

Bowdoin College

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2021

### Reflections questionnaire response by Annabel Winterberg on March 20, 2021

Annabel Winterberg

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Respondent

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34:03  
Time to complete

1. Name - please select "anonymous" or enter your name in the "other" field. \*

- Anonymous
- 

2. What is your relationship to Bowdoin? \*

- Student
- Faculty
- Staff
- Alumni
- 

3. If applicable, what is your Bowdoin class year?

4. Has your connection to Bowdoin changed during the pandemic? If so, how?

When the pandemic happened I was in the Spring of my junior year. This campus felt like home to me and it was the place I was happiest. In some ways leaving last Bowdoin felt like a breakup. Now I'm back for my last semester and I'm happy but I don't feel as secure here I used to. This school doesn't feel like it's for me anymore.

## 5. What has it been like to teach/learn/work remotely/continue to work in person?

In some ways it's not that different than before. Online discussions can kind of function as real ones and the readings and reflections don't change. What's mostly missing is the little moments: bonding with your classmates before the professor arrives, hearing people laugh at something the professor says. The little moments of humanity aren't quite there.

## 6. Who and what comforted you during this time? What has sustained you?

My friends have been a real comfort for me. I found ways to stay in touch with a lot of them, even when we were all living at home. In the fall of my senior year I moved to Philadelphia for a few months with some Bowdoin friends and that turned out to be an amazing decision.

## 7. What is one thing you created or learned during the last year?

I have learned that I have the potential in me to survive great tragedy. I've also learned that living through history is a lot more normal than you think it is.

## 8. What have been your social connections in this time of physical isolation?

I got a lot closer to my father when I was living at home because we were often the only two people in the house. My roommate and I also talk almost every day no matter what. It always feels like she's there even if she isn't. Beyond that though, my social connections have been a lot less regular.

## 9. Which moments will you remember? What would you like to forget?

I don't if I would like to forget anything. I certainly would never like to feel some of this again: the loneliness, the hopelessness, the increasing distrust in the world. But I've also found a lot of moments of joy. The clarity of how much I loved my friends at my makeshift 21st birthday party in the liminal week when we had to evacuate campus. Dancing on a rooftop in Philadelphia the day that Biden won the election. Walking back onto campus for the first time in months and joy filling up my soul. I want to keep all that with me.

10. If you'd known that you'd be so isolated for so long, what might you have done differently?

I would have done even more in the time before this pandemic happened. I would have said no less, taken more opportunities, watched that movie with my friends before I went to bed. During the pandemic I also would have reached out for help sooner and paced myself more.

11. Have you had COVID-19 and/or have you been vaccinated against COVID-19? What was that like?

I have not had COVID-19. However, I did live in an apartment with 4 other people who were all COVID positive. That was a really scary few weeks because our lease was up, but we couldn't leave because we weren't sure if I was negative or not. But I never caught it. I got tested like 3 times and it always came back negative. We got the lease extended and actually had a pretty fun "COVID Thanksgiving".

12. Several significant news events have occurred during the pandemic, including the antiracist uprising, the U.S. presidential election, and the insurrection at the Capitol. Was your experience of these events impacted by the pandemic? If so, how?

All of these events deeply affected my college experience. I'm white, but I come from a blended mixed race family. Since I was living at home, George Floyd and what followed meant a lot of really hard but important conversations with my family. For the election I was living in Philadelphia, living with 4 other Bowdoin seniors. I remember in the high state of emotion leading up to everything. We would gather in the kitchen kitchen for major news events like Trump getting COVID or RBG dying. The night of the election we watched got cheesesteaks from a local place, watched the results come in and drank. And drank and drank. It felt like we were living on pins and needles that whole week. But then that Saturday we woke up to the news Biden won. And we were in the city where it happened! It literally felt like we were watching history happen before our eyes. Up on the rooftops people were dancing and drinking at 11am. The parks were packed people and the whole city was infused with joy. We walked around for hours and then bought our first bottle of champagne to celebrate. The captiol insurrection happened in the middle of my mock trial practice. I had been watching the proceedings on C-SPAN all morning and it was on the background as we talked about case theory. Then, as we realized what was happening, our eyes became glued to the screens in front of us. On a zoom call we expressed disbelief and horror for several hours as everything unfolded.

13. What are the challenges you are currently facing?

I graduate in a few months and I'm finding a lot of trouble finding a job. I see post after post online about students who are deep in debt and grad school and can't find work. So I'm really scared to pursue that path. But also all the applications I'm sending out are just met with silence or rejection. I'm really worried that all this work I've done in college has been for nothing.

14. If you are self-isolating with family, how is that impacting your experience?

I am not currently but I isolated with my family from March-August and December-January 2020/2021. It was hard. I love my family, but I feel as if I grew into a different person in college and I didn't fit in there anymore. It felt like all the independence I had worked to cultivate has slipped away and I felt pretty much useless.

15. What are you most looking forward to, when pandemic-related restrictions have been lifted? Do you think your post-pandemic life will be different from your pre-pandemic life? In what ways?

I'm mostly excited to not feel guilt for wanting to feel like a human. To be able to hang with a friend without feeling like I am a bad person. For going to a restaurant to not feel like a crime. I'm also excited to meet new people and form new connections. I don't know how life will be different, but I hope the good parts from the past will remain. If I wear masks more so be it, but I hope the joy of human connection can no longer be stigmatized.

16. What do you think you will remember most about this time? What would you like people in the future to understand about your current experience?

I think I'm going to remember a really bitter feeling of loneliness and despair. But I'm also going to remember a lot of good moments from my last semester here. The overall feeling will be bittersweet

17. This space is for any reflections you'd like to put here. (4000 character limit)

18. By checking the box below, you agree to allow your answers to be added to the Documenting Bowdoin & COVID-19 archive of the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives and made available openly and permanently online. \*

I agree to the above terms.