AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Rebecca J. Kenney for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education presented on February 22, 2008.

Title: Lesbian Leaders in Action: Influencing and Transforming Community College Culture

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The purpose of this study is to explore through their own stories and journeys (*storjourns*), how lesbian leaders influence and transform dominant community college culture. Five lesbian leaders participated who held the position of Director, Associate Dean, Dean, Executive Vice President, and President/Executive Dean. This microethnographical inquiry divulges and makes public the actions, pathways and tools that these lesbian leaders in community colleges used to influence and transform their heteronormative community college cultures in ways of social, cultural, and educational justice and equity. Two research questions guided this inquiry:

1. In what ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges influence the dominant heterosexual community college culture?
2. In what ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges transform the dominant heterosexual community college culture?

A critical microethnography research design was used in this qualitative study to focus on a group of lesbian leaders in community college with a shared culture who

seek social justice from homonegative college cultures through reflection, action and change. Their storjourns reveal through their own voices the tools and pathways used to influence and transform community colleges to be more socially, culturally, and educationally equitable for all who enter the doors and exact justice for all. Six evolutionary themes emerged from their storjourns:

1. Relationship Building and Coming Out in the Workplace
2. Safety
3. Mentorship
4. Policy and Power
5. Influencing Community College Culture
6. Transforming Community College Culture

These leaders' actions have proven to be successful throughout the progression of their careers as out lesbian leaders. The results of this study challenge lesbian leaders in community colleges to realize and help establish a new and fully inclusive culture by moving beyond a passive or adaptive style of leadership. Their pathways and tools are made public through this study for all other lesbian leaders to follow and use. One intended outcome of this study is for lesbian leaders to become or remain *out* and promote the community college mission of "open access" by bringing their whole selves to the leadership experience each day to influence and transform community colleges across the country.

Lesbian Leaders in Action:
Influencing and Transforming Community College Culture

by
Rebecca J. Kenney

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APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Education

Dean of the College of Education

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Rebecca J. Kenney, Author

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

LIST OF TABLES

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Judie A. Kenney

You are the smartest and funniest mom I have ever known.

Thanks for making me read the big, fat dictionary.

As I whispered in your ear that last night, I am a thousand times more the person because of you.

I miss you so,

Your loving daughter

Lesbian Leaders in Action:
Influencing and Transforming Community College Culture

CHAPTER 1

FOCUS AND SIGNIFICANCE

> *You're neither unnatural, nor abominable, nor mad; you're as much a part of what people call nature as anyone else; only you're unexplained as yet—you've not got your niche in creation.* (Radclyff Hall, 1928/1990, bk.2, ch. 20, p. 3)

Lesbians who are leaders in community colleges are subject to a differently lived experience in their everyday jobs and workplace environments than that of their fellow administrators (Andreas, 2004; Coon, 2001). In their community and workplace environments lesbians are denied employment and benefits, deprived of marital and civil rights, kept from promotional opportunities, terminated from their jobs, refused housing, lose custody of their children, and killed solely because they are lesbians (Andreas, 2004; Coon, 2001; Fone, 2000).

A lesbian leader's experience is vastly different than that of her colleagues. Deep-rooted institutional oppression causes daily anxiety and fear and compels lesbians to hide their sexual identity, limiting their ability to participate fully as college leaders and to access professional opportunities (Andreas, 2004). To survive this environment, lesbian community college leaders often adapt their own lesbian culture in ways to fit within the dominant heterosexual culture. This passive response to the pressures of a dominant heterosexual culture can impede the effectiveness of a lesbian administrator. For example, a lesbian community college president holds

back a significant, yet pointed, comment during a meeting of peers on the impact of her district's imminent reorganization. Meting out her answers, she refrains from responding to avoid being discounted as a leader and stereotyped as another angry lesbian (Anonymous, personal communication, February 12, 2004). It may be an alliance she would have formed with colleagues, a directive she would have exacted, or an employee she would have rewarded or disciplined, but because she is lesbian and fears exclusionary treatment, her effectiveness as an administrator is diminished (Anonymous, personal communication, February 12, 2004). Compounding the impact of imposed silence, her community college loses out on a potentially influential and important contribution to the overall creativity and effectiveness of the institution.

However, if lesbian leaders in community college are to realize a new and fully inclusive culture, they must move beyond their passive, adaptive style of leadership and of "adjusting to a society that aggressively enforces heterosexuality as the preferred way of life" (Seidman, 2002, p. 30). By transcending tendencies of passivity, lesbian leaders can embrace their voice, positively influence the dominant culture and contribute toward a transformed culture that includes societal and educational justice for all.

This study seeks to explore a more empowering and transformative stance than that of passive adaptation. It queries whether lesbian leaders can use their inherent culture to positively influence and transform the dominant heterosexual community college culture in ways that articulate the emancipatory aspirations of

lesbian women while engaging in a transformational movement. For the purpose and context of this study, the terms *influence* and *transform* are defined by me as follows:

Influence: A manner of leadership that sways or affects the culture of an institution like a subtle to moderate wind—mostly imperceptible or intangible by nature—yet conditioning and persuading nonetheless.

Transform: A manner of leadership that causes obvious or deep-level change to occur like rays of sun to a failing plant, improving and permanently altering the cultural tendencies and patterns of individuals and of institutions in a way that creates a metamorphosis, opening the door for social justice, and educational equity.

The definitions of *influence* and *transform* as defined above are my own definitions written solely by me and were born out of my own experience as a lesbian leader in community college. These definitions are meant to provide a framework and point of reference where an act of *influence* may not be permanent, deals with change that may be more initiating, and provides early stages of awareness; and where an act that *transforms* is permanent and constitutes a sustainable change in self or one's institution. I attempted to provide dimension to the definitions by embedding each definition in metaphor, which is in keeping with the organic nature of this inquiry and research. To assist with reading and fully engaging in the comprehension and experience of this study, I have included a complete glossary of working definitions at the beginning of Chapter 4 on Presentation and Findings of Themes.

While lesbian leaders in community colleges experience at least a double bind both as women and as lesbians (lesbians of color or different abilities may experience a triple bind or more), this study will focus more specifically on the significance of being lesbian and of the lesbian experience rather than gender or race issues as related to a patriarchal or racist system. At the same time, it is critical to note that this study does not in any way suggest race or other co-cultures beyond their identity of lesbian is not important or to diminish the impact multicultural lesbians experience in their daily lives in this country. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how lesbian leaders influence and transform dominant community college culture. The research questions for this study included the following:

*1. In what ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges **influence** the dominant heterosexual community college culture*?

The lesbian culture is unique unto itself. Thus, our culture commonly holds elements that are non-existent or missing from the standard heterosexual culture and, more specifically, the culture found at community college. What are ways lesbian leaders draw from their own culture to positively influence the (existing) dominant culture? How do they expand their professional space and enhance the daily lives of students, staff, faculty, and overall college environment? How do the actions and leadership of lesbian administrators influence a cultural shift towards a more equitable and inclusive community college culture? I posit there is a kind of lesbian sensibility that is an important source of cultural innovation in community colleges. If this sensibility, or cultural inimitability, is whitewashed, ignored, or drowned by lesbians

who primarily adapt or by a culture that ubiquitously applies the stamp of heterosexuality, I fear we all lose. One-way adaptation or assimilation has profound ramifications for our country and our community college's cultural life, which will be deprived of a major source of intellectual and artistic energy if lesbian leaders are reluctantly forced into a culture that does not include their own (Seidman, 2002). Researching this question can uncover the multiple practices and ways lesbian leaders influence community college culture.

2. In what ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges ***transform*** *the dominant heterosexual community college culture*?

How do the actions and leadership of lesbian administrators in community colleges serve to *transform* the dominant heterosexual culture? How does their leadership (i.e., choices, actions, interactions, behaviors, directives) impact, cultivate, and change the community college system and culture to become an institution whereby lesbian and gay students, staff, and faculty members are equally encouraged to participate in every manner equal to their heterosexual counterparts? How do lesbian leaders contribute to diminishing or abolishing anti-lesbian workplace environments and "situations that, whether intentional or not, [are] painful and [leave] the women feeling fearful, excluded, and like second class citizens" (Andreas, 2004, p. 61)? By researching how lesbian leaders influence dominant heterosexual community college culture, I hope to answer these questions and document how their ways of influence can be replicated by lesbian leaders at other community colleges and result in cultural transformation. Ultimately, I want to dare

to anticipate that the results of this research could offer an intricate map and cache of leadership tools for incumbent and future lesbian leaders to use, such that they can influence and transform their community colleges and continue to ever strive towards social, educational, and cultural equity within their institutions.

Significance of the Study

> *Heterosexuality has been forcibly and subliminally imposed on women. Yet everywhere women have resisted it, often at the cost of physical torture, imprisonment, psychosurgery, social ostracism, and extreme poverty.* (Adrienne Rich, 1986, p. 653)

Before going into the traditional case for significance of a research study, I will first present my own driving rationale. As a lesbian administrator in a community college, my professional experience significantly influences my interest in this topic of research. I experience daily discrimination. I endure federal, state, local, and college regulations that deny my family and me equal rights and benefits comparable to those of my heterosexual colleagues. Time and again, I face workplace circumstances that force me to either compromise my dignity and identity by ignoring blatant discriminatory (or hateful) comments, or that compel me to address other's comments at the risk of personal safety or of losing my job. I have been subjected to a hostile work environment and have suffered violence in the community college workplace specific to my lesbianism while receiving little or no support. I was denied promotions by an unabashed community college president who made his bias against gay people known to our students, to fellow heterosexual administrators, and to me. The exhaustion of constantly thinking through my actions and words in advance of answering questions or responding to situations takes an

unmeasured toll. As an openly gay, or *out,* lesbian administrator, I must always weigh and calculate the risk hidden within nearly every communication and situation at work.

