metaphors contributes to the formation of a unique identity and facilitates the expression of individuality within the graffiti culture.

3.2.1 Unidirectional Output and Bidirectional Interaction

In graffiti, the construction of identity is primarily achieved through language behaviors and the use of symbols. Firstly, graffiti can be seen as a form of one-way output, where graffiti artists express their views, emotions, and identities through their own graffiti. At the same time, graffiti can also serve as a medium for two-way interaction among graffiti artists, allowing them to further express and shape their identities through responses and interactions with other graffiti.

Example 15:   I'M THE KING

Example 16: 理智与心相冲突，我该怎样选择？我的路在何方，现在清醒吗？现在晚了吗？2014.12.13 倒计时 14 天(Translation: The conflict between reason and the heart, how should I choose? Where is my path? Am I clear now? Is it too late? Countdown to December 13, 2014: 14 days remaining)

Example 17: A；我好恨自己，我是个废物，我什么也做不好，考不上研究生. B: 别这样说！(Translation: A: I hate myself, I'm a failure, I can't do anything well, I won't get into graduate school. B: Don't say that!)

Example 18: 【调查】什么课让你们这么无聊 1L：英概 2L：顶楼 3L：商务英语 4L：自习课 Translation: [Survey] Which class makes you so bored? 1L: English Literature 2L: Top Floor 3L: Business English 4L: Study Hall

Graffiti, as a form of one-way information output, allows graffiti artists to express their viewpoints, emotions, and thoughts through visual means such as drawing patterns, words, or symbols on walls. Graffiti artists present information visually to observers, who can then acquire and interpret the information through observing the graffiti. This one-way output characteristic makes graffiti a unique form of expression that can convey intuitive and explicit messages. Examples 15 and 16 are illustrations of one-way information output, where the graffiti artists did not intend to provoke group interaction and dialogue through their graffiti. Instead, their focus was more on directly expressing their attitudes or viewpoints. Example 15 aims to showcase the artist's confidence, attempting to elevate their identity through the text itself. Example 16, from the beginning, designates the audience of the graffiti as oneself, employing multiple rhetorical questions to highlight personal confusion without

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providing extensive information about individual circumstances, instead implying introspection.

However, graffiti also has the potential for two-way interaction. When graffiti artists interact and respond to each other's creations, graffiti can become a means of communication and dialogue. Artists can respond, comment, or supplement previous graffiti on walls. This interaction can be direct, as seen in Example 17, where an observer responds to the graffiti, offering comfort to the graffiti artist and expressing care within the community. It can also be indirect, as shown in Example 18, where a topic is presented on the wall, asking "Which class makes you so bored?" to initiate dialogue, fully utilizing the communicative function of graffiti. Through the interaction among graffiti artists, graffiti can transform into a social platform, facilitating the exchange and interaction of different viewpoints and voices, creating a shared creative space.

Two-way interactive graffiti dialogue and interaction play an important role in campus graffiti. They promote communication and collaboration among graffiti artists, fostering the exchange and collision of ideas and perspectives. Through the interaction among graffiti artists, a deeper understanding and interpretation of graffiti content can be achieved, expanding thinking and broadening horizons. Furthermore, the two-way interaction of graffiti can create a more vibrant and interactive campus environment, attracting more graffiti artists to participate in creation and forming a diverse creative community.

3.2.2 Textual Symbols and Pictorial Symbols

Symbols used in graffiti include text, letters, logos, and drawings, which are employed to express and shape the identity of graffiti artists.

