

THE DECONSTRUCTION AND REFORMATION OF COMMUNITY AND ITS PLACE
ATTACHMENT AMONG WARREN WILSON COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE WAKE OF
COVID-19

By

Riley Francis

In

Sociology

Submitted to the
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Warren Wilson College

Advisor: Ben Feinberg

2021

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal functioning of and social processes throughout the world. Warren Wilson College, as have at other colleges across the country and the world, has had to respond and adapt to these changes. Much of the focus of how COVID-19 has impacted higher education has been superficial and mostly focused on its structure, not yet looking in-depth into student experiences. Using mixed methods, this paper focuses on changes the COVID-19 pandemic has caused among the student community and its attachment to the traditional, physical Warren Wilson campus. These changes are examined through the lens of cultural geography, disaster studies and other concepts like liminality. The WWC student community attachment to place has always been and will continue to be important to its community identity in general. With the Spring 2020 closure as the inciting incident, sense of community and community attachment to place, particularly the physical campus has shifted and become disrupted. This attachment to place is both influenced by and frames changes happening within the student community. At the center of these changes is a dichotomy between solidarity and division. Shared experiences among students have been a site for solidarity, while factors like decreased social interactions and greater time confined to living spaces have worked to fragment the student community. Other factors, such as individual stress, comfort, familiarity, and the impact of online learning also play a role in these changes.

Introduction

The way people around the world relate to their communities and the spaces they interact with has been radically altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Definitions of social distance in public spaces have been shattered and thus the ways we interact in public spaces (Romania 2020). The way institutions of higher education have been affected by the spatial disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is especially striking. In spring of 2020, colleges across the United States suddenly closed their campuses and evacuated students away from campuses in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Then, in the fall, colleges that did not choose to remain online-only had to undergo massive changes at the administrative level and adapt their own campuses to have adequate COVID-19 mitigation measures in order to reopen (Blankenberger and Williams 2020).

Warren Wilson College is no stranger to this phenomenon. On March 17th 2020, at 3:49 PM, an email entitled “Campus Closure: Message From President Lynn Morton” was sent through the Student-I email group. Students had three days, one hour, and eleven minutes to pack up their stuff, wrap up whatever business they had there, and leave campus. From that moment on, the Warren Wilson student experience became redefined both at the individual and collective levels. One facet of campus life where this manifested is in students’ place attachment to the Warren Wilson’s physical campus. As students scattered away from campus and commenced remote learning, the presence of a common place for students to interact and relate to each other was removed.

A general sense of uncertainty was present among students not just as a byproduct of the spring closure, but something that also followed into the summer and fall. While more details about the semester were released, there was still the possibility of another mass exodus as a

result of an outbreak and the possibility that students would not follow COVID-19 mitigation protocol. As students returned to campus, they navigated the establishment of new norms around the use of space and interactions with others.

The pandemic has affected all areas of human life, stimulating an explosion of new research. This research draws from an eclectic assortment of literature, including existing literature on COVID-19, to form a theoretical basis for it. One of the major frameworks used is disaster studies. The majority of the literature within disaster studies does not examine pandemics through its theoretical lens. The field tends to define disaster as a discrete, tangible environmental disruption, whether caused by natural or human forces (Mayner and Arbon 2015). Yet, the field would benefit from the inclusion of pandemic studies, as pandemics essentially behave as disaster agents in a social context. While there is emerging literature about online education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature regarding online learning in higher education has primarily focused on voluntary online instruction up until the present day (Alphonse et. al 2019, Berry 2018, Liu et. al 2007, Akhvlediani et al 2020). This means that there is a gap in the research regarding students' expressions of agency in the face of changes within higher education. This study attempts to help fill the gap caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and understand how the intersection of these fields of study play out in a particular case study.

It is important to understand how this pandemic is challenging every aspect of society as we know it. In particular the way it affects how people form community and how this relates to its sense of place is important because, traditionally, place is an important factor in community formation (Brehm 2007, Wheeler 2014, Williams and Vaske 2003). Traditionally, it has been the stage in which social interaction occurs, laying the blocks for community formation at large

(Goffman 1959). This research is of particular significance to the Warren Wilson College community, but most significantly its student community. As the physical campus has been at the center of student life, place becomes central to the student community. This is particularly distinct given the unique nature of the college, given its status as a work college in Appalachia. It is also important to be cognizant of how community dynamics are changing as a result of this shift and to look at how the student community could be resilient in the face of this spatial disruption. Though the results will be particularly specific to Warren Wilson College, some of the findings may be applicable to other colleges and universities across the country and world. COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge to the traditional physical campus at the center of college culture. Higher education as a social institution is evolving before our eyes and we need to look at its target audience: its students.

This study has set out to understand how community dynamics and community attachment to place among Warren Wilson College students have been disrupted as a result of COVID-19 and how students have formed a different sense of community and sense of place in the context of a community. It finds that there is a dichotomy in the way the student community has changed over the course of the pandemic. There is a greater sense of solidarity over shared experiences and issues, but these sites, along with decreased social interactions, have contributed to division within the student body. These changes are framed within the context of place, including the physical campus and locations from which students participated in remote learning. These locations and attachment to them both inform and are informed by changes happening within the student community.

This paper will explore this topic first through the establishment of literature that has informed its design and analysis and a discussion of the methods employed as a part of this

research. Its findings will be examined both through looking at significant events, the spring closure and fall reopening, and at specific processes that have occurred over the course of those two semesters. The processes and phenomenon experienced by the student community discussed after issues specifically related to the spring closure and fall reopening. This starts with how Warren Wilson is constructed as a place and how this construction has changed as a result of the pandemic. Then, the impact course modality, whether a course is online, in-person, or a mix of the two, has on students on an individual and collective level will be examined. The roles of stress comfort, and familiarity, and how solidarity and division have impacted changes within the student community are the next two topics that are analyzed. Finally, processes related to normalization, considerations of how much change has actually occurred within the student community, and other variables causing change will be discussed.

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporates a variety of theoretical perspectives in order to understand the way the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped community and place attachment among students. Concepts from cultural geography are used to understand the social role of place and the way place attachment works within and is constructed by a community. Disaster studies is used to understand how COVID-19, as a disaster agent, has forced the student community to react to the pandemic in a way similar to a natural or technological disaster. Liminality is used as a concept through which the way COVID-19 has caused change. Literature based on higher education and the emerging literature on COVID-19 are used to provide a background to understand the phenomenon at work at a structural level. Concepts from symbolic interactionism and the above mentioned perspectives are used to provide a theoretical basis for community in general.

Space and Place

The literature regarding sense of place looks at the concept through a variety of angles. There is not a general consensus on the use of terms regarding the social dimensions of place. Much of the literature regards social space as space where social interactions occur and are framed within. Though, Bourdieu (1996, 2018) uses the term “social space” to discuss how people of different social statuses, like social class, occupy different spaces. In the context of this research, social place will be used to describe the social functions of and contexts provided by space instead of social space. The purpose of this is to demystify conflicting definitions and uses of the term “social space.”

Individual connection to place is influenced by a number of factors, both specific to the individual as well as those more generally social. On an individual level, space can be seen as a

sensory experience through which sense of place is established (Tuan 1977). The social groups an individual belongs to and one's characteristics can shape their own construction of a sense of place. How long one has stayed in a community could affect their attachment to it (Tuan 1977, Wheeler 2014). In understanding attachment to place, Williams and Vaske (2003) define two dimensions. Place dependence is the functional attachment to a given place and speaks to the importance of place as a setting in which certain activities and goals are actualized. Place identity is the emotional attachment to a given place and refers to its symbolic importance. Though, greater infiltration of the internet in daily life and localization of social life into the home are bound to change how people relate to place and there may be greater study of the internet as a place in its own right.

There is a consensus that space makes a difference in the establishment of social dynamics and communities (Duncan 1989, Wheeler 2014). It is a concept that is socially defined and impacted by individual experiences, but also shapes social dynamics. Place provides a framework in which social structures can form and thus shapes the nature of social structures and thus the communities that live within them (Duncan 1989). Place holds significant symbolic value for both individuals and communities (Cosgrove 1998, Wheeler 2014). Certain landmarks can hold particular meaning for a community, further contributing to a sense of place. This is particularly true if these landmarks have some connection to the past, thus contributing to collective memory (Wheeler 2014).

Place is often commodified, especially in high-amenity communities (Brehm 2007, Williams and Vask 2003, Wheeler 2014). Much of this is rooted in how land is seen as property under capitalist modes of production (Cosgrove 1998). This can affect how individuals and communities form place attachment. This attraction to high amenity communities, promoted

through commodification of land, can be one's introduction to a given place. The findings of this literature is a part of place attachment at Warren Wilson College. Admission and other marketing efforts capitalize on the beauty of the physical landscape. The physical landscape is a selling point to prospective students, employees, and donors. Thus, this commodification is interwoven into the way students and the student community forms place attachment to the physical campus.

Place does not just shape communities, but sense of place also is also a common experience shared within a community. This is a concept known as community attachment (Brehm 2007). In her research, Brehm (2007) finds that, while individual narratives do not necessarily reflect intra-community interaction, they reflect common bond with and shared interest in the natural landscape in which the community is planted. Individuals share common experiences with other members of a community in the same place. Thus, a common sense of place grows through these common experiences. Wheeler's (2014) work on social memory and place speaks to this as well. Landmarks within a given community can serve as a point where social memory is preserved. In a way, community attachment is also formed through previous use of the land and is formed not just through the current community, but also the people who previously lived there.