My (former) college chancellor and direct supervisor, my professors, my family members and countless others have asked me why, in the face of so many pressing concerns that exist in higher education, do I choose to write about lesbian leaders? Whether intentional or not, their question in and of itself is personally and professionally offensive. We lesbians make up the same or greater percentage of minority grouping as other legally protected and academically studied ethnic groups (Caudron, 1995). Yet the amount of literature written (in comparison to other minority groups) is abysmally insufficient, and we continue to have little or no protection via local, state, federal, and college held regulations and policies (1995). If I passively acquiesce to the pressure of afore mentioned voices and choose a topic of doctoral study that will make them more comfortable, who will write about the experience and transformational leadership of lesbian leaders in community colleges? How will this specific body of knowledge be known, expand, and inform the work of current and future community college leaders? I owe it to myself, the community college culture, and to my sister lesbian leaders to pursue this line of inquiry.

Does the lesbian population matter in America? Are there enough numbers to warrant a study on lesbian leaders in community college and their influence on dominant culture? Data collected during the 2000 Census indicated dramatic

increases in the total number and geographic dispersion of lesbian and gay households nationally over the past decade, identifying 1.2 million adults living with partners of the same gender in 99.3 % of all U.S. counties, up from 290,000 in 52 % of counties in 1990 (Bradford, Barrett, & Honnold, 2002). The old (gay) adage of *we are everywhere* seems apropos in the face of such stunning statistics, yet despite their ubiquity lesbians continue to be compelled to seek freedom from oppressive cultures—their own community colleges often topping the list (Nicolosi, 2002). If lesbian leaders engage in leadership that influences and transforms dominant culture, they can "change the fact that homophobia and anti-gay hate sentiment exist on … every other college campus in America" (Nicolosi, 2002, p. 49). Therefore, I posit the story of a lesbian leader in a community college is best told by those who live the experience each day. If I do not research and give exposure to this subject, who will?

It is hoped that an unintentional outcome of this study will be to provide several models for ways lesbian leaders can be fully out while influencing and transforming their respective community college culture. The study I propose can empower other lesbian leaders to in some ways shape their applications of leadership after that of the *out* lesbian leader participants of this study. In this approach, an untended outcome of this study can provide an avenue for formerly closeted lesbian leaders to summon the courage to stand up for the rights of all lesbians to give it their all without holding back, and to come out at their respective community colleges. The community college culture can be forever transformed because we have allowed people to know us more fully as whole people and as open, professional leaders. It is

my strongest assertion, given the importance and predominance of relationships, that "unless we use our freedom to help others flourish, we deny our own well-being" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 144). Lesbian leaders are directly linked "between their lesbianism and building relationships, challenging the status quo by educating others about lesbianism and discrimination, and encouraging diversity, inclusion, fairness, and equity in all leadership endeavors" (Andreas, 2004, p. 93). Therefore, we must continue to add to the limited research in the areas of lesbian leadership, influence, and cultural transformation for the well-being of us all.

To survive in the dominant heterosexual culture, I have learned ways to adapt my given culture. To both survive and feel successful as a lesbian college administrator, I have found ways to influence and transform the dominant heterosexual community college culture and to provide a significant voice where there was once silence, restriction, and oppression. I imagine that my lesbian colleagues across the nation share some or many experiences similar to mine. I question whether they too have found ways to influence their respective college cultures, thereby implementing a means by which cultural transformation is institutionalized and long lasting. Their process for cultural influence and transformation can then be researched, applied, and replicated at other community colleges across the United States. Therefore, the significance of this study was based on three key points of argument for action:

- Promote social change by uncovering the ways lesbian leaders in community colleges influence and transform dominant culture.

- Challenge and promote awareness: change college policies and regulations that openly or passively deny rights to lesbian administrators, faculty, staff, students, and trustees to become equal to that of their heterosexual community college counterparts
- Add to the understudied and limited body of study and research in the area of *out* lesbian leaders and their leadership respective to community college culture.

These points of argument are outlined below:

Promote social change by uncovering the ways lesbian leaders in community colleges influence and transform dominant culture

Through this study, I want to promote social change in the area of community college culture. In his revolutionary work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2000) speaks of academic efforts towards changing institutionalized oppression and about the importance of interconnectedness and relationships wherein "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. Introduction). It is in this steady and conscious process of inquiry and conversation that changes at the community college cultural level are possible. The pursuit of the world within our world means sharing our stories, stretching our voices, and never giving up on the possibility of social, educational, and cultural equality within our community colleges and our greater society. In her work, *The Price of Passing: A Lesbian Perspective on Authenticity in Organizations*, Anna Spradlin (1998) speaks of her professional life of 20 years (including more

recently at the University of Colorado-Boulder) wherein she "carefully edited, internally rehearsed, and de-lesbianized each speaking turn to pass as heterosexual within work environments" (p. 598). It is time to change this all-too-common experience for lesbian leaders in higher education.

Challenge and promote awareness: change college policies and regulations that openly or passively deny rights to lesbian administrators, faculty, staff, students, and trustees to become equal to that of their heterosexual community college counterparts

There exists an imminent risk for lesbians who come out to peers or staff "which results in rejection, ridicule, hostility and even violence" (Hodges & Parkes, 2005, p. 11). Nancy Hartsock, feminist and professor of political science and women studies at the University of Washington, asserts that we must "develop an understanding of difference by creating a politics in which previously marginalized groups can name themselves and participate in defining the terms that structure their world" (Hartsock, 1997). I interpret this statement as a call to action and a means for the kind of transformation necessary to take place at the policies and regulations level of community colleges. As lesbian leaders, we can participate in challenging the status quo and promoting awareness by using our inimitable cultural traits to influence community college culture and open the door for bringing our whole selves, and that of other marginalized voices, to the leadership table. By doing so, we are better able to promote awareness and influence changes at the policy and regulation level to be wholly inclusive of lesbian and gay students, staff, and faculty. Changing discriminatory or exclusive policy and regulations to include sexual identity is a starting point to addressing a larger call for systemic change—a freeing

from the constraints of a heterosexist community college culture and a transformation into a heterogeneous culture. Through challenging these existing restraints, we can create an atmosphere of acceptance and increase cultural awareness between the dominant heterosexual culture and those administrators who identify as lesbian or other than heterosexual.

Add to the understudied and limited body of study and research in the area of out lesbian leaders and their leadership respective to community college culture

We participate in every culture, community, and profession; yet, we are often forced to deny that we exist (Seidman, 2002). Increasing the body of scholarly knowledge on lesbian leadership and cultural transformation with community colleges, therefore, is of even greater importance. Sandra Harding, renowned feminist, author, and director of the Center for the Study of Women at the University of California, Los Angeles, states in a journal article by Susan Heckman,

> It should be clear that if it is beneficial to start research, scholarship and theory … then we should be able to learn even more about the social and natural orders if we start from the situation of women in devalued and oppressed races, classes and cultures. (Heckman, 1997 p. 343)

As a lesbian leader in a dominantly heterosexual culture, I contend my core lesbian identity and administrative position meets the definition of women working in devalued and oppressed cultures. Further study will add to the current, yet limited, studies found in the area of lesbian leadership in community college. Exploring the specific strands of influence and cultural transformation through the action of lesbian leaders in community colleges will add to and expand the knowledge base to include a critical theory paradigm that calls for transformation and social justice. It is my

greatest hope that this study will diminish oppression for lesbian leaders in community colleges, encourage lesbian leaders to be fully out in their workplace, and lead effectively thereby transforming the institution.

Summary

In the preceding pages, I have provided an introduction to my study on how lesbian leaders can use their cultural inimitability to influence and transform the dominant heterosexual community college culture. The purpose of this study is to explore how lesbian leaders influence and transform dominant community college culture. The significance of this study reveals that a lesbian leader's experience is vastly different than that of her colleagues. Deep-rooted institutional oppression causes daily anxiety and fear and compels lesbians to hide their sexual identity, limiting their ability to participate fully as college leaders and to access professional opportunities (Andreas, 2004). To survive this environment, lesbian community college leaders often adapt their own lesbian culture in ways to fit within the dominant heterosexual culture. To both survive and feel successful as lesbian college administrators, we need to find ways to influence the dominant heterosexual community college culture and to provide a significant voice where there was once silence, restriction, and oppression. If we deny our own well-being as lesbian leaders in community colleges, then we fail ourselves most certainly, and we fail the rest of society most likely. The time is now as lesbian leaders in community colleges across our nation to inspire and incite reflection and action that leads to social, educational and cultural transformation within our community colleges.

To review, the purpose of this study is to discover how lesbian leaders influence and transform dominant community college culture. The research questions explored are:

1. In what ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges *influence* the dominant heterosexual community college culture?
2. In what ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges *transform* the dominant heterosexual community college culture?

The significance of this study is based on three key points of argument for action:

- Promote social change by uncovering the ways lesbian leaders in community colleges influence and transform dominant culture.
- Challenge and promote awareness: change college policies and regulations that openly or passively deny rights to lesbian administrators, faculty, staff, students, and trustees to become equal to that of their heterosexual community college counterparts
- Add to the understudied and limited body of study and research in the area of *out* lesbian leaders and their leadership respective to community college culture.

In the resultant sections, the review of relevant literature grounds my study in what is already known, builds on the research on cultural transformation through lesbian community college leadership, and informed me regarding my research design.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

> *To the racist, Black people are so powerful that the presence of one can contaminate a whole lineage; to the heterosexist, lesbians are so powerful that the presence of one can contaminate the whole sex.*
> (Audre Lorde, 1984, p. 51)

Overview of Major Sections for Literature Review

This study explores topics specific to the lesbian community college leader's culture and the dominant culture in which they work. The herein literature review focuses on how lesbian leaders strive to influence and transform community colleges through emancipative measures of discourse and actions of cultural and social justice that challenge hegemony and lead to educational equity. There is a paucity of literature that precisely matches the context of lesbian community college leaders as studied within this transformational process of leadership. Therefore, my research review focuses on literature that is as closely related to this topic area as possible in order to build a context for this study and to substantiate the intent and significance of the study as described in Chapter 2, Case for Significance. Hence, to contextualize and frame this approach, I selected three areas of relevant literature to discuss as background for this study: (a) Lesbian or Minority Leaders Interrupting, Influencing, or Transforming Dominant Culture and Old Frameworks of Leadership in Community College/Higher Education; (b) Cultural Domination Destabilized and Exposed by Lesbian or Minority Leaders in Community College or Corporate America; and (c) Lesbian Leaders in Colleges and the Impact of Homophobia/ Homonegativism as a Disruptor or Barrier to Effective, Transformative Leadership.