Firstly, textual symbols play a significant role in graffiti. Text can take the form of words, phrases, sentences, or expressions, and is used to convey specific meanings and information. The text used in graffiti can range from formal language to slang, popular vocabulary, or terminology specific to certain communities. By selecting specific textual expressions, graffiti artists can showcase their cultural background, personal values, and identity. The use of textual symbols can also convey emotions, attitudes, political stances, social viewpoints, and more, further constructing and showcasing the identity of the graffiti artist. The previous examples provided several instances of conventional textual symbols, which straightforwardly convey the intentions of the creators and explicitly construct the image of the graffiti artists. However, there are also instances of more complex textual symbols.
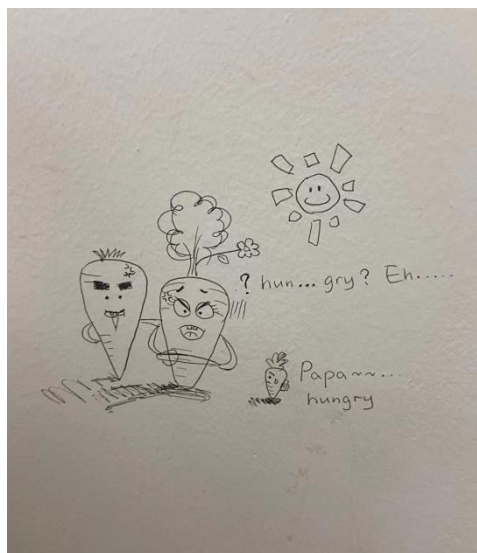
Example 19:
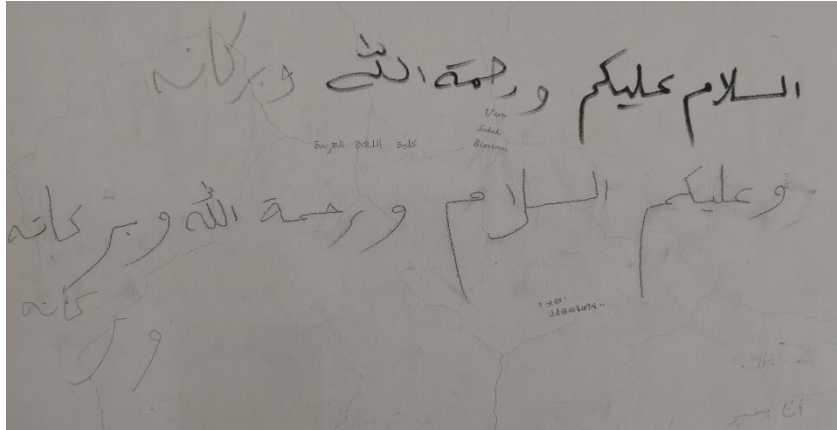
The text used in Example 19 belongs to a lesser-known language, making it difficult to recognize. By expressing themselves in this language, graffiti artists are able to highlight their identity as learners of a minority language. Furthermore, this demonstrates the practical application of the language skills they have acquired, exemplifying the positive aspect of learning a language for practical purposes. The secrecy associated with this form of text also arouses curiosity among graffiti viewers, prompting them to explore this linguistic phenomenon, which, in a sense, bestows upon them a new identity as observers.

Additionally, pictorial symbols play a significant role in graffiti. These symbols can range from simple signs, patterns, and icons to complex drawings, illustrations, or images. They are often employed to convey visual and intuitive information, serving as a visual representation of the graffiti artist's identity and personal creativity. The pictorial symbols used in graffiti can be symbolic, carrying specific cultural or social meanings, or they can be unique creations by individuals. By selecting specific pictorial symbols, graffiti artists can express their interests, passions, aesthetic perspectives, and personal characteristics.
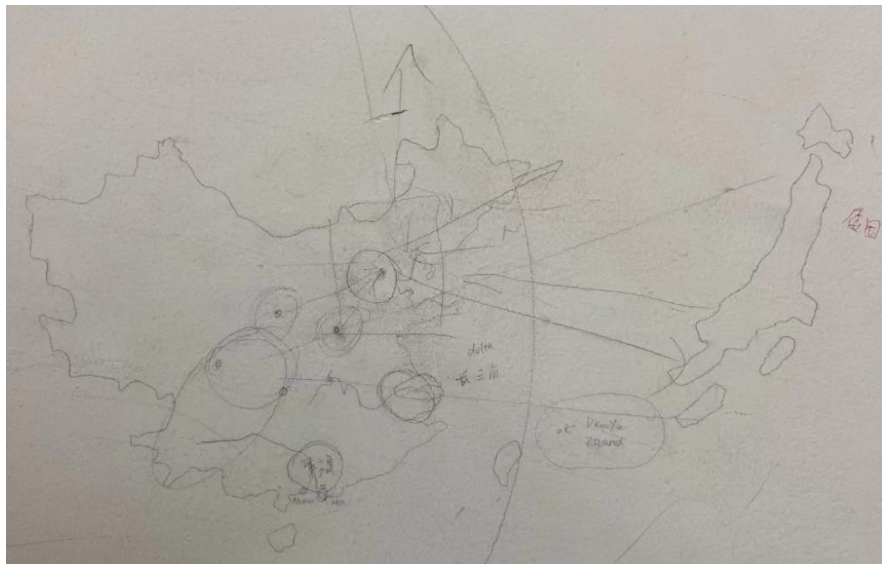
Example 20:

Example 21:

Example 22:

Example 20 conveys the signal of "hunger" in an adorable manner, showcasing the inner childlike innocence that exists within a college student. By transforming the originally negative image of the graffiti artist into a depiction of a child expressing a physiological need, the negative emotions associated with evaluating graffiti behavior are significantly diminished for viewers. In Example 21, watercolors are intentionally employed in the graffiti to create an image of a professional painter. The artist chooses to create their work on the wall instead of paper, possibly to demonstrate their painting skills while also acknowledging the decorative function of the artwork on the wall. Example 22 presents a depiction of a world map vividly describing the Diaoyu Islands dispute. Through visual imagery, it illustrates that the Diaoyu Islands and their affiliated islets have been China's inherent territory since ancient times, and the Japanese side's disregard for historical evidence and its acts of seizure are unjust. As a result, it fosters a sense of historical literacy and a strong sense of patriotism among college students, eliciting resonance within the crowd.

The use of textual and pictorial symbols serves multiple functions in graffiti. Firstly, they aid graffiti

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artists in establishing their own identity and associating themselves with specific cultures, groups, or social movements. By selecting specific symbols and images, graffiti artists express their affiliation with social groups, cultural backgrounds, or identity, thereby shaping their unique identity within campus graffiti. Secondly, textual and pictorial symbols can convey emotions and attitudes. Graffiti artists can express their views and attitudes towards social issues, political matters, personal experiences, or emotional states by choosing specific words and images. Such expression of emotions and attitudes contributes to the construction of the artist's personal image and identity features. Lastly, the use of textual and pictorial symbols facilitates visual and linguistic communication in graffiti. Artists employ these symbols to convey information, share perspectives, and engage with observers. Through interpreting the textual and pictorial symbols in graffiti, observers establish a linguistic dialogue and communication with the graffiti artists. This communication enriches the campus graffiti culture and promotes the expression and understanding of diverse voices. Interpreting these texts requires an objective analysis of the signals conveyed and the functions achieved by the graffiti, devoid of biases against graffiti as a counter-cultural movement.

3.2.3 Metaphor and Symbolization

The use of metaphors and symbolic symbols in graffiti contributes to the construction of deeper levels of identity and meaning. Firstly, a metaphor refers to the use of one thing or concept to imply or represent another thing or concept. In graffiti, metaphors can be expressed through drawings, words, or symbols. By employing metaphors, graffiti artists establish a connection between a certain concept or viewpoint and their identity, enabling a more expressive and profound approach to identity construction. For example, using the image of a bird as a metaphor for freedom and independence, or using chains as a metaphor for confinement and oppression, these metaphorical forms can be utilized in graffiti to convey the artist's identification and expression of their identity. Among the collected images in this study, one prominent metaphorical symbol is the use of heart shapes. In addition to that, facial expressions and self-created graphics are also observed as metaphorical representations.