Sense of place is now being challenged in an unprecedented way. It's role in community formation is now contested, as COVID-19 measures push more of social life online and change the way people operate within social place. Community formation as it relates to place is being deconstructed and the structures in which community forms have to adapt and rebuild. This is currently being played out socially at the societal, institutional, community, and interpersonal levels. This process is the result of a liminality-inciting incident, like a natural disaster (Thomassen 2014). While this pandemic is destroying place as it is constructed socially, natural

disasters literally destroy physical landscaping, also forcing communities to adapt and form a new sense of place. This one connection is just one of the many that indicate similarities in the social impacts and constructions of pandemics and disasters.

Disaster Studies

Traditionally, disaster studies has been focused on the social construction of natural, technical, and natural-technical disasters. This framework is lacking in that many other experiences, like pandemics, apply social stress and operate in similar ways to natural disasters. In the context of this research, disaster is defined as “the widespread disruption and damage to a community that exceeds its ability to cope and overwhelms its resources” (Maynor and Arbon 2015).

Resilience, the capacity of a community to respond constructively in the face of a disaster, is a concept from disaster studies that is particularly relevant to this research. The literature tended to rail against the idea that communities were bounded and slow to change. The concept, like communities themselves, are not static and shaped by the circumstances around it (Barrios 2014, Ride and Bretherton 2011). Resilience is not about bouncing back, but bouncing forward (Cox and Perry 2011, Ride and Bretherton 2011). For a community to effectively recover, it cannot revert back to its pre-disaster normal. It must adapt to the new conditions created by the disaster, both physical and social, and learn from the disaster so it can mitigate the effects of a future disaster. How a given community operates both before and after a disaster is important both for resilience and for recovery efforts in general.

Crucial to resilience is the concept of emergence. It is a contributing factor to how communities can bounce forward rather than simply bouncing back to its previous normal. Emergence speaks to the idea that communities are dynamic and constantly shifting. This term is

particularly relevant in the context of the role of liminality in disasters. *Communitas* that stems from liminal states can fuel emergence within given groups and communities. Jencson (2001 page) discusses community recovery as a “ritual of transformation, intensification, and revitalization.” After the disaster she examines, the social structure within and normal activities of the community broke down, giving way to a deep sense of *communitas*. Through this *communitas*, pain and suffering were accepted and worked through by the community via recovery efforts like sandbagging. Emergent groups and relationships within the community were facilitated by the *communitas* and the sacredness held by the community of the damaged and flooded landscape. Emergence and *communitas* shaped the way the community recovered from the flood and the community dynamics produced from it, in the case for the better.

Community dynamics are affected by disasters. Social networks are disrupted and may experience permanent change. Underlying tensions within communities rise up and become more prominent during disaster recovery (Ride and Bretherton 2011). This can contribute to the development of a corrosive community and affect community resilience. Under this stress, communities can fracture or fall apart. Community boundaries are prone to shifts during the disaster recovery process. External forces, largely authority figures, can either foster cohesion or division within post-disaster communities (Barrios 2014, Ride and Bretherton 2011). Their interference in the rebuilding process could block a community’s ability to find agency within the rebuilding process and reaccumulate social capital within the community. Though, in post-disaster communities with shared trauma, connections and interactions originally meant for social support can inadvertently cause tensions within them and increase stress (Ritchie 2012) On a smaller scale, social constructions, like place, have strong literal and social ties to communities that can also affect community dynamics and resilience in the wake of a disaster.

After disasters, sense of place is disrupted through the destruction of landscape brought on by the disaster (Cox and Perry 2011, Miller and Rivera 2010). Not only does this affect sense of place among individuals, but also community attachment to place. Place can be a reorienting factor after a disaster and especially after forced displacement (Cox and Perry 2011, Miller and Rivera 2010). In recovery efforts, rebuilding the physical landscape can be an important tool to strengthen a sense of community (Jencson 2001, Miller and Rivera 2010). In rebuilding the physical landscape, communities recover and a stronger sense of community is developed.

While the literature regarding disasters focuses mainly on natural and technical disasters, other phenomena function similarly within the literature. Thus, the concepts created within disaster studies are applicable to other phenomena, like pandemics. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this particularly evident, even as the literature is just now emerging within the social sciences. Additionally, the terms used and developed within disaster literature would be useful in examining how specific communities are being affected by COVID-19. Communities are now experiencing a destruction of their social landscape because of the pandemic. Viewing COVID-19 as a disaster agent is an angle through which a new perspective on society and communities' changing relationship to place could be crafted.

Literature on COVID-19 and Pandemic Studies

Research on COVID-19, especially in the social sciences, is still emerging. It is an extension of and expansion on pandemic studies. Much of the literature at this point addresses the macro-level changes happening in society (Blankenburger and Williams 2020, Fuchs 2020, Kurian 2020, Romania 2020, Shi et al 2020, Wolf et al 2020). There is a general agreement that society has been sent into a type of liminality, changing the way society relates to space,

particularly public space, time, and place. Fuchs (2020) discusses how the pandemic has deconstructed the regionalization of social place, simplifying it into the home. Many social roles one occupied in public spaces are now confined to the home, making it much more difficult to manage them.

The literature examining macro-level changes mostly does this using existing theory. For instance, Romania (2020) discusses the practice of physical distancing through symbolic interactionism, specifically using Goffman's conception of social distance. His main argument is that, in the time of COVID-19, society is in a state of interactional anomie, "a condition of uncertain knowledge of what rules of conduct regarding social distance shall be applied to interactions with non-familiar people in public spaces." One important point Romania makes is how the line between what is in the frontstage and what is in the backstage has changed. As more of our social lives take place within the home, particularly through the increased use of video calls, much of the space within the home that would have been considered as backstage is now part of the frontstage. There has also been literature on pandemics that is useful for understanding the impact and social construction of COVID-19. For instance, Everts (2012) discusses how anxiety and risk are interconnected. The escalation of risk, especially related to disease transmission, converts to a type of social anxiety, something that can be seen during this pandemic.

The COVID-19 literature's particular focus on the way society at all levels has been changed, both temporarily and permanently, shares many characteristics with disaster studies. Both natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic have liminal qualities that are important to understanding both phenomena. Yet, there has yet to be substantial literature that focuses on how these macro-level changes affect specific groups and communities. For this future research,

liminality could be a useful tool because it provides a framework through which we can examine how COVID-19 is changing society at all levels and affecting individuals. While theoretical examinations of the social effects of COVID-19 are at the fore of literature related to the virus, specific case studies and research touching on specific areas of society, like higher education, have yet to be conducted. Certain theoretical perspectives and constructions have also not yet been explored, which will mostly come from research conducted on certain institutions and with affected communities.

Liminality

Liminality is a concept that operates in both space and time and at various levels of society (Thomassen 2014). While liminality has mostly been applied to rituals, the term has a variety of applications beyond this. Natural disasters and pandemics are two situations to which liminality is particularly applicable. In these situations, individuals, communities, and society at large are forced into a liminal state, in between the old “normal” into a new “normal” (Jencson 2001, Kurian 2020, Thomassen 2014).

In looking at how liminality was originally theoretically constructed, Turner (2002) builds off of the work of van Gennep and discusses the use of ritual among the Ndembu of Zambia. Through the discussion of a rite in which a chief is installed, he theorizes *communitas* and the way it is connected to liminality. Turner discusses a dichotomy between *communitas* and the normal social structure. As liminal entities separate individuals from an accepted social structure, *communitas*, a status of statelessness and equality among individuals involved, emerges from this gap. Though, after this liminal state, those participating in rituals are inserted

into the social hierarchy, thus making the state of communities intrinsically connected to liminality.

In the years since Turner and van Gennep, other scholars have built upon their work, expanding the theory of liminality. While the main focus of the term is still upon ritual, there is now more attention on non-ritual liminality. There is also additional focus on the impact of the dimensions of space-time within liminality. Thomassen (2014) discusses the spatial-temporal qualities of liminality and how they apply to both ritual and non-ritual events. All aspects of liminality can take place on the individual, group, and society levels. He also classifies three time lengths over which different types of liminality can take place: moment, period and epoch. Rituals and rites of passage, the original events to which liminality was applied, fall under the intersection of community and either moment or period. Natural disasters and pandemics are two events that fall under the intersection of society and moment. The spatial qualities of liminality can exist in many different areas and sizes of space. It can be within bounded thresholds or expanded areas. Liminality is inherently paradoxical, as, at the macro-level, the social hierarchy is suspended, while individuals experience a destruction of identity. There are also instances that are in a permanent state of liminality, which happens if a social group freezes within the liminality process. This concept of permanent liminality is particularly concerning when examining the COVID-19 pandemic, as it is very possible that effects that could be considered temporary now could become permanent even after the pandemic releases its grip on social life.

In addition, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have begun to be understood through the lens of liminality (Kurian 2020). Kurian (2020) mostly focuses on the psychological impacts the social state of liminality is inflicting upon individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. She describes how the liminal process changes the direction of and disorients individuals' physis, our

orientation to grow. Individuals are experiencing psychological stress from the state of liminality at the social level, a state that has forced individuals into isolation and restricts certain freedoms they experienced before the pandemic. This is indicative of how changes in the use of space and how people relate to place caused by the pandemic may restrict personal growth, perhaps affecting the ways they connect to communities they belong to (Kurian 2020, Thomassen 2014).