Section I:
Lesbian or Minority Leaders Interrupting, Influencing, or Transforming Dominant Culture and Old Frameworks of Leadership in Community College/Higher Education

This section provides research and studies particular to the overall concept of cultural transformation led by either a lesbian or minority status leader in higher education. With an empowered voice and stance Adrienne Rich (as cited in Rapp, 2002, p. 176), author and out lesbian, profoundly illuminates the intrinsic incongruities of leadership inherent in higher education today. In her critique of Rich's work, author Diana Rapp uses a postmodern and feminist perspective with a critical theory worldview to suggest that "educational agendas can be built more upon empathy and inclusion than instrumentalism and competition" (Rapp, 2002, p. 176). Rapp's research is significant here because it too, as with this study, is a call to arms. This is an action-oriented, emancipatory analysis wherein Rapp insinuates social justice as a core and necessary experience and outcome within the realm of higher education via the role of leader. Specifically, Rapp points to those leaders whose sexual identity is known as lesbian or gay and, as such, she discusses the almost total omission of their presence or influence in any aspect of high-level leadership in community colleges. Rapp calls lesbian leaders in higher education across the country to rally forth in the fight for inclusion and to heed her assertion that "the difference between a professional life lived actively and a life of passive drifting and dispersal of energies is an immense difference" (p. 178). Rapp's research significantly parallels the core of my study. Her research provides a foundation and profound argument for lesbian leaders in community college to shed

their passive role—one of adaptor to dominant culture—to instead draw on their inimitable culture as openly identified lesbian leaders leading the way to influence and transform higher education.

Ann Marie Nicolosi (2002), author and associate professor of women's and gender study/history at College of New Jersey questions, "How do colleges and universities deal with expression of hate and/or hate crimes against their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) community—How does an administrations' action, or inaction, determine the climate of a campus' acceptance of hate and verbal violence?" (2002, p. 47). Nicolosi describes her experience at her place of work, the College of New Jersey (TCNJ). She points to how, college-wide, she and others grappled with issues of diversity specific to sexual orientation. Nicolosi's study is especially significant to my study because she writes not only of her college's process and experience in its effort to face issues of social equity specific to sexual orientation, but also of her own personal transformation experienced as a result of her role as a college leader during a time of chaos and change. As a formerly closeted lesbian leader, the hate crimes occurring on campus and others' reaction to those crimes greatly disturbed Nicolosi and ultimately emboldened her resolve to come out as a lesbian. Nicolosi writes of coming out to a class of students in the midst of this firestorm of controversy. Subsequently, as described by Nicolosi the college is culturally transformed from an institution of silent exclusion regarding lesbian and gay diversity to one of open dialogue and inclusion. Nicolosi intimates this change is a direct result of her leadership and her courage to be open about her

lesbianism. As example, with her development and implementation of what she termed as a "Teach-In" event, Nicolosi was able to win over top administrators of the college who ultimately provided the financial and institutional support (including canceling classes on the day of the event) so that Nicolosi's college-wide *teach-in* effort could be held. Nicolosi explained that faculty were "responsible for fostering discussions about homophobia, heterosexual privilege, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) lifestyles in the classroom, as well as to provide support for the students" (p. 51). By coming out as a lesbian and using that new role as an effective lesbian leader, Nicolosi transformed not only her college but also herself.

An actual story, event, or occurrence of lesbian or gay leaders who transformed their college and influenced and changed the level of inclusivity and equitable distribution of social justice are invaluable and central to my study. To this regard, David Wallace authors an autoethnographical study wherein he discusses transformative discourse (dialog that is transformational) as a means of breaking apart "the usual ideologies that have accrued as the effect of fixity" (Wallace, 2002, p. 54). Wallace explains the importance of conversation or *discourse*, when attempting to expose and change cultural inequities. The author substantiates this claim by sharing his lived experience as a gay leader at his college. Similar to Nicolosi, Wallace sought to get his college talking about what was not being said, and in the process, launched a college-wide tool for discourse. Wallace explored the notion that negative experiences at his college cause lesbian and gay leaders, students, and faculty, who have been "defined as 'other' by dominant culture to have

a vested interest in "exposing the performative nature of discourse and in finding means to change the underlying ideologies of dominant culture" (p. 54). Wallace defines *discursive performativity* as having the power to reconstruct cultural narratives by speaking in another mode and to a wider audience. The definition and action of *discursive performativity* is in contrast to what he calls *theatrical performativity*, which attempts no transformation and only deconstructs cultural narratives.

This research is significant to my study since Wallace, the author and out college leader, intentionally engaged in a conversation or discourse on his college's shared chat line with the purpose of proving his theory of *discursive performativity*. In so doing, much like Nicolosi, author Wallace succeeded in transforming not only his college by leading them in this discursive dialogue, but also transformed himself in the process. Transformation, in this case through intentional conversation or discourse as initiated by an out leader such as Wallace, is core to my study that explores how lesbian leaders influence and transform community college culture. Wallace's path and tool for making this transformation happen is central to the paths and tools uncovered through this study's participants' stories as told through their voices. A limitation to this study is that the author is not a lesbian leader. Wallace is a self-identified gay man and therefore does not fit the exact research parameter of participants included in my study: lesbian leaders. However, Wallace provided a mini-autoethnography of institutional moments in which he experienced a set of conditions that enticed him to speak or write as a gay academic to make political

interventions in dominant culture. Wallace explored important issues that are often unacknowledged in everyday discussions of homosexuality: exposing heteronormativity as heterosexism, moving beyond invisibility, and the trap of double consciousness. Wallace's status as a sexual minority and transformational leader in higher education provides credibility and shows relativity to this study.

Like Wallace, Nan Ottenritter (1988) addresses sexual minority issues on campus and provides a framework for assessing the community college's inclusion of sexual minorities through what she describes as her "courage to care." Ottenritter delineates her exploration into three sections:

1. Assessment of three community college sexual minority issues:
    a. Education
    b. Services
    c. Procedures and policies
2. Discussion of inclusion of sexual minority students in the areas of:
    a. Individual development
    b. Coming out
    c. Prejudice and discrimination
3. Suggestions of best practices for community college leaders in the areas of:
    a. Getting to know members of the LGBT community
    b. Examining the language and symbols used on campus
    c. Setting examples as inclusive leaders
    d. Employing a cooperative working spirit

Ottenritter (1998) underscores the institutional loss that occurs when a lesbian is cut off from holistically contributing to the community college culture or environment, whether because of her own internalized homophobia, or because of the homophobia or heteronegativity which is perpetrated upon her by others. Ottenritter's (1998) work is an example of why a lesbian leader's approach to community college leadership matters. As an out lesbian leader, she employs an action oriented leadership style of influence and transformation, as opposed to an adaptive style often used by lesbian leaders who experience discrimination and fear retribution. Ottenritter's (1998) discussion is therefore central to the significance of this study on influence and transformation as the focus of her research is specific to the community college culture in relationship to lesbian issues.

A limitation of this work is that the analysis is not solely focused on lesbians such that one must extrapolate at times how the term queer is used as a ubiquitous catch-all for all humans not identifying as heterosexual. Another area that may be seen as a limitation is that Ottenritter authored this work 19 years ago. The mere fact that nearly two decades have passed since Ottenritter's (1998) study was written might indicate her research and inferences are outdated and do not match current circumstances related to lesbian leader's experience. However, the unfortunate truth is that even today lesbian leaders holding the highest posts in their colleges remain fearful of divulging their sexuality. They remain in the closet. There still exists an exclusionary culture rather than the inclusive culture Ottenritter (1998) tried to champion through her research analysis 19 years ago. As example, I know this to be

true specifically because of what I experienced only a few months ago when seeking participants for this study. What I had thought would be a quick process in finding five participants to agree to be interviewed became a far more laborious and decisively disturbing process. Five community college presidents who each lauded the focus and intent of my study, in the next sentence or breath declined to be a participant in the study solely because they did "not meet the study's fourth criteria of being out as a lesbian" at their respective community colleges. Therefore, the importance of Ottenritter's work remains as relevant as the day she wrote it—fortunate, or unfortunate.

Section I Summary: Insights that Relate to this Study

Through their leadership, lesbian leaders influence and transform community colleges by identifying inequities, reflecting on the issues, and acting with courage to change the culture of the institution. In so doing, the leader also transforms herself. The literature included in this section gives credence to this process of reflection, action, influence and transformation. Leaders such as Imbra (1998), Nicolosi (2002), Ottenritter (1998), Rapp (2002), Rich (1986), and Wallace (2002) all unknowingly shared in this stepped process. Hence, they each reflected, acted, influenced, and transformed by applying their own inimitable cultures and sensibilities. In profound ways, these authors interrupted dominant culture and old frameworks of leadership in their respective community college/university. It would add to the understanding of this topic to investigate what other ways lesbian leaders in community college specifically mobilize other lesbian leaders to contribute to sustaining

transformational efforts toward social, cultural, and educational change on campus. There is room in the literature for the insights my study contributes by exploring the culture and experiences of lesbian leaders in community colleges and the specific implications of their influence and transformative actions.

Section II:
Cultural Domination Destabilized and Exposed by Lesbian or Minority Leaders in Community College or Corporate America

In this section, I included research and studies that address issues of minority culture (lesbian, marginalized, or 'othered') versus dominant culture specific to college leadership or similar leaders within corporate America. These studies explored the detailed challenges, barriers, and double binds of being a minority leader working in a dominant culture, more specifically, a lesbian leader working within a dominant heterosexual culture at a community college. However, given the relative absences of literature specific to lesbian leaders in community college, literature including similar leaders in universities and corporate America was also included in this section in order to augment the context for this study and to substantiate the intent and significance of the study.

Authors Harbour, Middleton, Lewis, and Anderson (2003) teamed to publish a critical review of articles found in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice. The authors identified 16 studies that address issues related either directly or indirectly to underrepresented groups and "how dominant culture, privilege and assimilation affect selected underrepresented populations at the community college" (2003, p. 829). Groups examined included Asian, gay, Hawai´ian, lesbian,

immigrant, and Native American populations. This study specifically addresses what the authors describe as, "Dominant Culture Privilege." With a shortage of studies on the topic, the authors' work is foundational to my study in helping to explore and expose the scope of dominant culture in relationship to 'othered' culture of lesbian leaders in community college and their influence on the overall culture of their respective campuses.

