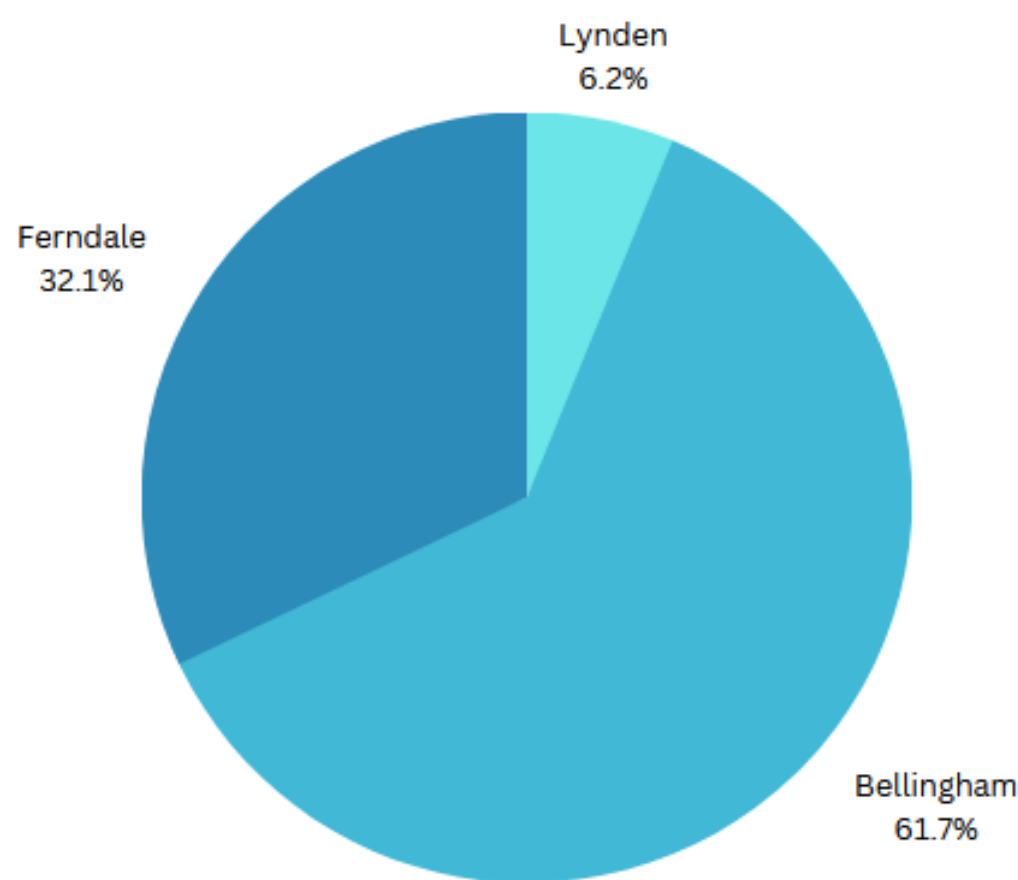


Introduction

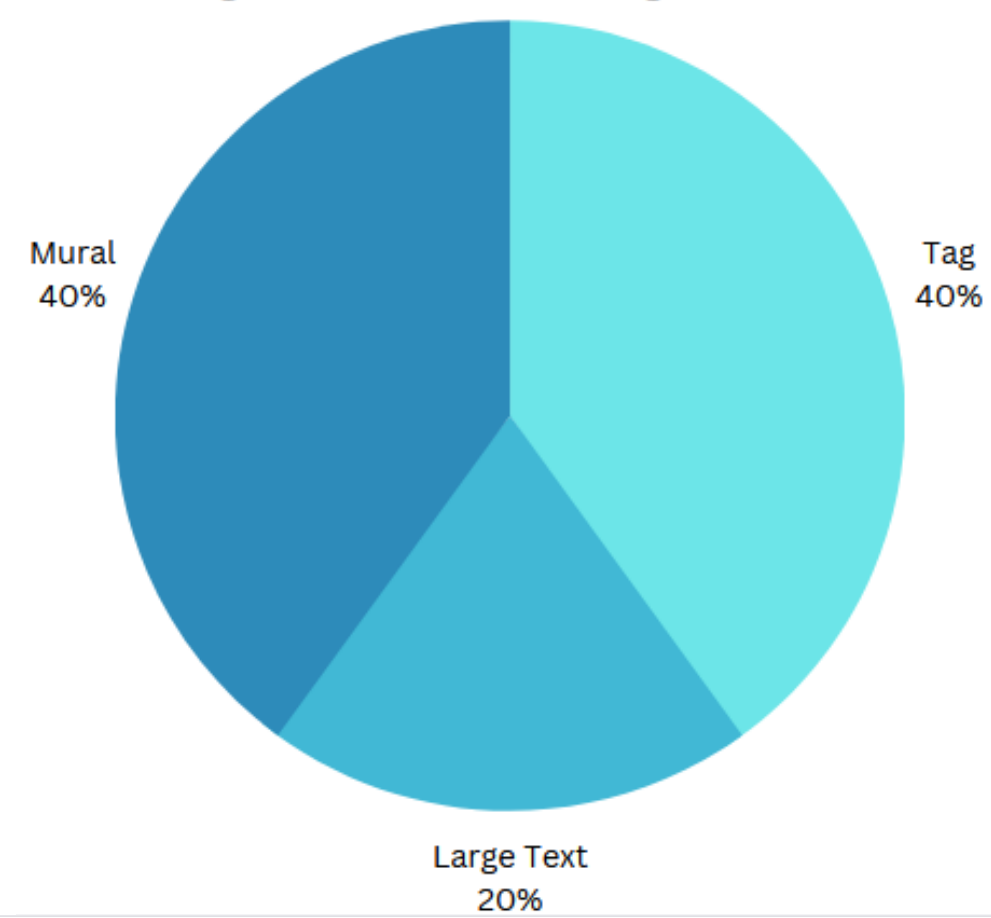
Though often stereotyped as a product of inner-city crime or the work of particularly rebellious teenagers, the truth of graffiti is not confined to a simplistic narrative set to cast moral judgment upon its practitioners. When one observes the graffiti bled into every corner of the streets they walk, they come to see a reflection of the local community instead of a deviation from it. There are poems, stories, and swirling canvases of art that are scattered onto the backs of signs and alleyway corners. Political pieces are commonplace, dotting the landscape with declarations like a hammer and sickle motif or blood-red lettering declaring "ALL EYES ON WETSUWEN." Still, more often, the messages are commonplace; a proposal under the bridge asking, "Marry me Lily," a lighthearted reprimand of "you really suck kid" etched onto a train, an ostentatious "Go Lions!" in yellow and green. Our goal was to map common graffiti trends and learn about what influences graffiti.