While the concept of liminality was first conceived during anthropological examinations of rituals, it has been expanded and applied to different situations and disciplines. These elaborations have made it a useful concept in examining the social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though, it has yet to be applied to many aspects of society experiencing this state. One dimension of liminality that has yet to be examined in the context of COVID-19 is its spatial dimension and how it applies to sense of place. Liminality's spatial dimensions not only affect how space is socially organized, but how a sense of place is constructed and experienced by individuals and communities.

Community and Community Formation

There is no clear consensus on a definition of community. The way the term is used varies by field and purpose. Many different policy interests will use the term in different ways, politicizing the term (Schiefer and van der Noll 2014). While it is a common assumption that it is always beneficial, sense of community may not always be desired and will not happen unless individuals want it to happen, especially if the community is located online (Liu et al. 2007). Though, when people intentionally participate in their community and the construction of it, they are more likely to feel a stronger sense of community (Talò et al. 2014). More recently, Wolf et al. (2020) that community cohesion and pro-social behavior are crucial to combating the spread

of the COVID-19 pandemic. While sense of community may be diminishing in light of physical distancing measures, it is more important than ever to protect the health and survival of community members. Now, ensuring a strong sense of community has higher stakes on a societal level than in recent years.

Literature discussing community resilience offers particular insight into how communities function both after a disaster and non-disaster times. While older literatures see community as static and bounded, newer literature disagrees. Barrios (2014) approaches the concept as “in a constant state of emergence.” They are both reactive to external forces applied to the community as well as internal dynamics. This quality of communities are particularly evident during disasters because disasters apply overwhelming stress to communities, stretching their adaptive capabilities. At their core, communities are fluid and adaptive to internal and external forces through emergence.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, Goffman (1959) describes how groups, the building blocks of communities, work together or against each other based on a definition of the situation, using dramaturgical terminology to describe these phenomena. One concept that he discusses that is particularly useful is setting. This is defined as the material conditions in which social interactions take place, that, for the most part, shapes the social interactions that take place within it. Thus, where the interactions between members of a community happen matter to how a sense of community and its norms are formed. Groups depend on their settings for definition. In addition, his conceptualization of social distance is significant in understanding not only community dynamics, but also how groups of people operate within a given space. Unlike how the term is used in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Goffman uses social distance to mean a set of norms used to organize social interactions and the maintenance of individual identity

within them. This speaks to how people maintain their own identities within groups and communities.

As Goffman alludes to, social cohesion is an important facet of community building. Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) extensively survey the literature in this area. They find that there are three factors significant to social cohesion: social relations, place attachment, and prosocial orientation. Additionally, they find that social cohesion has been decreasing in recent years. Social cohesion seems to be particularly relevant to how society has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has only sped up how social cohesion has been decreasing. This is particularly evident when examining place attachment, one of the factors they list. As social life becomes more and more digitized, physical place has a shrinking role in community formation (Fuchs 2020). Yet, social cohesion is more important than before because, without it, collectively acting to enforce mitigation measures is much more difficult.

Schiefer and van der Noll's (2017) findings connect to Wolf et al.'s (2020) findings about how prosocial behavior is important for mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This connection may suggest that social cohesion could be important to mitigate the effects of the pandemic: both to prevent the spread of the disease and to bring people together in the face of increased physical distancing. Though, it is still unexamined how social cohesion could be either developing or deteriorating, particularly looking at college campuses where students are more physically distant or learning completely remotely through the internet. Online learning is one area where this is particularly relevant. Traditionally, instruction has been conducted in a physical setting, establishing norms and a particular structure in which community could form. Now, online classes are far more prevalent and this deconstructs how physical classes created

specific community dynamics. There is even a question of how a community could even form in an online classroom.

Higher Education

To understand how American universities have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to examine how they operated as a social institution before the pandemic. The higher education system in the United States is shaped by neoliberalism and its structure is a byproduct of military funding and adaptations to American capitalism (Gusterson 2017). This structure is a major factor in the formation of student culture, more important than local sources (Moffat 1991). Higher education has faced disruption at the administrative level, causing changes in their revenue and enrollment rates (Blankenburger and Williams 2020). Since student culture is strongly influenced by the structure in which it operates, changes that are happening at the administrative level may trickle down to student culture.

There is a gap in the literature about how COVID-19 is affecting higher education. Much of the literature regarding this subject focuses more on structural changes happening in higher education as a result of COVID-19 (Akhvlediani et. al 2020, Blankenburger and Williams 2020). Blankenburger and Williams (2020) discuss how selected areas of higher education policy has been affected by the pandemic. The literature discussing the impacts COVID-19 has had on higher education has not specifically centered student experiences. How students at American colleges have reacted to and responded to the pandemic at the interpersonal or community level is not well documented at time of writing.

The COVID-19 has changed the study of online learning in ways the literature is just starting to examine. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature on distance learning focused

on voluntary online classes (Alphonse et al. 2019, Berry 2018, Liu et al. 2007). Much of the literature regarding online learning focuses on student and professor satisfaction and what factors affect this. Though, these findings are still relevant to this research. Alphonse et al. (2019) focus on how student learning environment affects the ability to learn in the online classroom. They find that where a student completes online classes is significant to learning outcomes. In particular, they find having an ergonomically sound and quiet learning environment is a better environment than a loud, uncomfortable one. This is significant because many students who were forced into greater and complete online instruction may have been put into environments that were not particularly conducive to learning, creating distractions affecting students' ability to form community within the online classroom.

Whether or not digital communities form within online lessons and whether or not this matters is particularly important to this research. Liu et al. (2007) found that, in general, students felt "a sense of belonging to a learning community" in their online courses, though familiarity between students was low. Both students and professors felt a low level of social presence, especially due to the asynchronous nature of online classes at the time. This sense of belonging could be fostered by increased instructor presence, and increased collaboration and social interaction among students, stressing the need for intentional community planning within the online classroom. Additionally, a sense of community within the online classroom reduced feelings of isolation and lessened the likelihood that a student would drop out of the program. Even in the face of low social presence and low familiarity between students, sense of community was found to be present among students in the online classroom and significant for students.

While online learning and online communities had already emerged before the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus has accelerated the growth and prevalence of online learning. It has presented new issues within this field, as traditional institutions had to resort to fully online instruction during the lockdowns in Spring 2020. This not only tested the pre-existing infrastructure, but also changed, perhaps permanently, the role of the internet within instruction in higher education. As higher education en masse has moved to greater online instruction, problems like access to technology, technological literacy, student motivation, and student wellbeing in the face of a pandemic have arisen (Akhvlediani et al. 2020, Murphy et al. 2020). While these factors take place primarily at the individual level, they have the potential to impact community building within the online classroom. The online classroom, as a new building block of a greater campus community, has the potential to greatly impact sense of community and community attachment to place among students.

All of the fields discussed provide different angles through which this topic can be explored. Fields like cultural geography and literature focused on higher education provide a base for essential experiences related to my topic to be discussed and given a theoretical background. Others, like liminality, symbolic interactionism, and disaster and COVID-19 studies, are useful when looking how COVID-19 has been acting as an agent for social change and, more specifically, changes to community and interpersonal interactions among Warren Wilson students over the course of the pandemic. This literature and the problem and purpose of this research informed the way I designed the methods for this research

Methods

This study was conducted using concurrent mixed methods, including survey as the quantitative method and interviews as the qualitative method.

Qualitative Methods

For the qualitative component of my research, I conducted 13 semi-structured interviews, most of which lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. The informants for my interviews attended Warren Wilson College during either the Spring 2020 semester or the Fall 2020 semester. My sample consists of four Spring 2020 graduates, two students who came to Warren Wilson during the Fall 2020 semester, and six students that attended Wilson during both semesters. Snowball sampling was used to build the interview sample. In addition to the snowball sample, there was also a question at the end of the survey that asked people if they would like to be interviewed for the research. Informants were asked about their experiences with online and remote learning, changes to their lives and relationships with others as a result of the pandemic and their experiences related to place before and during the pandemic. Throughout this paper, they are referred to using pseudonyms.

Open coding was used to analyze the data. After transcribing the interviews, I went through the transcriptions and isolated key phrases and common themes found within many interviews and noted how the responses fell under these common themes. Once all of the interviews were coded, the coding for all of the interviews were compared to each other to narrow down commonalities and differences in how they apply to the themes identified and to the study's research questions.

Quantitative Methods

The quantitative component of my research involves an online survey conducted over Google Forms. The main types of questions include: demographic information, yes or no, and scale of 1-5. There was one open ended question at the end, asking what other factors students observed in how campus changed over spring and fall 2020. The final question of the survey was a part of the recruitment process for my interviews, asking if the participant would like to be contacted for an interview. My sample was students who attended WWC in either the Spring 2020 or Fall 2020 semesters. 88 people responded to the survey.

Two sampling methods were used: simple random sample without replacement and convenience sample. The convenience sample was conducted through advertisement through the Student-I email group and through posting flyers to bulletin boards around campus. These promotional materials provided information about the study, participants' rights, and a link to the survey. The SRS was conducted using student mailboxes, with a sample size of 100. Student mailboxes were randomly selected and recruitment letters were sent to the selected mailboxes. These two sample types were chosen to both ensure that the survey reaches a wide variety of people, many of who I may not know. In order to protect confidentiality, identifying information was not collected and data collected from the survey was analyzed as an aggregate.