Example 22:
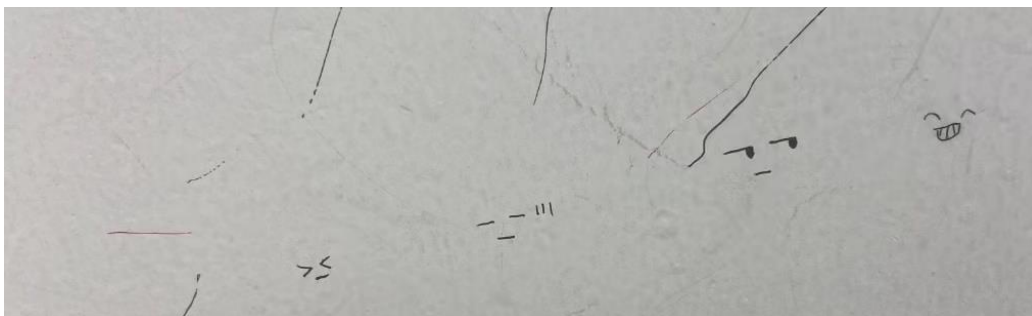
Example 23:
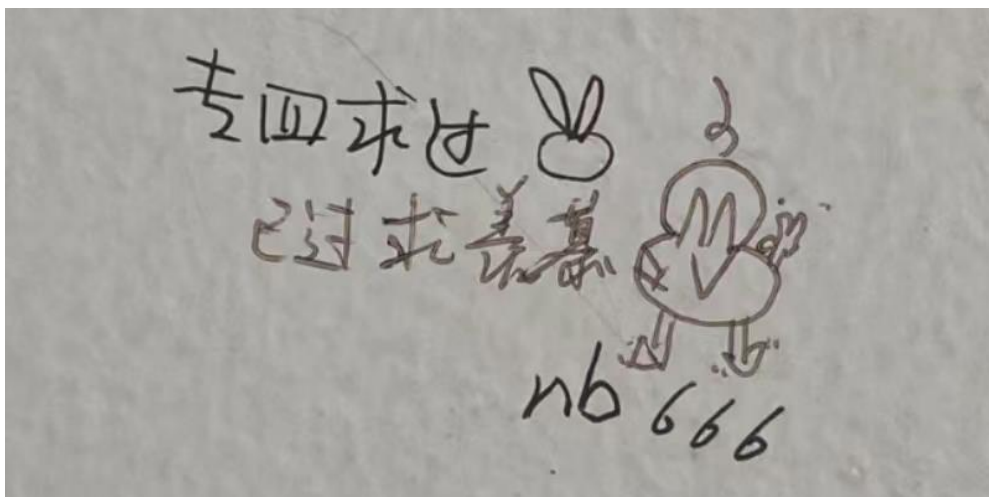
Example 22 employs a series of emoticons to symbolize the artist's changing emotions. Furthermore, symbolism refers to the representation of specific meanings or concepts through symbols or images. In graffiti, the use of symbolic symbols can convey the identity and characteristics of the graffiti artist. The artist selects specific symbols or images to become symbols of their identity. These symbols may have shared meanings in culture or society, such as using a national flag to represent national identity or using heart-shaped patterns to represent love and care. By choosing symbolic symbols, graffiti artists can evoke resonance and understanding of their identity and values among observers. In Example 23, the praying scissors gesture symbolizes the artist's anticipation for passing the TEM-4 (Test for English Majors - Band 4) examination, which represents a special identity for students majoring in foreign languages.

Furthermore, metaphors and symbolism can convey implicit and profound meanings and emotions. By employing metaphors and symbolism, graffiti artists can convey richer and more complex information through concise and intuitive expressions, allowing observers to understand and interpret graffiti through the meanings and symbolism of the symbols. It also creates a sense of shared experience and resonance with the observers. When observers can understand the metaphors and symbolism used in graffiti, they establish an emotional and identifying connection with the graffiti artist. This shared experience promotes understanding and identification of the graffiti artist's identity and increases resonance and appreciation for their graffiti works. Finally, the use of metaphors and symbolism enriches the creativity and artistic nature of graffiti. Graffiti artists demonstrate their creativity and artistic talent by selecting unique metaphors and symbolism. They can express their identity and viewpoints in non-traditional ways and create unique and expressive works through the combination of symbols and images.

3.3 Multiple Identities Constructed in Graffiti

Wall graffiti serves as a platform for diverse expressions, allowing individuals to construct multiple identities related to culture, society, creativity, resistance, and more.

3.3.1 Cultural Identity

The cultural symbols and signs used in graffiti can represent specific cultural identities. Graffiti artists can utilize various cultural symbols, patterns, logos, and words to express their sense of belonging and identification with a particular culture. For instance, they may use national flags, ethnic totems, or traditional decorations to showcase their cultural identity. The previously mentioned Example 2, which features unique phonetic characters in the Chinese language, and Example 22, which includes labeled locations on a map of China, both reflect the characteristics of Chinese culture. These cultural markers foster cultural identification among communities, enabling viewers to immediately understand the meaning of the graffiti and willingly engage in interactive discussions related to the graffiti's topic.

Furthermore, language and writing in graffiti are important elements in constructing cultural identity. Graffiti artists can employ specific languages, dialects, slang, or culture-specific writing systems to express their cultural background and group affiliation. The use of such language and writing helps graffiti artists establish resonance and understanding with observers who share the same cultural background. Example 1, which features Chinese slang and English slang, exemplifies the uniqueness of identity traits between different cultures. The tendency to use slang can also shed light on the cultural influences that shape the characteristics of the graffiti artists.