Locations and Amounts of Graffiti

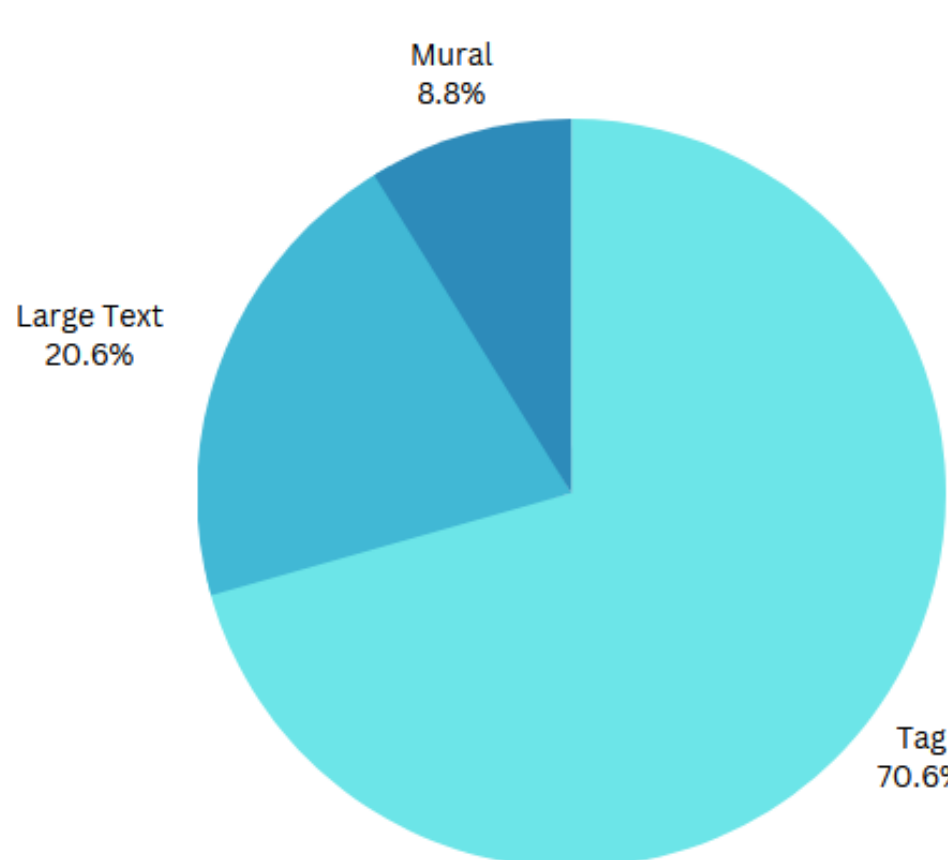
Graffiti Amounts



Lynden Types



Bellingham Types



Ferndale Types

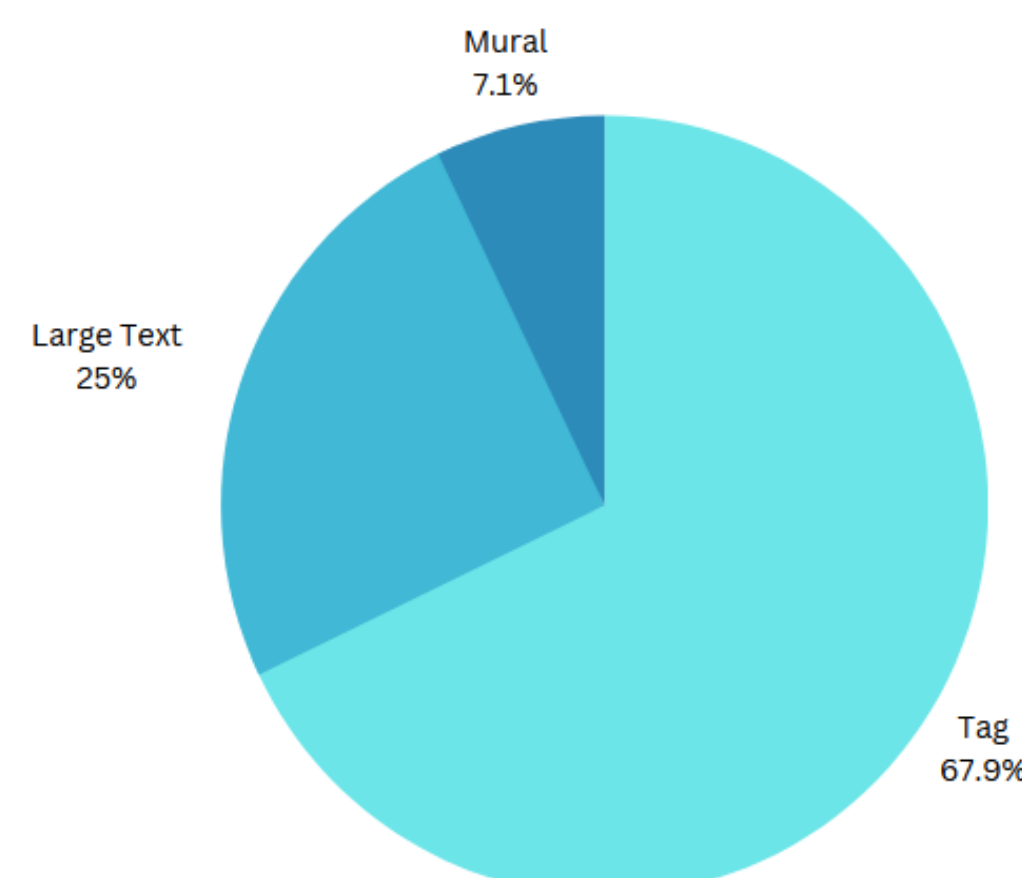


Figure 1. The above pie charts shows the number of graffiti we found in different areas, along with what kinds of graffiti we found in those areas. The pie chart in the top left, shows how much total graffiti we found in each town. The other 3 pie charts show how much of each type of graffiti we found in the respective towns.

Graffiti Trends in Whatcom County

Brent J, Claire F, Harneet S, Justin H

ANTH 204: Archaeology

Research Question & Background

Knowing that history is often repeated, we decided to look to the past to find what influences graffiti. After the eruption in Pompeii, the city's graffiti was preserved. Looking at this, you can find similarities between our findings and ancient graffiti. For example, in the basilica, there are tags such as "Epaphra, you are bald" and "O walls, you have held up so much tedious graffiti that I am amazed you have not already collapsed in ruin" (Kashgar). Also, 37% of the graffiti found and translated were name/tags, but also many ads (Lohmann). A professional graffiti artist named Aemilius Celer also was hired to write ads for events such as gladiator fights and political debates. No matter the era, graffiti was practiced and influenced by society and culture.