The data collected from the survey was analyzed using two different methods. All of the survey data was downloaded as a spreadsheet from the Google Form. I analyzed the quantitative data using both Google Sheets and R. On top of analyzing the survey data as an aggregate, I also analyzed responses from individuals who were a part of the Fall 2020 cohort and individuals who attended both semesters separately to see if there were any significant differences between the two. The open ended question regarding other factors was separated out and coded based on

common themes, with the most prominent ones being decreased social interactions and decreased opportunities to interact meaningfully with other students, the political climate of the time, and racial justice movements, both on and off campus. Responses from interview informants were also used to supplement in the analysis of this issue.

Ethical Considerations

Privacy was of the utmost importance in the data collection process. Each informant's responses, both in interviews and the survey, were kept confidential through various methods, including password protection. No identifiers were collected in the survey and any answers to the final question regarding potential interviewing were kept separate from the rest of the data and stripped from it before analysis. Identifiers were collected during the interview process, but, unless they consented to be identified, each subject was assigned a pseudonym that was used during data collection, coding, and analysis.

My position as a student within the community gives me both unique insight and inevitably makes this research somewhat colored with my own perspectives. As someone with firsthand experience in the student community both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am better aware of what is going on within the student community during this time frame and could give me a more empathetic eye. Yet, this means that my biases may play a larger role in this research compared to a researcher who is an outsider, as my experiences have caused me to have a lot of opinions about what has been going on on campus over the course of the pandemic. I try to the best of my ability through solely focusing on the input and responses of my interview informants and survey participants. It is important to note this condition before moving forward to the chapters discussing the findings of this research.

Findings

The Spring Closure

The Spring Closure was the inciting incident that pushed the entire Warren Wilson community into a state of liminality. On March 12th, 2020, administration announced that normal campus life would be paused until April 10th, 2020, with classes moving online, work cancelled, allowed students to go home both for that time period or for the rest of the semester, and enforcing other changes in order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Five days later, administration announced the permanent campus closure for the rest of the semester, including a permanent move to online classes and the cancellation of work for the rest of the semester. This action forced students into a situation where they had to leave and find an alternate living situation very quickly. These events set off a chain reaction that would quintessentially alter the Warren Wilson student experience.

Each informant could remember where they were when they heard about the news about the change in status of campus operations. Many noted both their physical and social surroundings, noting not only where they were, but also who they were around. This is significant because it is indicative of how place is tied to strong memories, especially relating to disaster and disaster-like events (Miller and Rivera 2010). These memories are important to the construction of place attachment in general and in the way individuals construct their own narratives about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The memories mentioned by informants were either about where they were when they heard about the temporary shutdown or where they were when the campus was permanently closed for the rest of the semester. Yet, the latter had different implications for student life on campus.

The temporary shutdown unintentionally served somewhat as a transitional period into the spring closure. Many informants decided to stay on campus during the shutdown. Two informants who had worked on campus during previous summers had noted how similar the campus was at that time to their times working during the summer. Another informant, Kathryn, described her experience during the shutdown as feeling “very surreal. It was odd. It was just a lot of people were kind of going to and fro it felt like the entirety of campus like, felt like a liminal space in a very in a very sort of weird way. And I don't think that ever really stopped from that point until the like permanent closure stuff was dealt with.”

Kathryn mentions the beginning of the evolution of students' relationship to place. The changes brought on by the temporary shutdown manifested through the new patterns of movement and use of space around campus, as well as the decreased number of students on campus. Thus, the temporary shutdown is exemplary of liminality's spatial qualities. Liminality does not just express itself temporally within a particular group, but is also expressed in the space this group occupies (Thomassen 2014). A deconstruction of social norms at the interpersonal level affects the construction of place through how individuals use it during a time of liminality. Thus, new patterns of movement on campus starting during the temporary shutdown are an inherent part of the liminal state the entire student community is facing. These qualities were only further exaggerated when students were working to evacuate and after the spring closure, as the space in which students related to each other became unbounded and the suspension of social norms became even more prominent.

There was a common discourse around students' experiences with and feelings about the spring closure. Informants used words to describe the spring closure using words like: abrupt, sudden, stressful, rushed, disappointing, unexpected, and chaotic. This array of adjectives

suggests that the nature of the closure was surprising and tumultuous. They also indicate how the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting closure of the campus acted as a disaster agent, triggering this liminality.

Informants described the packing and relocation processes in terms mentioned, with particular emphasis on stress. Gillian mentions the emotional impact of the spring closure and how it affected her, saying: “You know, it was very upsetting. Everyone was just really in a state of shock, I think. And there was like, some anger and disbelief too. Because it's like, you know, you have plans, and then suddenly, they're just kind of ripped out from underneath you.”

This quote from Gillian not only touches upon some of the common discursive threads about the closure, but also highlights how uncertainty was a major part of the way she experienced the evacuation process. She shows how these feelings of “shock,” “anger,” and being upset are intrinsically connected to the stress and uncertainty caused by the spring closure. This sudden relocation, as in other types of disasters, caused a great deal of stress and even a sense of grief (Cox and Perry 2011). Her experience reflects the experiences of other informants who experienced the spring closure. Yet, no other group had to grapple with uncertainty and other pandemic-related experiences like the Spring 2020 graduates.

Spring 2020 graduates faced ordeals related to the spring closure that are specific to them. On top of loss incurred based on just having to leave campus as a result of the closure, they lost out on experiences and celebrations that are unique to those in their final semester. Going through the loss of these specific experiences, as well as graduating in the middle of a pandemic, magnified the feelings of uncertainty, anger, and disconnection. Amanda, a spring graduate, describes how the environment in her capstone class had changed after the spring closure. She said:

“All of the relationships except for my relationship with the professor were strained. Because we were all I don't want to say pent up emotions, but we were all seniors. So we were all going through it. And it was I don't want to say we were all angry at it, but we most of us were. And that anger would come out or the passive aggressiveness would come out through our writing and who the comments because we have to leave comments, and then an end, a giant end thing, paragraph. And it would definitely come out through there. So those relationships were definitely strained because you get mad at. There's a lot of passive aggressive comments.”

While this common experience provided a source of solidarity among seniors, the anger that was present provided a source of tension. The channels they had for this anger were limited and thus often spilled over onto each other. This may have been especially highlighted in a senior seminar, as that class is strongly associated with the end of one's undergraduate experience and rituals that come with that.

There was a major disruption of ritual that happened after the closure, something graduates noticed in their capstone presentations and during the virtual graduation. These events could not be held in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic, taking away significant rites of passages for these graduates. Jake, a spring graduate, noted the difference in tone in the virtual graduation. He said:

“I was sitting at the kitchen table with my brothers and my uncle. And we were just listening to the names. It's funny because when they started throwing the names across the screen, and playing the music behind it. I was like, why's it feel like, we all died in like an airplane crash or some shit? Just how somber the music was. And I was like, I don't? I don't know, this don't... this don't sit right with my spirit.”

The description of online graduation exemplifies the disruption of ritual that took place. Instead of being an active participant in his own graduation ceremony, Jake and all others in his graduating class, had to sit and watch it happen, removed from the community at large. This passivity changed the tone of graduation and how much the graduates personally gained from the ritual of graduation. Jake's experiences are not unique among the spring graduates who were interviewed. Among them, there was a level of disappointment and not as much of a stress on

how important the event was. The lack of traditional rituals marking the end of one's undergraduate years have affected Spring 2020 graduates' sense of closure regarding their time at Warren Wilson.

The rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and the spring closure upended student life on the Warren Wilson campus. The state of mass liminality at the societal level forced the student community into a state of liminality as well. A feeling of uncertainty among students is indicative of this. The processes of change happening within the student community happening after the spring closure continued into the fall semester, further developing and evolving as an extension of the phenomenon of the spring.

Fall Reopening

Fall reopening came with many changes to campus and the way students formed community within and beyond it. Uncertainty continued to be a theme leading up to and throughout the semester. The first generation of Warren Wilson students that have only known it without any pre-pandemic context started their journey within the institution. This semester brought with it major changes in social norms, the reorganization of campus spaces, and the impact of those factors on the student experience.

Leading up to the fall reopening, students continued to feel a sense of uncertainty, especially since there was a possibility that students would only be there for a few weeks before an outbreak occurred, if the campus would even reopen at all. Kathryn commented on her experiences of uncertainty coming into the fall semester saying: “I was convinced it was going to be a couple weeks long, I thought it was just gonna collapse almost immediately, I didn't really have many long term plans for it, I was just sort of getting ready for like, Alright, I need to be ready to just leave at any moment.”

This uncertainty was very much an extension of the uncertainty felt by students over the previous spring and summer. Returning back to campus could not wholly be a comforting stress-reducing experience, as students were coming back to a campus full of risk related to the contraction and spread of the COVID-19 virus. This risk inherent to returning to campus is heavily tied to anxiety. COVID-19 related anxiety created a mass state of social anxiety among the student community, contributing to the shattering of everyday life and routine, particularly related to the ways individuals interact with each other (Everts 2012). This uncertainty is inherently tied to the risk related to COVID-19 transmission and to the anxiety surrounding this and other social changes happening at the macro and micro levels.