In her phenomenological study, Michelle Andreas researched for the first time a more thorough understanding of the interrelationship between being lesbian and community college leadership (Andreas, 2004). Andreas studied five lesbians who are leaders in community and technical colleges, all dean level and above. In Chapter 5, Summary, Discussion, and Conclusion, Andreas discusses further implications of her study and asks the question, "How do lesbian community college administrators negotiate their lesbian identity to emerge as community college leaders" (p. 86)? She speaks to the implications of self-identifying as lesbian and of the constant *coming out* that many lesbian leaders in community college experience as they decide "when, where, how, and with whom to disclose [their] sexual orientation" (p. 90). Andreas exposes homophobia associated with each participant's experience as leaders in community college that is "a part of every story, struggle, and joy expressed by the women in this research" (p. 90). It is this "struggle" that Andreas points to that continues to impact and affect a lesbian leader's ability to live, work, and lead in an authentic and transformative manner today. In common with authors Imbra (1998), Nicolosi (2002), and Rapp (2002) as an out lesbian leader in

higher education, Andreas offers an observation regarding her own path as a result of her research,

> I have learned the nature of and process involved in original research, come to understand the history and dynamics of my own culture, and engaged in rich and meaningful conversations with family members, friends, and colleagues involving 'hard-to-discuss' issues of culture, power, privilege, oppression, homophobia, and heterosexism. (Andreas, 2004, p. 97)

As was stated earlier in this regarding authors Imbra (1998), Nicolosi (2002), and Rapp (2002), it is critical to point out here that by the very experience of engaging in her research specific to lesbians and lesbian leadership, Andreas herself feels transformed. Andreas recognizes not only the importance of other lesbian leaders coming out in their respective community college workplaces, but also the crucial significance of her own willingness and ability to be authentic and the role that coming out plays in "hard-to-discuss' issues of culture, power, privilege, oppression, homophobia, and heterosexism" (p. 91).

Central to my study and to this literary review are critical excerpts from Andreas' research work (2004) and her chapter on Research Findings regarding the subject of cultural domination and the impact of hegemony on lesbians who are leaders in community college. As a leader in community college, Andreas' participant, *Victoria*, examines the impact of her college's heteronormative culture by considering her desire to feel "a part of the team" and the destructive feelings of rejection and isolation that result from lack of acceptance or recognition as an equal contributor:

> I would say that while I value and feel very comfortable with my style and who I am [as a lesbian], I also have a great need and desire to be accepted and to be recognized as part of the 'team.' …I think my work requires that [I be part of the team] if I am going to achieve goals and move the institution and be a visionary leader and an effective supervisor and promoter of values… if I'm rejected or feel rejection or isolation then I don't feel like I can do my work, I don't have my tools. (Andreas, 2004, p. 81)

Victoria and four other sister participants' experiences are summarized when Andreas concludes, "Not only do the women work hard to have other people experience their humanness before they experience their lesbianism, but they often feel a need to be superwoman to minimize homophobic responses toward them" (2004. p. 81).

Out of a necessity of survival and to move beyond the stagnancy of survival, Andreas's research on the interrelationship between being lesbian and community college leadership peels back a painful cover that has too long been allowed to quash the energy and contributions of lesbian leaders. Like tearing away a layer of black plastic used to block sun and growth from a long forgotten garden, Andreas is the first in the United States to give voice to lesbian leaders in community colleges and their struggle to be heard, recognized, and treated as equal in the leadership realm. Her work is foundational to my study.

Through the very process of telling their stories, Andreas' courageous work provides new life, new growth, and expands opportunities for lesbians in leadership positions throughout the country. Andreas destabilizes "those punitive rules (social, familial, and legal) that force us to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity" (Find reference in Working Definitions). She does this by choosing to write

this dissertation as opposed to many other topics that would have been easier and safer to write and in doing so underscoring the toll that is taken on lesbian leaders who are closeted due to an exclusionary culture and climate on their college campuses. Andreas emphasizes the importance of adding to her work, asking that others continue to research ways to minimize homonegativsm by diversifying the current dominant community college. This is where my work picks up the charge using a critical qualitative paradigm that calls for reflection, action, and change through transformative acts of social justice.

In Christine Imbra's (1998) qualitative work she uses life-story methodology and a lesbian standpoint epistemology to explore the experiences of lesbians in leadership positions in higher education. Imbra's doctoral dissertation provides a written account of the life-stories of lesbians in leadership positions in higher education and strives to assist in creating a greater understanding of their experiences in the academy (Imbra, 1998). This dissertation is ground-breaking research on lesbian leaders in institutions of higher education and holds similarities to that of Michelle Andreas' (2004) work, which focuses more specifically on lesbian leaders in community colleges as opposed to Imbra's participants who worked in 4-year universities. Imbra deliberately diversified her participants in terms of age (different generations), location of institution (rural vs. urban), level of self-disclosure (out vs. closeted) race/ethnic heritage, type of institution (public, private, 2-year, 4-year), and level of leadership position (department chair, dean, vice-president, president). The significance of the study focuses on lesbian leaders as an invisible group, the role of

privilege and dominant culture, internalized and institutionalized oppression, and lesbian presence: perspectives on lesbian existence, lesbian erasure, and lesbian identity.

The significance of Imbra's research to this study is profound. Imbra seeks to document the transformation that others accomplished. She explores the dominant culture of institutes of higher education through her research that asks, "what is currently known specifically about lesbians in leadership positions in higher education" (1998, p. 21)? Imbra researches the first known "written record of the life experiences of lesbians in leadership positions in higher education institutions, thus, creating a written history of their role in the academy" (p. 17). A limitation of the work in relationship to my study is that her study focuses on four-year institutions rather than lesbian leaders in community college as is the focus of Andreas's research. Imbra's data remains integral to the research I pursued as it was a foundational work and supports Andreas's subsequent research that solely focuses on lesbian leaders in community college.

Shari Caudron (1995) addresses what she deems a "poor job" by the human resources departments when it comes to creating workplaces that value lesbian leaders and staff in corporate America. Caudron makes the point that though it is more commonly unacceptable to make disparaging remarks about women, African Americans, Hispanic populations, or any other recognized minority group, there is one minority group that is continually overlooked in our diversity discussions—namely countless lesbians (or gays), who are CEO's, supervisors, and other leaders,

such as those in colleges. This research explores the climate and culture of corporate American in terms of its level of acceptance and rejection, and how "equitable treatment of this employee group is not just a matter of benevolence and good will—it's a matter of intelligence and good business" (Caudron, 1995, p. 42).

Caudron exposes the inequities intrinsic in corporate America's human resource departments. She offers the concept of a playing field for all levels of supervisors, and employees, asking that the environment be made fair for all (1995, p. 42). Caudron articulates her concept of equity as rules of the game to be followed by human resources departments in matters of HR policy, HR practice and consistently met and carried out by HR personnel. In other words, Caudron purports that the human resource departments of corporate America plays a central role in creating a climate, environment, and, therefore, *culture*, that is inclusive of lesbian leaders and employees—despite the dictates of a dominant heterosexual culture that she states thinks and acts to the contrary. Caudron focuses heavily on comparison of minority population as a main argument for why she contends human resource departments should treat lesbian (and gay) populations with the same considerations and support as other legally recognized minority groups. Caudron states, "As a group, lesbians and gay men probably outnumber most groups classified as minorities" (p. 46). Caudron claims that lesbians and gays should be protected by law in the same way as other minority groups are protected in this country.

The significance of this research to my study is that it exposes the inequities and unfair treatment of the lesbian and gay population in corporate America. This

helps to make the case for how dominant heterosexual culture, even amid human resource departments and their mission of inclusivity and equity, continues to marginalize and treat differently the minority lesbian population. In general, Caudron's research begs the question, do lesbian leaders feel protected or represented by their respective human resource departments? More specific to my study, wherein I have been an out lesbian administrator over the past 10 years in three community colleges located in three different states, Caudron's study and results match my experience with every human resource department at each of the three community colleges.

One limitation of Caudron's work is that the central focus is on corporate America, not community colleges. However she includes higher education in her list of human resource departments that continue to perpetuate dominant culture bias. Also a limitation, the study was written 10 years ago and much history has transpired since. Yet again, as with Ottenritter's work, much of Caudron's research findings indicate inequities and unjust treatment of gay American population by human resource departments still exist today; thus Caudron's 1995 findings remains viable and valid.

Anna Spradlin (1998) uncovered her own professional journey as a lesbian leader who ultimately came out while working at her current position as a professor at the University of Colorado–Boulder. Spradlin explored how, in her effort to fit the dominant heterosexual cultural context of her workplace over the course of her professional career, she unconsciously developed strategies for "passing." Spradlin

defines *passing* as "how one conceals normal information about oneself to preserve, sustain, and encourage others' predisposed assumptions about one's identity" (p. 598).

Through much reflection over time, Spradlin came to better understand how her internalized homophobia was limiting her ability to be an effective leader in higher education. Spradlin identifies six strategies she had been using to "pass" in the dominant heterosexual culture: Distancing, Dissociating, Dodging, Distracting, Denial, and Deceiving. She describes her working environment or work culture as paralleling that of the military's current policy on lesbian and gay members of the military: "don't ask don't tell." Spradlin discovers and describes her own paradox and experience as a lesbian leader who works within a dominant heterosexual culture. She compares her experience to other lesbian leaders in higher education and surmises that thousands of other lesbian leaders in higher education are experiencing a similar paradox. Spradlin feels she is encouraged along side her heterosexual college colleagues to *bring her whole self to her work place* unless she is gay. Spradlin claims the silent rule at her college was to keep this difference hidden, repressing what she terms "the pink elephant" in the room. Spradlin spoke to this dominant culture-based contradiction and contends,

> The paradox of implementing these passing strategies within an organization through which the climate implicitly enforces 'don't ask don't tell' is that the same organization simultaneously is asking the gay person [lesbian] to 'be all she can be.' For me, these two demands became impossible to fulfill. The price I paid for passing was the prevention of authentic, healthy relationship development within the workplace, the erosion of self-esteem and integrity, excessive tension

> within my own primary relationship, and the sheer drain of professional and personal energy. (1998, p. 603)

The strength of her work is in the author's own journey from the eroding affects of *passing* to the emancipation of *being all she could be* as an out lesbian leader at her college. Through her leadership, Spradlin exposes the inequities of her college's dominant culture by identifying the strategies she had developed and used over her professional career in order to fit in, participate, and literally survive in her college environment.