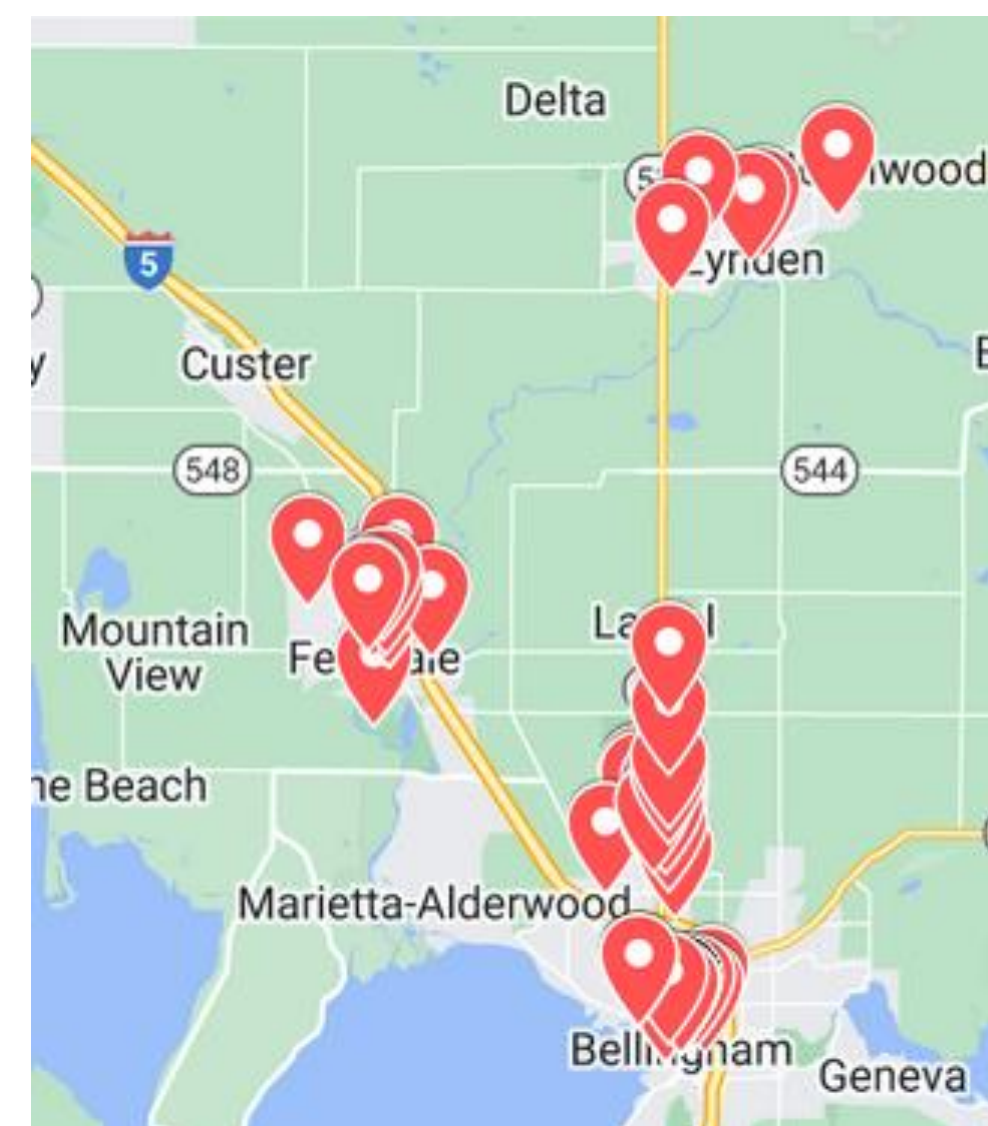


Figure 2. This is a map with every documented piece of graffiti we found marked with a red marker. The main clusters are in Lynden, Bellingham, and Ferndale in Washington state. The top QR code is to access the graffiti images, and the bottom one is for the map!



Methods

Materials & Location

To conduct our research, we needed a camera, a GPS, a notepad and writing utensils, and a mode of reliable transportation. We conducted our research between November 10th and 15th in Lynden, Bellingham, Ferndale, and along the Guide Meridian in Washington state.

Procedure

First, each of us chose a location in Whatcom County. One person chose Lynden and the Guide Meridian, another chose Ferndale, and two chose Bellingham (because of how large Bellingham is). Then, we went to our location(s) and found up to 10 different areas to record graffiti. We took a picture of the graffiti at each location and recorded where we found it, along with any other initial observations.

Interpretations, Implications & Limitations

- As shown in the graphs, location plays a role in the type and amount of graffiti. In primarily residential areas, there were minimal amounts, while in shopping districts and industrial regions, it was abundant. This could be because of more foot traffic (often teens) in shopping areas. We also found that the most common type of graffiti in Whatcom County is tags and that anything can influence graffiti, supporting our hypothesis.
 - An issue that skewed our data was that there was more than one piece/type of graffiti in many locations, so we counted every piece of graffiti that was visible. Another problem we ran into is that some areas have graffiti that covers buildings. This made it nearly impossible to record every piece. Therefore, we decided that each person would collect up to 10 different areas with graffiti. Each area recorded could have multiple parts, but each person would only have to go to 10 locations. We chose about ten sites each because we wanted to represent the town's overall graffiti presence.
- Lynden did not have ten different locations with graffiti, and Bellingham had more than 10, which helps us determine why some towns have more graffiti than others. We can compare the type of town, the population, the essential values of the city, and even what events the towns host (school events, political events, festivals, etc.) Another limitation was that we could have missed some graffiti, such as tiny tags, which are hard to find.
- We learned that a couple of reasons Lynden has so little graffiti could be because it's primarily residential, is a town with stricter religious ideologies and expectations, or because the town's population is primarily residents over 50 and children under 18. We discovered that many variables play a part in graffiti trends; the population's average age, town values, current events, a town's views on art, etc.
- For future archaeologists who want to replicate and expand upon our research, we recommend starting with a large group of individuals to gather even more graffiti for a more accurate representation.

Figure 3: an example of the graffiti that was found.

"Matu"



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