Even in the face of this uncertainty, many students chose to come back to campus for the fall semester. Coming back to campus, many of the first impressions that students had about campus were extensions of what campus was like during the temporary shutdown, with particular focus on decreased social interactions. Leonard, a returning Sophomore, discussed his move-in process and how it compared to his experience moving in the previous year as a first year. He said:

“I wasn’t sure how many people would come back so for sure it almost felt like a ghost town like it was like, yeah, cuz I think my when I first moved on the campus, like my freshman year, like it was awesome and there were people all over the place, helping you out and they were you know everybody was moving at the same time and you got to talk to all the parents and stuff it was super cool, but not knowing how many people would come back and then moving in and there’s nobody here It felt like a ghost town for sure. Yeah, it was really weird. Yeah, it was quiet.”

As Leonard notes, the lack of interactions with others created a jarring first impression of campus, reflective of a large change in a ritual marking the beginning of the semester. Move-in, particularly during first year and transfer orientation, used to be a much more communal experience with interactions with orientation workers helping with move-in and other students and their families who were moving in. The theme of uncertainty still is addressed in this quote, but is more concerned with how the student community will take shape again on the stage of the physical campus. Again, this narrative also expresses the spatial nature through which these changes are taking place, both reflective of changes employed at the structural level and individual choice regarding the use of space on campus. The liminal state during the temporary shutdown that Kathryn described in the previous chapter had proven to have carried over into the fall semester.

The pandemic and the changes that have resulted from it have caused students from the Fall 2020 cohort to have different experiences compared to students who attended during both

Spring and Fall 2020. Survey data supports this, especially when comparing the responses to the scale-based question between the Fall 2020 cohort and the rest of the respondents. The responses provided by the Fall 2020 cohort were more similar and had an overall smaller standard deviation compared to respondents who came to Wilson before 2020. The survey suggests that the Fall 2020 cohort may have more similar experiences of the Warren Wilson and student community compared to their predecessors.

How the COVID-19 pandemic has affected society at large and Warren Wilson bleeds into the Fall 2020 cohort's experience as students. One way this has manifested is through their place attachment to campus. One respondent had this to say about their adjustment to campus:

“As a freshman, I still am unaware of some buildings on campus/have not yet visited all areas on campus. Many friends that I made last semester are no longer here this semester, (as a result of the pandemic). I have never met most of my professors and other campus staff, (besides Glad workers).”

These students have not been able to form the same place attachment to campus that previous cohorts have. The greater presence of isolation among students on campus means that many of that cohort have not been able to form as strong of an attachment to the physical campus. This has had an impact on their ability to connect to others on campus, not just students, but to faculty and staff. Indeed, many in the Fall 2020 cohort have not had the same opportunities to relate to their fellow students, both returners and those in their cohort. One informant, a mentor for members of that cohort, had this to say about those she mentored: “I know my students had a really difficult time forming their friendships. And I feel like it took them a lot longer than normal to find their group of people.”

Additionally, students who entered Warren Wilson in fall 2020 as transfers have had different experiences compared to those who entered as first years. Two informants, Sylvia and Ezri, came into Warren Wilson during fall of 2020. Sylvia, a transfer, did not have an easy

pathway to form a circle of friends over the course of that semester. She says: “I have these acquaintances, but I haven't met anyone that I've developed a level of friendship with like I did with students at [previous college].”

In contrast, Ezri, a first year student, found friendships within their First Year Seminar (FYS). When describing how their group of friends came together, they said:

“Most of us were on the same FYS, like three of us. And then it was just like, people's roommates. Like that person that was in FYS' roommate, who is actually like, really fun, and we all get along, too. And everybody in that, FYS, like, we're like a broad, like, group of friends. It's like 30 of us. And then like, just like, like that person's friend or that person's roommate. And like you like just attached to like, closer people than you do others and make like, like tight bonds that make up the broad general friend group.”

The biggest difference in these two experiences is that there are apparatuses in place specifically for first years that tend to create pathways for first year students to create friendships. One significant factor was that Ezri's FYS had both in-person and online sessions, creating a physical place where their classmates and them could engage with each other. Transfers do not have access to these apparatuses beyond orientation. With greater physical isolation produced by the pandemic, transfers are put at a greater disadvantage in establishing a social network and thus may not create as strong of an attachment to the physical campus.

By the end of the Fall 2020 semester, Warren Wilson students had begun to acclimate to the way COVID-19's social impacts were present on campus. This caused an evolution of the way students relate to the physical campus. Factors such as new students, campus-specific COVID-19 mitigation measures, and the reorganization of space on campus facilitated this reconstruction of place attachment within the student community. The importance and role of place, especially the physical campus of Warren Wilson, was in the process of being made into something different, taking on new meanings.

The Evolution of Warren Wilson as a Place

Students at Warren Wilson have developed a particular place attachment to its physical campus. It is central to the Warren Wilson student experience, with 97.73% of survey respondents agreeing with this statement. Additionally, 93.18% of respondents find that the physical campus is important to their experience as Warren Wilson students. This attachment is rooted primarily in the natural environment of the campus, as well as locations that are considered central to campus and important to individuals.

There are certain discursive threads that run through students' discussions of the physical campus. One major idea that pervades throughout the discourse is that of the campus being a secluded bubble, a shelter from issues that may plague the outside world and a bounded space that the student community is attached to. Malcolm, a Spring 2020 graduate, described the campus as "a 2000 acre fortress of like zen lush environment." He further explains his experiences with the physical campus, saying:

"Wilson is just magical like there is one thing that I definitely find myself missing the most about being at Wilson was the opportunity to be alone, like to just go for a hike and find a space and be able to set up a hammock and like meditate for three hours and not see anyone except a cow."

The experience that Malcolm describes stresses his own individual perspective about being alone on campus. Based on these quotes, Malcolm's place attachment was very much informed by his own experiences with his surroundings (Tuan 1977). Yet, certain phrases he used throughout his descriptions of campus, like "fortress," "magical," and other language fixating on the campus' natural beauty. The language he uses to describe his own experience is common and similar to how other informants described their relationship to campus. This shows how one's specific experiences and attachments to place connect to a larger community attachment to a given place (Brehm 2007).

This also feeds into a larger idea presented by informants about individual experiences of campus. While there may be a common narrative regarding students' attachment to the physical Warren Wilson campus, two informants noted that students' experiences of campus are "individualized" and are dependent on "who your friends are and what your interests are." With a campus so expansive, students are able to find their own personal attachment to place within a larger framework at the community level, interpersonal level. While these individualized perceptions exist, there are common themes around places that students find to be most significant regarding their attachment to the physical campus.

Much of the places informants found personally significant were related to the natural environment of the Warren Wilson campus. The three main sites mentioned were Dogwood Pasture, the trails and the Swannanoa River, with other spaces like the Formal Gardens mentioned occasionally. A few informants explained that these sites are places where they can find quiet and take time for personal reflection. In contrast, the places they described as important to the entire campus tended to be more "utilitarian" or "iconic," as well as places that are considered to be the "central parts of campus." Almost all of the informants mentioned Gladfelter or spaces in and around it as significant to the whole campus, while only a few mentioned Gladfelter as a space that is personally significant to them.

As COVID-19 forced the campus to close and students to evacuate to other locations, the construction of place attachment to the campus changed. In order to reopen campus, a variety of changes had to be made to certain spaces to mitigate the spread of the virus, causing a mass reorganization of space on campus. Many spaces that were once considered to be places where students connect with others, became less associated with community or entirely stripped of this connection. One of the most obvious community spaces that was lost was Sage Cafe, one of the

places a few informants mentioned that held significance to the entire campus. Additionally, Gladfelter became a space that was less hospitable for social interactions. Gabriel, a returning student, noticed this change in his own routine, saying:

“I would hang out in Glad[felter] a lot more last year, right. And especially because COVID, you didn't have to worry about being in Glad[felter] as much you kind of hanging out and sit at a table with a bunch of people and just kind of talk and hang out. But this, you know, this year is completely different. Most of the time, if I went to Glad[felter] I would go and go out, walk all the way back to my dorm. I would talk to people if I saw them there, but only for a couple seconds. And then I walk.”

Now, Gladfelter as a place, especially its dining spaces, have an element of anxiety attached to them. This increased vigilance has affected the way the entire community perceives and interacts with this space and, thus, its meaning has been reconstructed. This is a place that has been considered to be one of the most important spaces to the greater student community. A change in attachment to a place that is significant to a community is emblematic of changes in place attachment around campus.

The use of space on campus changed as a result of the COVID-19 mitigation measures that were implemented. This alteration was a defining factor in the development of a new place attachment among students. This happened in a variety of spaces on campus, not just those specifically associated with Student Life. Alyssa, a returning Chemistry major, spent much of her time in the science buildings on campus before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, after reopening, she found it less familiar. “Walking through the Witherspoon building was surreal,” she told me, “because there was nowhere to sit, and that's where I spend a lot of my time, like I have all of my classes there pretty much walking through there and having no sitting spaces, no community spaces sucked.”

Witherspoon, a building that used to be so familiar to her, changed meaning to her after that familiarity was taken away. It used to be a place that would be comfortable for her to dwell

in between her classes, but this was discouraged by the removal of benches and chairs within the building. The intentional restructuring of space to discourage social interactions removed her association of the building with a kind of community built around informal public encounters, in a way she found “surreal,” or jarring. Her experience shows how physical distancing measures had reduced students’ attachments to nonresidential indoor spaces on campus as places to exist within and spend time with other people in.