The significance of this research to my study is two-fold. First, is Spradlin's ability to define the raw and honest effects of an exclusive college culture that only promotes one dominant culture—heterosexual. Spradlin felt unfairly thrown into the same cultural pot with heterosexual leaders wherein somehow she was expected to lead and thrive while employing her secret strategies of Distancing, Dissociating, Dodging Distracting, Denial, and Deceiving. Secondly, the significance of Spradlin's work to my study is found via the leadership she provided that ultimately created and maintained a culture and environment at her college, a cultural environment now far more inclusive and supportive of lesbians and other sexual minority groups. Spradlin shares in common with authors Imbra (1998), Nicolosi (2002), and Rapp (2002), and Andreas a process that has emerged through this literature review as common to all aforementioned authors: she reflected, acted, influenced, and ultimately transformed her college and herself in the process of her leadership journey as an out lesbian leader. Spradlin described the effects of her justice-seeking leadership that championed the new existence of inclusive co-cultures at her college rather than the

confining existence of one dominant and exclusive, heterosexual, culture. Spradlin explains that a college that promotes inclusive cocultures,

> ...reverses the implicit cultural message don't ask, don't tell by letting gay persons know that there are individuals or groups with whom they do not have to fear negative responses to their true identities. There, they can reveal normal conversational information freely; they can cease the enactment of passing strategies. In these safe havens, they can be their authentic selves [and lead in an authentic way]. (1998, p. 601)

A limitation of this study is that Spradlin's work was focused solely on a four-year university rather than specifically a community college culture. Also, this study was written approximately 9 years ago. However, yet again, progress has moved slowly since 1998 when Spradlin performed her research. The United States military still employs the "don't ask don't tell" policy to which Spradlin likened her college leadership experience, and, as mentioned earlier in this literature review, many, many lesbian leaders remain closeted in due to the homonegativity that dominant heterosexual cultures at their respective colleges employ, whether explicit or implicit, within their institutions.

Section III:
Lesbian Leaders in Community Colleges and the Impact of Homophobia/ Homonegativism as a Disruptor or Barrier to Effective, Transformative Leadership

The perception, experience, and anticipation of homophobia or homonegativism as related to a lesbian leader's workplace are omnipresent cloud of oppression that often force lesbians to finely sift through every thought, emotion, and action prior to engaging with anyone in any way. This emotionally and mentally exhausting process of internal inquiry is common among lesbian leaders (Andreas, 2004; Nicolosi, 2002). Therefore, the result of uninterrupted homophobia and

homonegativism in the community college culture for lesbian leaders is a barrier to effective, transformative leadership.

This type of internal filtration process as Andreas describes it occurs daily in my administrative role. As example, in 2004 I took a new position at a community college. It was a common experience for me as a community college administrator to be a part of annual retreats and less formal retreat-like meetings throughout the year wherein full participation and teamwork are constantly touted, encouraged, and expected from my colleagues and me. As a new dean at this particular community college, my immediate supervisor was the college Chancellor. After spending only 4 weeks on the job, the Chancellor called for a 2-day administrative retreat. Questions raced through my mind. Will I be treated differently? Will I hesitate to fully participate? What will I hold back my comments and suggestions for change for fear of jeopardizing new relationships with my colleagues? This new college and state is a completely different culture; will I be subjected to professional ridicule if I come out as a lesbian? Will I fear for my personal safety? Until my wife is settled in with a new job, we are dependent upon my income; will I put my family's livelihood at risk if it is known that I am lesbian, and I speak my mind as freely as do my heterosexual colleagues? If I am fully open as a lesbian leader at this retreat in this community college, will I risk being cut out of decision-making, professional opportunities, general social interaction, and administrative support? The internal inquiry and social filtration in situations such as this one often seem endless.

Because I am a lesbian leader in a community college wherein the dominant culture is heterosexual, these are the questions I will most likely continuously ask myself every day of every year that I spend on the job until the very culture of community college in America changes to be one of equity and mutual inclusivity for lesbian and heterosexual leaders, students, staff, faculty alike. This, I contend, is the effect of homophobia and homonegativism as a disruptor or barrier to being an effective and transformative lesbian leader.

The literature tells me that I am not alone in my experience of how homophobia/ homonegativism disrupts or is a barrier to effective, transformative leadership as described above. There are unfortunately numerous community college leaders who know from first hand experience that, "Gays and lesbians are ostracized, and left out, while facing enormous pressures to conform" (Harris, 1999, p. 1). Therefore, it is necessary to explore what is newly discovered or already known about lesbian leaders in community colleges and the impact of homophobia/homonegativism on effectiveness of leadership relative to influence and transformation.

Authors Gedro, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2004) wrote a study that explores how lesbians learn to negotiate the heterosexism of corporate America. The sample consists of 10 women in the management or executive level who were over the age of 30, identified as lesbians, had worked in their organizations for at least two years, had at least two people who report directly to them and had budget responsibility. The study found that lesbians who have learned to negotiate the

heterosexism of the corporate setting *successfully* have learned the following survival strategies:

A. To pre-screen individuals and groups for their receptivity toward the issue of lesbianism.
B. To come out as individuals/lesbians in a strategic way.
C. To educate others about the unique issues that lesbians face in corporate settings.

Gedro et al. (2004) discuss the social and organizational arrangement defined by heterosexism in the workplace culture of corporate America. While *successful* is not adequately articulated in the study, the results of applying the above three strategies still did not significantly impact the lesbian participants from achieving even limited success. The findings were profound as Gedro et al. state, "The women in this study have struggled to prevail and rise in the corporate hierarchy" (p. 193). The authors point out that the reason the women do not prevail is because they are lesbian (2004).

In the conclusion on their findings, Gedro, et al. (2004) and Johnson-Bailey express hope that heterosexism and the effects of heterosexism on lesbian leaders dissipates through the transformational actions of human resources and other corporate leaders who are within the dominant culture wherein, "Hopefully, this will lead to the formal recognition of the needs that lesbians face and the ways in which human resource departments and other corporate leaders' (sic) can develop more equitable and prosperous work settings" (p. 193). A limitation to the study is that

while the participants held positions of power and responsibilities in their organizations comparatively equal to that of their higher education counterparts, the study specifically focused on lesbian leaders in corporate America rather than the area of higher education and community college.

Coon (2001) used both qualitative and quantitative methods to write his dissertation "from a theoretical perspective of ethnographic, phenomenologic, and heuristic approaches to research" (p. 71). The purpose of the study was to identify the leadership characteristics and values common to openly gay men and lesbians in high profile positions of leadership. This study was conducted with 50 openly gay men and lesbians in high profile positions of leadership. The research question and subsequent findings most significant to my study was found in Coon's fourth research question (out of five research questions): "What factors do gays and lesbians perceive to impede their advancement to leadership positions or from being able to experience leadership roles or behaviors?" (p. 7). Through the interpretation of the data collected, Coon concludes, "Through competence and exemplary leadership practices, gay and lesbian leaders will be better equipped to confront and scale the walls of homophobia and heterosexism that plague our society" (p. 138).

The significance of this study to my research is that Coon explores the impact of homophobia and heterosexism as a disruptor or barrier to effective, transformative leadership. Relative to this point, Coon states,

> Homophobia and heterosexism are the factors impeding the gay and lesbian community's quest for fair and equal rights and protections. These same walls of homophobia and heterosexism are supporting the glass ceiling in many organizations. Homophobia and heterosexism

> are the factors preventing our lawmakers from creating legislation to deal with the hate crimes inflicting pain and loss on individuals, families, and communities across the nation. (pp. 138-139)

This study also measures "transformational descriptors" useful to my study regarding the areas of lesbian leader's influence and transformation of the dominant heterosexual community college culture. A limitation of this study is that the participant group is made up of only 6% of those from the field of higher education.

Alexander and Clare (2004) use Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as a research method to elicit themes that surface through the stories of their participants. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes with 14 lesbian and 2 bisexual women who had self-injured on repeated occasions. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 50 years old. This was a fascinating yet disturbing study that focuses on lesbians who self-injure as a means for coping with their sexual identity. Alexander and Clare explain, "self-injury can be understood as a coping response that arises within a social context characterized by abuse, invalidation, and the experience of being regarded as different or in some way unacceptable" (2004, p. 70). They further clarify, "these factors are especially salient in the lives of women, and they emerge particularly strongly as part of the experience of women who are developing a lesbian… identity" (p. 70). The implications of this study beg the larger question of identity as identity relates to lesbians who are leaders in community colleges. Alexander and Clare contend, "it appears that lesbian[s]…are at greater risk of engaging in self-injurious behavior; this may

perhaps be connected with the additional social pressure of expressing what in effect continues to be a stigmatized sexual identity" (p. 71).

The implications of self hatred turned inward and manifesting in the action of self-destructive behavior such as cutting on oneself, alcoholism, food disorders, and so on, are unsettling and pose a powerful and real impact on lesbians who are leaders in community colleges. Given that, "self injury must be understood not as a symptom of individual intrapsychic disorder, but as a coping response that arise with a social context" (Alexander & Clare, 2004, p. 83), this study is useful in exploring the impact of homophobia and homonegativism as a disruptor or barrier to effective, transformative leadership. It also adds an element of urgency to the continued study of lesbian leaders, such that new and incumbent lesbian leaders do not fall prey to their internalized self-hatred or to the hatred, disdain, or ignorance of their culture or society.

In her study, Carolyn Welch (1996) explores lesbians and gays coming out of the closet to fight legal battles for the equal employment rights to that of other women, ethnic minorities, and disabled people. She asks how employers can put their houses in order, change employment laws, and help to dissipate or eliminate homophobia in the workplace.