Moreover, cultural themes and subjects depicted in graffiti can also reflect the cultural identity of the artists. Graffiti artists can select themes and subjects that are relevant to their own culture and express their identification and pride through images, words, and symbols. These graffiti artworks can serve as a means of cultural inheritance and expression. In the collected graffiti for this study, the researcher observed that graffiti artists frequently incorporate Chinese poetry.

Example 24: 本来无一物，何处惹尘埃 (Translation: Originally, nothing was there; where does the dust come from?)

Example 25: 滚滚长江东逝水，浪花淘尽英雄 (Translation: The rolling Yangtze River flows eastward; waves wash away heroes.)

Example 26: 是非成败转头空，青山依旧在，几度夕阳红 (Translation: Success or failure turns around in an instant; green mountains remain, and the sunset glows red multiple times.)

Examples 24, 25, and 26 are excerpts from classic Chinese poetry, demonstrating that graffiti artists are inclined to use renowned verses from Chinese cultural classics to express their emotions or attitudes. This reflects their recognition and inheritance of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. They take pride in Chinese culture and, inadvertently, assume the role of promoters of Chinese traditional culture.

3.3.2 Social Identity

Graffiti can showcase an individual's social status, roles, social relationships, as well as their attitudes and opinions towards social issues and phenomena. Graffiti artists can express their relationships and sense of belonging to specific social groups through their artworks. They may use specific symbols, signs, or words to indicate their affiliation with a particular social group, organization, or movement. This mode of expression helps graffiti artists establish connections, convey messages, and display their

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social identities within society. The identity of being a fan is particularly prominent in this study, as graffiti artists declare their membership in fan communities through written forms. For example, showing support for the EDG team among eSports enthusiasts, expressing admiration for actors like Zhu Yilong among TV drama fans, or displaying support for Lang Lang among music enthusiasts.

Graffiti artists can also use graffiti to express their attitudes and perspectives on social issues and phenomena. They can employ images, words, or symbols to convey their concerns and protests against injustice, inequality, environmental issues, and more. This form of expression showcases graffiti artists' social identities as participants and observers in society. Examples 11 and 12 reflect the dissatisfaction of graffiti artists with the school's course selection system and curriculum arrangement. They appear as rebels, pointing out certain problems, but have yet to find further solutions.

Furthermore, there is a form of resistance where graffiti observers oppose the act of graffiti itself, embodying the identity of maintaining social order.

Example 27: 请勿乱写乱画 评论: 完全同意楼上, 以身作则, 好好写字, 切莫乱写, 有失体面, 此大不敬也. (Translation: Do not write or draw randomly. Comment: I completely agree with the previous comment. Lead by example, write neatly, do not scribble randomly, it is undignified and disrespectful.)

Example 27 illustrates the image of individuals within the student community who uphold the cultural landscape of the campus and resonates with a comment expressing collective agreement. It indicates that there are individuals among graffiti artists who are conscious and engage in irrational actions to achieve rational results. If graffiti management can be achieved through internal identity recognition within the graffiti community, it can better address graffiti-related issues.

3.3.3 Creative Identity

As a form of creative expression, graffiti can showcase an individual's creativity, artistic talent, and aesthetic sensibilities. Graffiti artists can demonstrate their creative identities through their unique artistic styles and techniques. They can use specific painting techniques, pattern designs, color application, and more to showcase their artistic talent and creativity. These artistic styles and techniques become personal identifiers and identity features for graffiti artists. This characteristic can be observed in the pictorial graffiti of examples 20, 21, and 22, each representing different identity characteristics of the graffiti artists. Example 20 leans towards a casual style, merely presenting the image of a cute student. Example 21 carries an artistic atmosphere that creates a distance between the graffiti artist and the viewer. Example 22 has a cultural focus, portraying the image of a patriotic individual with a high thematic intent. Although all in the form of pictorial representation, they construct different identities and characteristics.

Through the expression of creative identity, graffiti artists can achieve self-expression in terms of their personalities and thoughts. Graffiti works can serve as a medium for artists to express their inner emotions, reflections, and ideas, helping them showcase their unique artistic perspectives and creative thinking. Moreover, graffiti works can serve as a medium for artistic dialogue and collaborative

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creation, fostering exchange and collaboration within the art community, enriching the diversity and creativity of graffiti culture.

4. From Identity Construction to Discourse Governance

The graffiti discourse governance need to be carried out from two aspects, namely, the allocation and management of discourse power and reconstruction of identity construction.