As a part of this mass reorganization of space on campus, there has been a greater reliance on outdoor spaces, both within organized institutions on campus and in students’ personal lives. The most obvious way this is seen is the construction of outdoor class spaces and an increased number of events that exclusively take place outside in places like the Pavilion. Yet, students have incorporated more time in outdoor spaces within their everyday lives. Gabriel notes how he started to spend more time outside, saying: “I would often I would see myself on the trails more often when I got a chance. I would take like the River Trail, I walked all the way up. I forget the road. But past the White Barn fields on the River Trail I did a lot more exploring last semester than I did prior. I think just to get out of the room and get out of you know, being on technology so much.”

The narrative presented in this quote presents the technological as opposed to the natural environment. Natural spaces are presented as an escape from the localization of classwork and social life into one’s living space caused by COVID-19 (Fuchs 2020). This greater time spent outside and the exploring of the natural spaces that Gabriel did created a stronger attachment to the outdoor spaces on the Warren Wilson campus. Gabriel was not the only informant to note spending more time outside and in natural spaces. Thus, this suggests that a stronger community attachment to natural spaces is occurring among the student community.

The physical campus has always been important in the student community's attachment to place. While certain, iconic spaces, like Gladfelter and its surrounding areas, are considered to be important to the entire campus, students tend to be drawn more to outdoor, natural spaces around campus. Yet, as the campus is so large and self-contained, there is a large breadth of experiences of place among students, experiences that share common discursive threads. This attachment was disrupted by the spring closure and remolded over the course of the fall semester after the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures and the reorganization of space. Overall, students are spending more time in their rooms, reducing time spent at academic buildings, "iconic" spaces like Gladfelter, and other communal, indoor spaces around campus. Yet, the use of outdoor spaces, both in organized activities and by individual choice, has increased, creating stronger attachments to places like Dogwood Pasture and the River Trail.

The Impact of Course Modality

The role that course modality has had on community building is crucial to understanding how COVID-19 has impacted the student community. The deconstruction of the traditional, physical classroom and the increased prominence of the online classroom has affected the way students have been able to relate to each other and has altered their experiences as college students. The online classroom and other online activities have become a major or the only way for students to connect with each other. Greater reliance on online instruction and the redefinition of the in-person class session has changed the way students relate to each other and the way they relate to the physical campus.

The online classroom had to be constructed suddenly as a result of the temporary suspension of regular campus life and later the permanent spring closure. The sudden move to online learning created a learning curve for many students. This was especially true of students who were in fields that are more hands-on, like science and art. Alyssa, a chemistry major, discussed how her academic trajectory and her ability to understand concepts in her chemistry classes was affected by the campus closure. She said:

“I could no longer in my Org[anic Chemistry] class, I could not like, we were doing organic synthesis, like, doing like, mixing things and seeing reactions happening and in order to understand the concepts that we were learning and we could no longer do that. And so I could not grasp the concepts. So, yeah, that just that left me in a bad position, like, it literally *set me up to fail* my next semester.”

Trying to engage with her chemistry coursework over a digital platform was challenging. Not being able to apply the concepts being taught made it harder for her to understand them, making learning much more stressful. The physical space of the lab was important to her learning experience and moving the instruction of this material over to a digital platform removed the space that was essential to mediate learning. Being removed from the experiential

learning model provided by in-person classes and not being able to grasp those concepts did not just affect her academic experience during the spring closure, but also had lasting implications for her future chemistry coursework, as the foundation for future coursework was not laid down properly.

The effects of online learning extend beyond students' ability to engage with coursework. Greater use of online instruction has caused students' relationships with their classmates. This began once online instruction started in the spring. When asked if a sense of community was forming within online classes, only 23.25% of survey respondents agreed. This data point was further elaborated in interviews. For the respondents who attended during Spring 2020, all of them reported that they largely lost contact with their classmates. While previous studies conducted before the pandemic may have observed that there was a sort of sense of community formed in the online classroom, the pandemic has introduced other variables that affect the formation of a community in these settings (Liu et al. 2007). The most prominent factor is that students did not choose to attend online classes and thus could not adequately mentally prepare for the particular challenges related to online learning.

This shift continued into the fall semester. By the fall, both professors and students had become more acclimated to online instruction. For some students, online coursework was easier in the fall compared to the spring. Though, lack of connection to classmates persisted. Kathryn discussed returning to online class sessions, saying: "Being prepared for an online class is definitely like a big thing that helps with just being like knowing it's gonna be online from the get go is very helpful for being able to approach it. Yeah, I found that I was pretty good was just making it to the sessions of it. I'm doing what I have to do for that class. Faster. I still had, you know, some inherent issues of online classes of just not real people." Going into the fall semester

expecting and preparing for online classes made it much easier for Kathryn and other informants. While online class sessions are closely associated with COVID-19, much of the emotional connections, like shock, had worn off. Yet, some of the disorienting qualities that online classes had in the spring, like not being able to be tangibly around classmates and professors were still present.

After campus reopened, the in-person class session was reintroduced, featuring the reappropriation of space necessary to mitigate COVID-19. After almost half a semester taking classes exclusively online, students who participated in in-person class sessions had new perceptions of the in-person classroom. Some informants reported that attending in-person sessions lifted their spirits. Leonard, a returning student, described his experiences returning to in-person classes, saying:

“I think it was just being surrounded by fellow students and I think like we were socially distant but I think like having that closeness though and being able to like, look at my professor like right there in front of me and and you know we did a lot of outside stuff as an environmental science class so we we walked outside a lot so it was like really cool to like do all these things and experience all these things in person with the people around me and we just gave presentation so to like give a presentation in front of a class instead of projecting my screen like. I think it definitely it gave me another sense of like accountability, which is which, that like that is like a really refreshing feeling.”

A return to in-person classes, in many ways, signified a return to a pre-pandemic “normal.” However, it also comes attached with the *communitas* that had formed from the liminal state presented by the Spring Closure. The stress caused by the COVID-19 disaster had caused the in-person classroom to be cathartic, a release from this liminality. Outdoor classes provided some of these same benefits. Though, there were clear differences between the experience provided by the reformed indoor classroom compared to the new construction of outdoor class sessions.

This reappropriation of space also caused many classes to take place in outdoor spaces. One informant found it much harder to focus. Another, Leonard, made the following observation about how the outdoor classroom was different compared to the traditional and online classrooms:

“I think in the outdoor space, you got more of a sense like it was like a classroom feeling like you were like in class. I think outside was nice. It seemed like a good middle ground. It was a good middle ground between that feeling of like classes mean nothing online and like hearing like a real in person class like it was like a, it seems sort of. I think fluffy is the best word to describe it, it seemed like it was just like a fluffy way to have class was to go outside.”

The outdoor classroom is not clearly bounded unlike the traditional indoor classroom. While it allows classes to meet in-person more safely, it does not necessarily provide as much structure as an indoor classroom. Like the online classroom, it is rife with potential distractions and focusing during these sessions is harder than indoor classes, making it harder for students to meaningfully learn in these spaces. Having classes outside also allowed students to assign a new meaning to the physical campus and spaces around the physical campus. Spaces that were not so strongly associated with learning were given that value. It is one facet of the mass reorganization of space on campus that affected the way students interacted with it and each other.

Greater online instruction has changed the ways students interact with their classmates and their course. Online instruction has weakened attachment to the physical campus, reduced community building in a given class, and made it harder for students to learn the material being taught, especially if a student had not taken an online class before the pandemic. Being isolated and outside the bounded, indoor classroom has presented challenges students have had to address. This change, like others happening within the student community, affect the way students construct their own community, both within and beyond the physical confines of the campus.

Solidarity and Division

There is a dichotomy at the center of the way the student community has changed throughout the course of the pandemic. A sense of solidarity has formed amongst students through common experiences and struggles. Yet, greater time in isolation, decreased opportunities for social interactions, and the tightening of social circles have caused greater division within the student community.

Many informants observed a sense of solidarity among students regarding a variety of issues and topics. One of the most comprehensive is the shared experiences that Warren Wilson students have collectively going through the pandemic. Kathryn, a sophomore, said, “I didn't feel like more connected in the sense that like, I, you know, I was there with people, but it was sort of like a bit of like, solidarity between everybody going through a very similar thing, when that happened. So to an extent, I felt that, but it was a very small kind of consolation to just be going through the same pretty bad thing everybody else was at the time.”

This common feeling transcends physical location, as all students have not lived or attended classes at the physical campus since before the campus closure. The process of localization that every student is undergoing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is something everyone must adapt to at once (Fuchs 2020). Being in the same situation as others has transcended physical proximity in this case. This also connects to the particular type of liminality experienced during disasters, in which social structures are destroyed. From this, spontaneous *communitas* that arise during this time (Jencson 2001, Turner 2002). While, in general, this *communitas* deconstructs or eliminates social statuses, in this case having a shared experience transcends these statuses. *Communitas* has also affected individual behaviors of students regarding the virus.

Another source of unity has been the formation of a common mindset among students about COVID-19 mitigations. Some informants noted their own sense of personal responsibility, while others commented on how it has become prominent among students. As Gillian puts it:

“I kind of felt like it was my own responsibility to, like, protect myself and my health because like, I would wear the mask, I would be washing my hands, I would be, you know, separating myself from other people like social distancing. So I kind of felt like, it was my own personal responsibility to like, keep myself safe and other people safe. And I wasn't really thinking about how other people would react to it.”