It is estimated that lesbians and gay men most likely outnumber Asian-Pacific Islanders, differently-abled, Hispanics, and others whom we have traditionally classified as minority (Welch, 1996). Welch points to a trend of change regarding the status of minority group protection under the changing laws that she professes

employers will soon have to heed. Welch supports a requirement that employers open their eyes to the discrimination that is affecting their lesbian and gay leaders and corporate staff. She warns, 'if companies do not put their houses in order in the coming year, they may not only lose good people, but may also be open to a flood of sex or sexual orientation discrimination complaints" (p. 24).

Though this study was written more than 10 years ago, it remains significant to supporting the context of my study because it explores the impact of heterosexism on lesbian and gay populations from the perspective of the legal ramifications of discriminatory employment laws. A limitation is found wherein Welch (1996) clearly infers from her original findings in this study that employers needed to change their homophobic ways or else be slapped with lawsuits once lesbian and gays became a protected class through federal legislation. Unfortunately, that legislation has yet to be carried into law even since 1996 when Welch originally wrote her study.

Over 30 years has passed since APA normalized lesbianism, yet this decision has done little to significantly impact federal, state, or local discriminatory and exclusionary laws and practices with regard to employment, taxation, pensions, disability, healthcare, immigration, military service, marriage, custody, and adoption (O'Hanlan, Dibble, & Hagan, 2004). Instead, the actions of the field of psychology over the duration of three decades have done even more to create, promote, and sustain homophobia and homonegativism in the American culture. Therefore, the DSM/APA's negative stance toward lesbianism directly and indirectly linking

lesbianism and homosexuality to mental disorder not only continues to influence workplace bias and internalized homophobia but also hold significance to my study.

In November 2004, anti-gay marriage legislation was put forth for vote by the people in 11 states in the United States of America. This legislative effort in all 11 states succeeded in amending each respective state constitution, which immediately set in action re-writing and re-defining marriage to instead read that marriage can solely exist between "One Man and One Woman." The purpose for introducing this legislation is to deny, ostracize, exclude, and expel same gendered couples from legally marrying. United States President George W. Bush, has publicly supported an amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would "protect the sacred institution of marriage" and defines marriage as being "between a man and a woman, husband and wife" (Curtis, 2005). Colorado Senator Wayne Allard has said "We must not stand still when the courts are being used to challenge and distort civilization's oldest, most sacred, institution" (Abrams, 2004). In addition, our courts backed President Bush's appointment of a controversial Alabama judge, William Pryor, to a federal appellate court while the Senate was on a holiday break. Pryor has compared homosexual and lesbian acts to "prostitution, adultery, necrophilia, bestiality, possession of child pornography and even incest and pedophilia." Pryor was also the deciding vote to uphold Florida's ban on gay adoptions (Bagby, 2004). When our country's President, influential politicians and more than half of the American voters continue to promote and ratify anti-gay policy or law in our country, it is easy to gauge the negative influence these people and efforts have on

the lives and daily work experiences of lesbian leaders in community colleges across North America.

The above excerpts are significant to my study because they explicitly describe the homophobic and homonegative words and behaviors of politicians who make or otherwise support anti-lesbian/gay legislature. I posit that the above homophobic/homonegative efforts of politicians (including the President of the United States) and subsequent changes or additions to federal and state law(s) have a negative impact upon lesbian leaders in community colleges. It is hoped this study can help change the impact and the degree of impact anti-gay legislation has upon lesbian leaders in community college. It is also hoped that study can uncover how this impact manifests itself in a lesbian leaders' ability to influence and transform dominant heterosexual culture at their respective community colleges and provide pathways and tools to change or slow the negative force of anti-gay legislative acts.

Summary of the Review of Literature

This literature review provided is a broad background to the paucity of information available on lesbian leaders in community college, influencing and transforming community college culture. The literature I have included reveals the opportunity for my study to contribute to the base of literature apparent through three evolutionary themes:

1. Lesbian or minority leaders interrupting, influencing, or transforming dominant culture and old frameworks of leadership in community college/higher education.

2. Cultural domination destabilized, dismantled, and exposed by lesbian or minority leaders in community college or corporate America.
3. Lesbian leaders in community colleges and the impact of homophobia/ homonegativism as a disruptor or barrier to effective, transformative leadership.

These three themes continue to be explored, add to, guide, and organize my research. Each section represented a significant aspect of this study's focus, which is to explore how lesbian leaders influence and transform community college culture.

The literature included in this chapter contends "interpretive discourse is authentically sufficient when it fulfills three conditions: represents multiple voices, enhances moral discernment, and promotes social transformation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 145). Through this study, lesbian leaders' voices are heard and "wrench apart a social order where the personal, the private and the public are maintained as separate realms" (Levine & Leonard, 1984, p. 2). In other words, just by being out as a lesbian leader in a community college, "the state of openly being a lesbian has the potential to disrupt and break down long-established social structures; those heterosexual spaces… that have been held together by silence, homophobia, and oppression" (p. 2). Earlier research lacks the microethnographical lens. If we are to increase community college cultures that support the transformational leadership of lesbian leaders, then the voices of lesbian leaders must be heard and their stories told to add to the knowledge base and community college leadership experience. Their personal stories and any themes that emerge can deepen our understanding of

lesbian leadership to enhance social, cultural, and educational equity, as well as fulfill the overall community college mission of open access. Chapter 3 describes the specific method that frames this study in order to achieve this goal as well as an overview of the theories that guided the inquiry.

CHAPTER 3

CRITICAL MICROETHNOGRAPHY METHOD AND THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

> *A life of reaction is a life of slavery, intellectually and spiritually. One must fight for a life of action, not reaction. (*Rita Mae Brown, 1982)

This provides an overview of the methodology for this study and includes the rationale, key concepts of the methodology, key authors, data collection procedures, information related to study participants, data analysis procedures, the strategies to ensure soundness of data and interpretation, the strategies for the protection of human subjects, and an anticipated time schedule for the completion of the research.

This research study exploring how lesbian leaders influence and transform dominant community college culture used a qualitative research approach and followed a microethnographic methodology with a critical orientation. Concisely, this study uses a *qualitative critical microethnographical* approach to research (Beach & LeBaron, 2002, Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). In keeping with an orientation towards critical inquiry, this study promoted social, educational, and cultural change, inclusivity, and social justice. In alignment with an ethnographical approach to research, this study accessed a shared cultural knowledge and

understanding of lesbian culture to interpret and analyze discussion of shared understandings and experiences as lesbian leaders in community colleges. This was a set of interviews later analyzed for patterns that address influence, transformation, and social justice issues. Through this method of research, the ways by which five lesbian leaders in community colleges applied their own inimitable culture to overcome the ubiquitous domination of an exclusive heterosexual culture were uncovered. A powerful and new level of true open access to higher education was exposed as barriers of inequity were shed. Addressing bias and reflexivity as researcher, part of my study included my own story and was discussed and reviewed as component of my data in Chapter 4.

Qualitative Research with Critical Orientation as Methodology

A qualitative research approach is most appropriately used to study people in their natural settings and to explore how many social institutions and social policies reinforce certain commonly held societal beliefs. A number of scholars have written on qualitative research (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Crabtree & Miller, 1999). In their discussion on this type of research, authors Denzin and Lincoln have dissected qualitative research into seven *moments*, which overlap and simultaneously operate in the present (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These moments include the traditional, modernist, blurred genres, the crisis of representation, post-modern, experimental and new ethnographies, post-experimental inquiry, and the future, e.g., now (2000). It is the moments of *experimental and new ethnographies* and *future* qualitative research that most align with this study. The

future as Denzin and Lincoln define it in this context is most concerned with moral discourse and with the development of sacred textualities (2000). The *future* moment asks that "the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community" (2000). It is through these critical conversations that lesbian leaders have influenced and transformed dominant community college culture in ways that include not only race, gender, class, and democracy, as Denzin and Lincoln suggest, but also that of heterosexual cultural dominance by affecting the state of heteronormativity. Qualitative research is a situated action that puts the observer in the world and "consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research assumes the following about qualitative researchers who employ this paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000):

- Researchers study things in the natural settings.
- Researchers attempt to make sense of phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them.
- Researchers employ a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, and each practice makes the world visible in a different way.
- Researchers are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience.

- Researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.
- Researchers seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.

Critical Microethnography

Critical microethnography is the philosophic position of my framework through which my collected data was analyzed. This type of ethnography relies on critical theory (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999) wherein the results of this study help to promote social and cultural change and inclusivity, as well as recognized the significant contributions made by five lesbian leaders in community colleges towards social, educational, and cultural transformation, justice and equity.

Fundamental Characteristics of Microethnography

1. *Researcher as instrument*: that the study of culture requires an intimacy with the participants who are part of a culture or connected group (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

2. *Fieldwork*: that ethnographic research occurs in the field, on location of the culture of interest (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

3. *The cyclic nature of data collection and analysis*: that in ethnographic research, a question about the differences in human experience found in a foreign or marginalized culture, as in this study's focus on lesbian leaders, leads researchers to

determine those differences (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). However, one of the problems pointed out is that no clear boundary exists between the similarities and differences in human experience, thus data collected by ethnographers in the field to describe the difference and similarities lead to still other questions about the culture…and those questions lead to still others and so on (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). The conundrum being that the study does not end because a researcher has answered all of the questions or completely described the culture, but because time and resources do not allow continuation (Spradley, 1980; Spradley & McCurdy, 1972; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

4. *The focus on culture*: that unique to ethnography is the focus on the culture, as the "only research method whose sole purpose is to understand the lifeways of individual connected through group membership" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 149).

5. *Cultural immersion*: that the depth and length of participation with the culture can be called cultural immersion (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999)…although, it is exceptionally critical to this research study that the following be understood: there are two major and valid ethnographic methods that can be considered to study the culture of interest, a *micro*- or *macro*- ethnography, or "*mini*" or "*maxi*" (Leininger, 1985; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). A *microethnography*, such is this study on lesbian leaders in community college, refers to the length or scale of the study, which is "generally of a smaller scale and is narrow or specific in its focus" (Preston, 1997; (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). To further delineate this microethnography from a

macro-ethnography, key author in this field, Spradley, likens the scope of a microethnographic study as one "that examines a single social situation … [e.g.,] nurses receiving report on one unit" (Hymes, 1978; Spradley, 1980; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Spradley goes on to note a "microethnography can be a "topic-oriented ethnography which restricts the study to one or more aspects of life, as I have restricted this study to that of researching five lesbian leaders in community college. In addition, author Patricia L Munhall discusses *hypothesis-oriented* ethnography as characterized by studies in process by which ethnographers engage in testing hunches about the way cultural practices might influence human development. This type of ethnography is compared to focused ethnography, in which the focus is on specific problems or situation within a larger social scene (Munhall, 2006). Also, regarding scope and number of participants and the valid use of micro as opposed to macro ethnographic research approach, it is common that doctoral students are assigned min-ethnographies because these studies are small scale (Leininger, 1985) and can be conducted in a shortened time period, such as 6 weeks, with data collection on a single cultural practice taking place one day a week.