4.1 Allocation and Management of Discourse Power

In the governance process of campus graffiti, it is crucial to consider the discourse rights of graffiti participants and seek appropriate ways to balance the freedom of expression in graffiti with the maintenance of campus order.

Firstly, the freedom of expression of graffiti participants should be respected and protected. Graffiti, as an informal form of marginalized discourse, carries the viewpoints, emotions, and creativity of graffiti artists. Students, as major actors in school management, not only possess the right to express themselves but also should comply with the school's regulations. They have the most direct experiences and observations regarding various school issues, enabling them to identify critical problems, such as course arrangement, difficulty level, and the usage of public facilities. Therefore, when governing campus graffiti, the freedom of expression of graffiti artists should be respected, allowing them to express their viewpoints and identities within appropriate boundaries.

Secondly, the maintenance of campus order and environment is also an important consideration. Excessive, improper, or illegal graffiti activities may have negative impacts on the campus environment and order. The governance of campus graffiti requires the establishment of appropriate norms and management measures to ensure a clean, stable, and safe campus environment.

Specifically, schools can develop clear graffiti policies and regulations that define acceptable types of graffiti and designated areas for graffiti activities. This can help to balance the needs of freedom of expression and campus order to some extent. Furthermore, schools can provide dedicated creative spaces and platforms for graffiti artists, such as graffiti walls or art exhibition areas, to encourage and guide them in engaging in legal and welcomed graffiti activities. This helps to control the scope and content of graffiti while meeting the creative needs of graffiti artists. Moreover, schools can actively promote dialogue and participation, communicating and engaging with graffiti artists to understand their needs and perspectives. Through interaction with graffiti artists, a better understanding of their identity construction motives can be gained, leading to appropriate adjustments in graffiti management.

4.2 Feedback and Reconstruction of Identity Construction

Graffiti, as a form of identity construction, can be used to understand graffiti artists' identity identification and needs through the observation and analysis of graffiti feedback. Firstly, through observing the feedback of graffiti works, one can understand the graffiti artists' identity identification within the campus environment. Changes in themes, symbols, and styles chosen by graffiti artists can reveal their identity transformations and needs. This feedback information can serve as a basis for

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adjusting graffiti management strategies and providing support.

Secondly, graffiti feedback can be used for the reconstruction and adjustment of graffiti artists' identities. Through interaction and feedback from graffiti artists, one can understand their perceptions and evaluations of their own graffiti works. This feedback can help graffiti artists reflect on their identity construction process, reconsider their viewpoints, creative approaches, and goals, and make necessary adjustments and improvements.

Lastly, through feedback and reconstruction in graffiti, the growth and development of graffiti artists' identities can be fostered. Graffiti artists can utilize feedback information to enhance their creativity and artistic skills, expand their means of identity expression, and better achieve the goals and significance of identity construction.

In conclusion, the governance of campus graffiti should adhere to a proactive approach, transforming disorderly graffiti activities into organized forms of expression through reasonable regulations and management. This helps shape a positive environment for student identity construction, promotes the development of students' artistic expression abilities and creativity, and maintains a favorable state of campus order and environment.

5. Conclusion

In campus graffiti, graffiti artists construct multiple identities through their linguistic behaviors and the use of symbols. As an alternative form of discourse, graffiti possesses characteristics of informality, anonymity, and counter-culture. Graffiti artists engage in information dissemination through both one-way output and two-way interaction. They utilize written and pictorial symbols to express their identity and employ metaphors and symbols to create deeper layers of meaning. Graffiti demonstrates multiple identities in the process of identity construction, including cultural identity, social identity, creative identity, and resistance identity. Graffiti artists can express their cultural background, social status, creativity, and spirit of resistance through their graffiti works, thereby shaping unique identity constructions within the campus context.

From the perspective of identity construction, effective management of campus graffiti should consider the allocation and management of discursive power, aiming to strike a balance between the freedom of expression in graffiti and the maintenance of campus order. Additionally, graffiti management should pay attention to the feedback and reconstruction of graffiti. By observing and analyzing the feedback from graffiti, insights into the identity needs of graffiti artists can be obtained, enabling adjustments and reconstructions of identity construction. Furthermore, proactive measures should be taken to address the issue of disorder in campus graffiti. Through regulation and management, disorderly graffiti can be transformed into orderly forms of expression, thereby fostering the positive growth of student identity construction.

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