Despite the isolation caused by the pandemic, many students have adapted prosocial behavior and common values necessary to mitigate the transmission of the virus (Wolf et al. 2020). While this happened on an individual level, much of this could be chalked up to the way students connect to the student community at large. This prosocial behavior and common values are more likely to be cohesive because of the small size of the community, increased investment in the community through structures like the Work Program, and the idea of the campus and its community as a “bubble.” As the campus community has a small town feeling, where everyone knows, or at least is vaguely aware, of each other it is easier for students to relate to each other and place higher value on the wellbeing of others in the community.

Yet, there are exceptions to this mindset among some students and, as some informants noticed, this is a source of division. This most often tends to generate fear. Kathryn noticed some people not wearing masks properly and described her thoughts on the matter. She said:

“It definitely cultivates an atmosphere of like, can't find the word for that, but it doesn't cultivate a good atmosphere. It's disconcerting, to say the least seeing somebody like, you know, just sort of not wearing a mask properly, or sort of like taking it off to like, do things they really don't need to take it off for. Yeah, that sort of thing. It's very disconcerting. I worry, it might just sort of like lead to a culture of like, normalizing that sort of behavior, because it's like, oh, you can even just do this for a little bit, go do something, when I think things should be a bit more like strict like, ideally.”

This fear can turn into mistrust, contributing to a corrosive community. As students became more aware of others' behaviors, those who were not seen to have been taking mitigation

measures as seriously became more focused upon by the student community at large. As disasters cause a magnification of social dynamics, a lack of cohesion regarding COVID-19 mitigation measures can contribute to a corrosive community (Miller and Rivera 2010). While common anger around this issue fits into feelings of solidarity among students, this anger puts stress upon the community, acting as a fragmenting force.

This reality is one reason why there is much more fear among the student body about the transmission of the virus, causing students to feel less comfortable making connections with others outside of their pre-established social circles or bubbles. This can, in part, be seen at the administrative level, as bubbles themselves were mentioned within the policy related to reopening procedures and in other administrative correspondence to students.

College administrative action has played a complicated role in the formation of both solidarity and division within the student community. Problematic policy and actions, or inaction, put forth by administration has been a site of common ground among students. These include, but are not limited to, issues surrounding refunds after the spring closure, racial justice on campus, and conditions in student housing.

Opposition to administrative actions by the college have been a source of solidarity among students, as a large proportion of students have a shared negative view of the way administration acted over the course of 2020. In fact, only one interview informant actively approved of the way administration has handled the challenges presented by COVID-19. This solidarity goes one step further, as students have come together to advocate for their own well-being within the framework of the college. Yet, these same actions have also been a fragmenting force within the student community. Gillian noticed this manifesting in the wake of campus closure, as students were fighting to get refunds. She said:

“I remember a lot of people were really angry because they were trying to unite and get that was before they gave us our refunds for room and board. And I remember being like, so upset about that, because like, I didn't need that money. But I knew that other people definitely needed that to find a place to stay, and also like hardship housing and stuff like that. It was a really scary time. And I wanted to, like, be a part of that. But at the same time, I didn't quite know how and there was just like a lot of fear and uncertainty around that.”

As collective opposition to the college's perceived indifference after the spring closure, anger among students reached a boiling point. In this space where solidarity is formed, interactions within it can actually increase community stress (Richie 2012). While solidarity has been a major source of community building among students, opposition to administrative action has put more pressure on the community, damaging progress that has been made. Gillian is not the only one to have mentioned this. A few survey respondents noted how administrative policy has caused division among the student community. They said: “stress and poor handling by administration has led to division between the student body because frustration and fear gets misdirected to those we see and interact with most often (each other).”

While administration has been confronted with student opposition to what is perceived as their more lackluster policies or perceived inaction, they have not had to directly interact with the way their actions or lack of action has impacted students. In general, some have observed that students have been more prone to anger and aggression that does not directly relate to administrative action. One channel that this anger manifests through is the Warren Wilson College App. Like opposition to administration, it can be a source of solidarity. Yet, it is more often associated with students' expressions of frustration over anything big, or small. This is something one survey respondent observed in the app. They explain:

“I think the campus app has become a vehicle through which students can express their thoughts and frustrations unfiltered, for better or for worse. I have definitely noticed that the more people post on the campus app, the more petty (online) fights break out, which often are around inconsequential issues like laundry or parking. It seems that the social isolation of physical distancing, as well as the emotional toll of a displaced social life, has

stirred up a bitterness among the student body, which comes out in sometimes mean behavior online (which might not occur as much if people had to see each other face to face). This is not to say that COVID has completely torn the student body apart (as I do see acts of agency and kindness towards one another as well), but I am wondering if the pandemic has broken open some deep fault lines that were beginning to emerge beforehand.”

The App is a one site where the interplay between solidarity and fragmentation occur.

While it provides a platform for all students to connect over, whether they are in-person or attending remotely, the App tends to bring out tensions that may not have been so obvious before the pandemic. This is indicative of how disasters tend to bring underlying tensions within a community to the fore (Ride and Bretherton 2011). On paper, it may look like a location for solidarity, but, in reality, the app tends to be a manifestation of division among students.

There is also noticeable distance, both physical and social, between students who live on campus and students who are online-only or live off campus. Not only is this seen through the eyes of those who do not live on campus, but also those who do. One response to the survey puts it succinctly, saying that: “I live off campus and not having any classes in person makes it almost impossible to interact with the campus community.” This lack of connection creates a segment of the student population that is forming their own experiences of the pandemic, looking from the outside at what is happening among the community of students living on campus. Place can be a significant factor that reorients and grounds a community in the midst of disaster (Cox and Perry 2011, Miller and Rivera 2010). Their lack of connection to the campus creates a discrepancy in the way students construct place attachment as a community. The lack of these students’ presence creates a gap within the reconstruction of place identity and their experiences are excluded.

This phenomenon is also noticed by students living on campus through their connections with students who do not live on campus. One informant, Leonard, noticed how his connection

with his friend who was online-only and off-campus became weaker as the fall semester progressed. He compared his relationship to his friends on campus to his friends who were online only, saying:

“We have more stuff to talk about and we had more time to hang out and, you know, if we were hungry we'd drive to a cookout or something you know we would watch movies together, we'd play video games together and study together and stuff but, you know, talking to my friends that were online and off campus. We couldn't have any of those connections so it was just sort of like, ‘Hey man, What's up? How are classes doing?’ and stuff like that. But, I mean, you could tell like through the text that it was very like it was us trying to keep a connection. But it was crazy hard.”

Decreased social interaction was a major theme both in interviews and survey responses as a fragmenting factor. 12 survey respondents noted in the “other factors” question that decreased social interaction was a major factor that affected student community dynamics. While this began in the spring, when remote learning made it harder for students to connect with each other, it continued and developed over the course of the fall semester. One survey respondent said: “Much less students attend Warren Wilson this year. You are limited to only knowing people who are limited to who is in your direct line of communication.”

A major development that falls under decreased social interaction is the creation and development of pods, also known as bubbles, among students. One effect that pods have had is that students stick more to their already established social groups. Gillian had this to say about how the formation of pods informed her interactions with other students:

“There were a few people who I'd really like to hang out with or spend some more time with or get to know but because everyone has such a different comfort level, it was difficult to reach out to those people and be like, Hey, you know, do you want to hang out because I know some people were very strict about it, and they just stayed with, like their suite or the people they lived with. They didn't want to hang out with anyone else, you know. And that was, that was difficult for me too, because I was like, well, we could be outside you know, and then Some people were, like, hanging out with everybody. So it was very, like, it just felt extreme on both sides.”

This quote highlights how pods have both tightened social circles as well as made it harder to form new connections within the community. In part due to the creation of pods, distinguishing others' boundaries regarding COVID-19 mitigation measures. Having this uncertainty, especially as other social norms are being broken down, makes it much harder to establish a common definition of the situation essential to forming new relationships (Goffman 1959). This has larger implications for community resilience, as tightened social circles and decreased social interactions can reduce emergence and lead to reduced social capital that is an essential part of resilience (Barrios 2014, Cox and Perry 2011).

Yet, there is also a question of how divisive pods are considered to be is simply because of personal bias. An informant, a mentor for first years, mentioned that pods formed within dorm halls helped first years adjust to college life. One survey respondent commented about pods, noting how “‘bubbles’ having to be exclusive or being seen as ‘bad.’” The uncertainty around individuals' personal definitions and boundaries about what a pod is, creating a challenge students must face when establishing new social interactions. They may not be inherently bad, but interpersonal interpretation of norms and boundaries around what pods are what makes them divisive.

There is a dichotomy central to the changes happening within the student community. While students find solidarity over shared experiences and the confrontation of certain antagonistic administrative policies. Yet, these sites of solidarity also act as sites of division as emotions like anger and fear become an overwhelming force. Though, decreased social interaction stands on its own as one of the largest fragmenting factors within the student body. Yet, whether or not these changes will persist or become normal after the pandemic dies down is contested.

Normalization and the Amount of Changes Taking Place on Campus

A major facet of how COVID-19 has affected the student community is how much changes to the community and new social norms that have stemmed from COVID-19 mitigation measures have become normalized. This normalization became more evident during the fall semester, after students returned to campus. While mitigation measures, like mask wearing, have become a part of everyday life, how normal changes have become is contested, as well as how much change has actually taken place.