6. *The tension between researcher as researcher and researcher as culture member, also called reflexivity*: that the struggle between being researcher and becoming a member of the culture is a challenge, and is where the tension lies, and where the potential to be less objective lies (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Therefore, it is critical that as the researcher of this study, I fully understood that my participation in of itself altered the very culture I was researching. To this explicit

regard, it was clear to me that I must open myself as researcher in this study through a very intimate personal disclosure that itself lays raw, unrestrained, and unconcealed my background and experience as a lesbian leader and as a researcher. I have made my bias known as truthfully and explicitly to readers of this study as I have the words to express. The tension between researcher in the pure definition of researcher and researcher as participant "has been discussed in many forums" (p. 150). It is foundational in this work to consider, "how does one discover the emic—the insider's view—without becoming a part of the culture" (p. 150).

A final point on the characteristic of *reflexivity,* and vitally important to this discussion, is

> "...the struggle for objectivity in collection and analyzing data while being so intimately involved with the group is a characteristic unique to ethnography…*reflexivity* allows [me] to explore cultures within the paradigm of [lesbian leaders] which values the affective and subjective nature of humans. The duality of being both researcher and participant provides opportunities to capitalize on sights derived from datum sources" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 150).

To this regard, I have included my Personal Disclosure in Chapter 4 as an integral contribution to the data collected in this study.

Assumptions Underlying Microethnographic Research

The following are a list of assumptions I used to guide me in this microethnographic research. I assumed the following about microethnography (LeBaron, 2006):

- It adheres to principles of empirical social science. A particular phenomenon is believed to exist to the extent that data, analyses, and conclusions are verifiable or reproducible by others.
- It values qualitative analysis. With less concern for coding and counting, I sought to understand and explain communicative behaviors through careful and thorough descriptions of their situated occurrence.
- It may proceed inductively or abductively. Through the recording, observing, and analyzing, research claims and conclusions emerge.
- It recognizes that *apriori* theorizing may divert attention from the central task of describing and explaining phenomena based on observable details. Once my research focus was clarified, as an analyst I specifically went looking for additional instances or evidence of some observable (or audible) occurrence toward strengthening or generalizing my findings.
- It privileges participants' perspectives. I avoided imposing my own theorized views on the social phenomena I observed; rather, I attended to the orientations and relevancies that the participants displayed.
- It acknowledges interpretive aspects of observational work. While adopting and maintaining an empirical stance, I was (at least to some extent) a member of the social world that I analyzed. As a researcher,

I did more than document observable behaviors: I appraised the significance of behavior or discourse documented.

- It regards communication as a primary means whereby social realities, microcultures, and meanings are interactively accomplished and experienced. What verbal and nonverbal forms of communication "mean" are what they are being used to do within specific situations.

Criteria for Truth

The issue of validity in this study was crucial to the overall integrity of the work and has to do with the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings. These findings were based upon "notions of reliability (repeatable, generalizable) or the stability of methods and findings" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 193). My work as the researcher was "not only nonobjective but partisan, partial, incomplete, and inextricably bound to the contexts and rationales of the researcher," (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 193) as other authors suggest in this type of qualitative critical microethnographical research (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To this regard, I assert validity through applying multiple efforts, including:

- *Reflexivity*: I turned the focus back on myself to evaluate my influence on the findings and interpretations. I take my bias into consideration and openly discuss my role in the study in a way that honors and respects the site and the people being studied (Creswell, 2002).
- *Member checking or Informant feedback*: I sent transcripts and dissertation work to each participant for their approval of accuracy in

details and nuance data. This included analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions, which were shared with study participants from whom the data were originally collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

- *Depth of description*: I interviewed participants for 3.5 to 5 hours each in their work and home settings in order to elicit thick description and to assess transferability of my findings, as well as to interpret shared symbols and meaning whereas ". . . to thickly describe social action is actually to begin interpret[ing] it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, and so on that characterize a particular episode. It is the interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick" (Schwandt 2001, p. 255).
- *Triangulation of data sources*: I corroborated evidence from studying 5 different participants, using different types of data (observational field notes and interviews) and using different methods of data collection (artifacts and interviews) in the description of the study's themes (Creswell, 2002).

Critical Theory

This study employed a critical theory approach to research in order to dig deep into the often insensible and oppressive layer of heterosexual privilege and cultural dominance prevalent at community colleges in the United States (Harbour et al., 2003). Therefore, I did not look at causal relationships, as would a quantitative based study; rather I focused on:

> what is going on here? How can I make sense of [how lesbian leaders make sense] of it? How could it be better? These common... questions call for research approach that preserves the complexity, storminess, and wealth of the lived experiences from which the questions arise. (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. xi)

As a researcher, I explored the works of Habermas, Hegel, Marx, Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer, critical theorists who are best known for their contribution to this field of work. In speaking to issues of cultural dominance through the lens of critical theory, Hegel speaks of the "universal class" and the "understanding [that] the state is a parasitic institution that serves the interest of the bureaucracy, and adjudicates a compromise among the competing interests and classes of civil society, a compromise decidedly favoring the dominant class" (Howard, 2001, p. 24).

From rich data collected through interviews and observation, I researched and developed through interpretation of data a multi-dimensional picture of a community college culture that aimed to encourage, support and be inclusive of the often tempered or quashed voice of lesbian leaders. Because lesbian leaders scan their environment for homophobia and clues indicating cultural inclusion, it is a "shared perception that safety in the workplace only occurs when all cultures, perceptions and experiences are included, heard, discussed, and explored" (Andreas, 2004, p. 65).

I suggest that community colleges across the country have experienced a tremendous shift in their culture as a result of the actions and leadership of lesbian leaders. Through research and connections as a result of this research, I identified five community colleges that have experienced cultural shifts and transformations

through the influence and transformation of the leadership and actions of the five participants in this study. To get at the core of this research, I chose critical qualitative research orientation using an ethnographic methodology because this approach drew from critical social science and the "theory of knowledge … [where] critical qualitative research uncovers examines, and critiques the social, cultural, and psychological assumptions that structure and limit our ways of thinking and being in the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 9).

Critical ethnography is the philosophic position of my framework through which my data analysis was integrated into the data collection. The following steps specific to ethnographic research (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 155) were used for conducting this research and collecting data:

1. Do participant observation
2. Make an ethnographic record
3. Make descriptive observations
4. Make a focused observation
5. Make selected observations
6. Discover culture themes
7. Write an ethnography

The scope of the research was taken into consideration given time and other limiting factors. Therefore, *micro*-ethnography, as opposed to *macro*-ethnography, was conducted to uncover *tacit knowledge*, the information members of this culture know but do not talk about or convey directly, and to explore multiple social/professional situations specific to lesbian leaders in community colleges (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

Finally, an ethnographical account consisting of organized information based on significant themes was written to share with others what I have learned and how I have attempted to make sense out of the patterns that emerged as a result of this research. In critically oriented qualitative research, the goal is to "disclose self evident and unnoticed biases, habits of thinking, customary conventions, and so forth through dialog" (Tesch, 1990, p. 39). I used a microethnographic approach and dialogical interview method for gathering data in order to produce the data needed to address my research questions. Interviews were the most appropriate and productive data collecting technique insofar as "qualitative interviewing helps explain how and why culture is created, evolves, and is maintained" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 3). Through dialogic interview, I drew out and obtained the stories of lesbian leaders in community colleges and their means for transformational work and outcomes. I worked hard to "put together the information [I found] from qualitative interviews to form explanations and theories that are grounded in the details, evidence, and examples of the interviews" (p. 4). Specifically, I explored and uncovered the actions of lesbian leaders wherein a cultural shift had taken place at their respective community colleges as a result of a lesbian leader's actions of influence and transformation.

Study Participants

True to microethnography, the focus of this research was on individuals who have a shared group membership and a shared cultural knowledge and understanding of lesbian culture narrowly focused on lesbian leaders in community college. I

interviewed five lesbian leaders in community college. The criteria for the participants were as follows:

1. A leader at a community college who held a position title of Director or higher (i.e., executive director, dean, executive dean, vice president, vice chancellor, chancellor, president), or similarly titled.
2. Had held this position for at least 1 year.
3. Identified as lesbian (bisexual or other self-identified individuals are not being considered or included in this research pool).
4. Considered themselves fully *out* (openly lesbian as their heterosexual counterparts are openly heterosexual) at work.
5. Lived within a reasonable geographical distance to researcher as determined by researcher and the financial cost associated with travel.

The participant involvement occurred over 4 months and included a minimum of 4 total hours stretched over two to three sessions. A minimum of interaction was established, as well as a maximum amount of interaction (20 hours), to allow participants the ability to respond to questions, reflect, remember, and contact me with further thoughts and reactions throughout the process. My interactions with all five lesbian leaders were held in person, at their home and or at their workplace, as well as over the telephone or via email throughout the research phase.

