Bowdoin Women 1971-1984
Caroline Montag, Class of 2017

This past summer, I sought to grasp women’s visibility at Bowdoin College from 1971 until 1984 through a quantitative lens. The Bowdoin Alumni Office provided me with a database that consisted of almost all of the female students who graduated in these years. The dataset contained a vast amount of information about the students’ lives at the College, including their majors, participation in athletics and family connections to Bowdoin. My primary goal was to expand on the existing data in the database and collect more public information. With the use of freshmen “Pic Books” from Special Collections, I added women who did not graduate from Bowdoin but had matriculated as freshmen. The Pic Books also provided me with each woman’s hometown, which later allowed me to calculate the population density for each town. I researched every high school in the dataset and listed it as public, preparatory or independent. Then I recorded which women were legacies and classified the type of legacy connection they had to the College.

After adding the data I gathered, I found the coordinates for each woman’s hometown using Google Earth and inputted these into the dataset. This allowed me to use ArcGIS to map the Bowdoin women by class year. I was able to see a westward trend in geographical spreading as the years progressed. ArcGIS also enabled me to visualize the hometowns of varsity athletes and legacies, as well as women who were Orient authors. I was able to see the correlation between athletes and high school type, and the effects of Title IX on athletics at the College.

The final step in the project was the use of the Bowdoin Orient archives. I have read hundreds of articles, beginning in the fall of 1970, and have recorded each time a woman was mentioned or wrote an article. This has allowed me to determine women’s involvement in the College as the years progressed. The Orient sheds light on women’s voices during this transitory period of coeducation at Bowdoin. Once I finish reading the Orient through the spring of 1984, I will add this information to the database. In the future, I hope to use these data to further analyze women’s experiences at Bowdoin with use of the statistical software R and ArcGIS.

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