Routine has been a major medium where normalization is taking place. Like changes in movement, mitigation measures have become ingrained in everyday life over the course of the fall semester. Mask wearing is the most common mitigation measure that facilitates this normalization. Ezri describes the progression of mask wearing throughout the fall semester, saying “like a couple people would forget and you'd see them run backwards for a mask because they forgot that they had to wear masks. But like, I feel like now like people are like, Okay, got my mask. have to put it on. I'm like, it's just like become routine now.” Incorporation of mitigation measures into routine has largely happened on the individual level, through habit. While there are still social and structural pressures facilitating mask wearing, this example shows how individual behaviors and the role of habit have also normalized. It is also indicative of how prosocial behavior and common values within the student community have helped foster a normalization of COVID-19 mitigation measures.

Yet, the biggest site where normalization is happening is in the classroom. While it is taking place in classes, regardless of their modality, it is especially noticeable in online classes. A major reason this is happening is that online learning at Warren Wilson has had a longer time to evolve over the course of the pandemic. Many informants mentioned how their professors had

become more accustomed to online instruction by the fall semester. A number of informants also mentioned how attending online classes and doing coursework for those classes has become easier and less stressful.

Much of this normalcy may be perceived as a performance. The concept of a “new normal” has become integrated into the definition of the situation of interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Goffman 1959). Alyssa noticed this when she returned to her in-person class sessions. She said:

“Being in person in class felt almost like we were pretending to be normal. Whereas, being online kind of felt like we were accepting that oh, this is the thing. So, you know, if you sit down you forget about the mask. And once you wipe your desk off and throw away your wipe and then at the end of class wipe your desk off again. Other than that, it was pretty normal.”

As mitigation measures, like mask wearing and disinfecting surfaces regularly, are integrated into routine behavior classes, it appears the performance of these activities is an important part of the construction of normalization. Habits incorporated within individuals’ lives can be used as props to establish new social norms. This social performance may ingrain mitigation measures into social context, perhaps causing permanent change within the community.

Yet, there is a question of how much change has actually happened within the student community. Many of the changes, especially those that cause greater division, that happen in communities affected by disaster are exaggerations of traits that already existed within them (Ride and Bretherton 2011). One informant, Julian, noted that not much has changed within the community. When asked if he had observed ways the student community had become fragmented, he said: “I don't think it's more fragmented. I think it just hasn't changed that radically. You

could make the argument, while people are sticking more to the people around them, but in a way it's literally always been like that. It's just that now it's more medical.”

From Julian’s perspective, students have consistently stuck with and focused on those in their own social networks. As this trait of the community was encouraged by the pandemic, it has become more noticeable and encouraged by the situation in which COVID-19 has put the student community. This is an important perspective to consider, as the idea that change must result from the COVID-19 pandemic is an assumption that is taken for granted. Julian’s observation about students’ tendency for cliquishness. This observation extends into specific areas of campus life, as many of informants’ comments about the App’s role in the student community have implied that its role has been a more intense version of its role in community building before the pandemic.

Yet, looking at this perspective through the lens of disaster studies, underlying and preexisting community dynamics tend to become more exaggerated and brought to the fore by disasters (Ride and Bretherton 2011). The stress put on the student community has made the tendency for cliquishness more prominent and obvious. Now, this cliquishness is constructed within the restrictions created by COVID-19, changing the way social circles are bounded and operate within the community context. From the perspective drawn from disaster literature, change has occurred based on pre-existing conditions within the community.

In addition, other factors that were not directly connected to the COVID-19 pandemic influenced change among the student community over the course of 2020. The most common factor mentioned by survey respondents related to the Uprising for Black Lives that began in the summer of 2020. Besides decreased social interactions among students, the next most common factor mentioned related to other political factors, like the 2020 election. This is playing out on

campus both among students and between students and administration. One survey respondent said: “Lynn Morton's inability to integrate BSU demands during BLM uprisings while only offering performative allyship.” The concept of performative allyship was also at play among students. Gillian, a white student, noted:

“Where's the line between that [performative activism] and like, actual activism, um, I feel like that was really present on social media and a lot of people I feel like we've come to school with that kind of mentality surrounding it kind of like having to prove yourself or prove you know that you were trying to do the right thing. I just feel like there was a lot of pressure there.”

As Warren Wilson is, as one survey respondent put it, “unpacking the trauma” that comes with confronting racism on campus, racial justice on campus has been brought to the fore. It has been pushed into the campus consciousness entirely through student actions such as the BSU Demands, the ISA Demands, and the two strikes that took place during the fall semester. This is an area where solidarity has been forming, but it has its limits. Performative allyship by both students and administration has been a major limiting factor and much progress has yet to be made to purge campus culture of its hostility toward BIPOC community members. Ezri, a white informant from the Fall 2020 cohort, noted how, during the Spring 2021 semester, interest in racial justice on campus has “gone down” and things have gone “back to normal” regarding race on campus. If this complacency is to continue, movements for racial justice on campus have the potential to be pushed to the background. Progress made toward making the campus a more safe and welcoming place for BIPOC students could stagnate and turn into a state of normalcy.

The normalization of behaviors and norms resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is contested and there is still a great amount of uncertainty of how normalized they will become. Yet, through channels like routine and structured social activity, like the classroom, certain practices have become second nature, if not normal. Additionally, whether or not drastic change

is occurring is up in the air. Many traits present within the student community have been drawn out and exaggerated by the stress of the pandemic. Other factors, particularly the political climate on campus, which this study was not able to explore, are also at play regarding how the student community has changed over the course of 2020.

Conclusion

This study contains a number of limitations that are important to acknowledge. The impact of COVID-19 on society at all levels contains a multitude of complexities and, even in examining one community, this study cannot cover all facets of the way COVID-19 has affected the student experience. There are many angles through which this topic could still be explored. There are also limitations regarding the sample this research draws from and the data obtained from it. Both interview and survey samples cannot fully capture the diversity of experience among Warren Wilson students due to time and resource constraints and the unpredictability of research involving human subjects. Also related to this unpredictability, there may be a bias within the data in that students who perceived changes within the community were the primary respondents to the survey.

The biggest inadequacy of this research is that it has an incomplete picture of what change is happening within the student community because there is insufficient data to examine how the pandemic has specifically impacted BIPOC students. This study also fails to make connections between how the COVID-19 pandemic and movements for racial justice at both the national, local, and community levels have intersected to influence change within the student community. Having insufficient data to analyze these topics with the nuance, care, and responsibility they deserve leaves a large gap in understanding of the processes of change happening within the student community and could be addressed in future research.

The process of change within the student community is still ongoing and, thus, the findings of this study can only speak to what happened in 2020. For instance, a few informants noticed how the first COVID-19 case impacted them and the students around them. They noted that, as a result of this case, they and other students had started to stick to their rooms and

withdraw from community activities more than they did during Fall 2020. Dynamics within the student community are bound to change as COVID-19 vaccination rates increase and the pandemic releases its grip on everyday life.

Yet, this study has produced significant findings that denote changes happening within the student community and its attachment to the physical campus. Students' attachment to the physical campus is important for community building among students and to the student community itself. The change to the physical spaces on campus have influenced change within the student body and changes within the student body produced by other factors are changing place attachment among students. Connection to place and connection to others through place is important for not only community building, but also for establishing feelings of comfort and familiarity. These feelings help to mitigate stress, stress that has increased as a result of students isolating in their rooms and having to rely more on digital spaces for classwork and relationships.

Place has framed changes happening within the community, including the dichotomy between solidarity and division. While student solidarity has transcended the physical campus, especially during the spring closure, the physical campus provided a stage that facilitated solidarity and connection with others. Lack of a common sense of place or connection through place has been one source of division within the student body. This manifested through greater isolation caused by both the move to remote learning in the spring and greater time spent in dorm spaces during the fall semester. This decreased social interaction among students led to the tightening of social circles and greater difficulty in establishing new relationships within the community. Community attachment and place in general is central to the changes happening within the student body and the changes within the student body are impacting the way community attachment to place is being formed by students.

All of these phenomena all trace back to one inciting event that acted as the primary channel through which COVID-19 began to act as a disaster agent in the Warren Wilson community: the announcement of the campus closure in the spring. In her email announcing the permanent closure of campus on March 17th, 2020, President Morton ends it with the following quote:

“Remember that a community is not solely dependent on location. Our community is strong and resilient, and together we will get through this challenging time. We will be connected to each other differently, but we will be connected. I encourage each and every one of you to continue to support the members of our community and to remain engaged with Warren Wilson no matter where you are for the next few months... The Owls will return, stronger than ever.”

This sentiment is an assertion, a hope, that the entire Wilson community would weather the pandemic without significant negative impacts. While the full effects of the pandemic on the student body have yet to be seen, the outcome has been much more complicated. Sites where students have found unification have also been places where they also grow more divided. It is yet to be seen whether or not the student community will come up on the other side of the pandemic “stronger than ever.” While this phenomenon is still developing, students have expressed agency to manage the effects of the pandemic and this has resulted in both solidarity and fragmentation among them. The experiences that students and student communities are undergoing as a result of the pandemic are varied and this is perhaps even more striking here at Warren Wilson, given how unique the campus is compared to other institutions of higher education. It is thus particularly important to record and reflect upon how the Warren Wilson student community has been affected by the pandemic, as our experiences as individuals and as a collective defy hegemonic narratives put forth by the state, the media, and even our own college administrators.

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