Because this research was carried out via an ethnographic research paradigm, it was necessary for me to meet with the lesbian leaders participating in this study in all or

some of the following areas: their workplace office, workplace meetings, workplace common areas, personal home, or other professional/personal settings. This assisted me in the discovery of cultural knowledge specific to the commonalities discovered within the lesbian leaders in this study. This was only done with participants' full permission and knowledge. The reason for observing and documenting in this way is to identify shared cultural knowledge by uncovering patterns and commonalities among the lesbian leaders. My role as an Microethnographic researcher required me to participate in the culture, observe the lesbian leaders, document my observations, collect artifacts, interview members of this cultural group (lesbians leaders in community college), analyze the findings, and report the findings (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

I recorded research information by use of audio tape, snapshots, sketches, and written field notes. I gathered data through these primary approaches (photographs, sketches, and notes) in order to capture verbatim responses, nuances, and to make inferences and references via field notes regarding important statements or ideas. An interview log was used to note specific numbers/position in the tape (video or audio) position so that the original data was accessed when needed. Field notes were used to describe interviews and direct quotes, inferences, meetings, places of work, places of home, or other sites as designated and chosen by the lesbian leader. All interviews occurred only with the lesbian leaders' full knowledge and full consent. Artifacts were collected only by permission of each participant. Each lesbian leader was made aware that they could choose to end the interview(s) at any point. This study focused on: "the political empowerment of people through group participation in the search

for and acquisition of knowledge and subsequent actions to change the status quo" (Merriam, 2002, p. 10). Focusing less on the individual and more on context, this critical research "querie[d] the context where learning [took] place, including the larger systems of society, the culture and institutions that shape[d] educational practice, [and] the structural and historical conditions framing practice" (p. 10). Therefore, through my research I attempted to reframe or reshape educational leadership practices and policies, such that social, educational, and cultural equity has the opportunity to become a reality for lesbian leaders and ultimately for other underrepresented and marginalized leaders and groups in community colleges across the United States.

Analysis Procedures

Data for this research were collected over approximately 3 months and were taken from three main sources: descriptive field observations in my researcher's journal, participant reflections (to include reflection via email discourse), and face-to-face interviews. I used an audio recorder to capture approximately 25 hours of recorded participant interviews via digital voice files (dvf) format. The data was then transcribed and coded. I did much of the transcription myself to provide as much opportunity as possible to be immersed in the voices and remarkable lived experiences of the five lesbian leader participants in this study. I provided participants with a list of questions in advance via an email attachment (Appendix A, p. 206). I asked broad questions to elicit thick descriptions when summarizing and analyzing the data. Observations were descriptive and not prescribed so as to allow

for an organic process through looking, listening, asking questions, and collecting artifacts. An ethnographic record was made consisting of field notes, participant reflections, and face-to-face interviews as described above. I have created a research method, participant, tool, and analysis table to provide a more detailed understanding of each area (see Table 1, next page).

Table 1

Interview and Observation Settings and Methods Used for Participants

*Research Method*s:	Observations/interviews
Research Tools:	Participant observations and field notes Semistructured and ethnographic interviews (audiotaped)
Analysis:	Thematic and microethnographic thematic analysis
Participant: Gloria	
Total time spent with participant:	10 hours
Split:	5.5 hours at home alone 4.5 hours at workplace
Observation time:	2.5 hours
Number of Interview Conducted: 2	1 face-to-face at home 1 observational and face-to-face at her college setting workplace
Participant: Savannah	
Total time spent with participant:	9 hours
Split:	6.5 hours at her personal office 2.5 hours at her workplace
Observation time:	2.5 hours
Number of Interview Conducted: 2	1 face-to-face at her home in her personal office, door closed, very comfortable setting for her

Table 1 (continued)

Interview and Observation Settings and Methods Used for Participants

Participant: Rhoda	
Total time spent with participant:	8.5 hours
Split:	6.0 hours at home 2.5 hours in home setting with additional person
Observation time:	2.0 hours
Number of Interview Conducted:	Face-to-face in her partly in-home, partly on side yard outside (Participant is retired and no longer physically in work setting)
Participant: Zora	
Total time spent With participant:	6.0 hours
Split:	4 hours at home alone 1 hour at home setting with additional person 1 hour in office in college work setting
Observation time:	1 hour
Interviews conducted:	2 1 face-to-face in her home, downstairs at kitchen table 1 face-to-face in her office at work (Participant was on maternity leave)

Table 1 (continued)

Interview and Observation Settings and Methods Used for Participants

Participant: Josephine	
Total time spent With participant:	6.5 hours
Split:	3.5 hours at home 0.5 hours at home with additional person 2.5 hours at her office at college work setting
Observation time:	1 hour
Interviews conducted:	2 1 face-to-face at her home, outside at backyard picnic table 1 face-to-face at her office at work

A rigorous process of identifying themes then winnowing down (Wolcott, 1990) the number of themes from approximately 15 to five distinct ones assisted me in sorting out commonalities and differences amid the group of lesbian leaders in the study. As they emerged through this research process and application, themes, both tacit and explicit, emerged. I used these themes to identify recurrent patterns. The findings were interpreted with the purpose of describing the culture and the phenomenon—lesbian leaders in community college. The discovery made from the findings brought forth crucial insights and *a* truth in the snapshot of this particular study as seen and felt through the eyes and experience of me, the observer-participant researcher. In order to remain focused and avoid repetition, I kept in mind the "critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to get rid of most of the data you accumulate" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 35). With this in

mind, I adhered to an inductive method of analyzation that also allowed for a feedback mechanism and a kind of "constant winnowing… the trick [was] to discover essences and then to reveal those essences with sufficient context, yet not to become mired trying to include everything that might possibly be described" (Stake, 1995, p. 84).

Strategies for Protection of Human Subjects

I anticipated some risk to participants of this study. One critical criterion for participants was that they considered themselves fully *out* (outwardly acknowledging to themselves and others at work and home that they are lesbian). Because their identity as lesbian was already known to others, their participation in this study poses far less measurable risk than that of a lesbian who was or is partway or all of the way *in the closet* (who does not wish it to be known that they are lesbian). However, if a participant in this study reviewed or relived traumatic experiences or recalled strong feelings of perceived injustice, I advised each participant that they might want to seek counseling to ease their discomfort.

All lesbian leader participants in this study were contacted individually by me to ensure their participation was voluntary. I minimized risks to all participants by keeping all names, occupational statuses, and institutional affiliations completely confidential. Specifically, pseudonyms were given to each participant and to institutional affiliations prior to the interview process and only pseudonyms were used during the interview process. A code assigning pseudonyms to each participant and organizational affiliations was kept in a locked cabinet and accessed only by me.

Any information that may identify a participant or link them to a particular occupational status or institution was obscured. All interviews occurred only with participant's full knowledge and full consent. Because it was difficult to conceal the research project, I confirmed with each lesbian leader in advance to make certain they foresaw little or no risk in meeting during work hours at their place of work or in their home. I discussed with each participant ways to minimize any risk, i.e., gaining prior approval from their supervisor to participate in the study at work during work hours. Every precaution was taken to protect the interests of the participants. The use of pseudonyms protected participants against any risks associated with a vulnerable group, such as this group (lesbians). All individuals understood that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they could end their participation at any time.

This study adhered to the guidelines of the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board Human Research Handbook (2007). I was especially careful and cognizant of this study's human participant's confidentiality and physical and emotional safety, given the sensitive nature of this work and the potential for retaliation or other forms of harm that may come to those who are inadvertently *outed* or otherwise negatively impacted by my research. I was careful to "conceal names, location and other identifying information so that the people who [were] observed [were] protected from harm or punitive action" (Patton, 1987, p. 78).

Time Schedule to Complete Research

The following list and table outlines the five phases of the study by interview questions, responses, allotted time segments, and participants.

a) Participants were identified using purposeful sampling as the primary type of selection. Specifically, self nominations and snowball sampling was used to determine a pool of participants.

b) Collected data through 2-3 in-depth interviews with each participant. Interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

c) Member check was performed through presentation of transcripts to participants to check for accuracy. Participants were encouraged to read and reflect on their interviews/stories and to provide me with any corrections to ensure accuracy.

d) Research texts were created as narrative threads, patterns, and themes are revealed.

e) The transcripts and research texts were shared with the individual participants to again check for accuracy of content and authenticity of each lesbian leader's voice.

The following was the schedule for this research study:

Institutional Review Board approval:	July 2007
Recruitment letter and Consent form sent:	August 2007
Data collection phase	August 2007-October 2007
First Session Interviews with participants	September 2007
Transcription of interviews	October - November 2007
Member check	November 2007
Transcription of 2nd session	November - December 2007
Member check of 2nd session	December 2007
Data analysis and writing	October 2007-December 2007
Completion of dissertation	January 2008
Dissertation Defense	February 2008

CHAPTER 4

MICROETHNOGRAPHY:

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND THEMES

I have dreamed on this mountain
Since first I was my mother's daughter
And you can't just take my dreams away—not with me watching
You may drive a big machine
But I was born a great big woman
And you can't just take my dreams away—not with me fighting
(Holly Near, 1978)

I traveled from Washington State to California on an intense and transformational road trip that included interviews with five lesbian leaders at their respective community colleges (or former college due to retirement) within the United States. It was a remarkable experience and a deep honor to be allowed into the very personal, sometimes painful, often momentous, lives, work experiences, and comprehensive storjourns (see glossary for full definition) of these five courageous lesbian leaders.

This chapter includes the microethnography itself which is organized into two sections. Section I depicts the lived experience, or *storjourn* as I have newly defined it, of each lesbian leader participant as uniquely crafted through her voice. Section II presents the findings as evolutionary themes associated with the study's main questions. I have included a glossary of working definitions at the beginning of this chapter located just prior to Section I to inform the reader of necessary meaning and context of term usage prior to delving into participant's storjourns. In Section I, verbatim language is used as transcribed from the audio interview to best portray and

honor each participant's voice. I adhered to the "*verbatim principle*, which requires ethnographers to use the speaker's exact words…affording an extensive accounting of an interaction that will provide the material for intensive analysis…and view of native expressions" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 159). On occasion, I combined a participant's responses in a paraphrasing of their comments. I have sent all participants copies of this chapter for each participant's prior approval to assure accuracy and to maintain the integrity of the data. The content of this chapter was written after listening to and carefully reading the interview transcripts numerous times to draw out nuances and critical themes. The interview question guide was sent out to participants in advance of their actual interview sessions (see Appendix A). The question guide was used to initiate a focus on the research questions while still allowing for flexibility in the direction of the interview. An open and flowing conversation provided each lesbian leader's unique personality and comfort level to emerge during the interview process. Specific interview questions and sequencing was determined during the course of the interview to evoke responses best suited to each participant's situation.

In Section I, the introduction of each lesbian leader includes an account of how I came to contact them; a depiction of the work setting home setting; or combination setting in which the interviews took place a brief summary of their personal herstory; path to becoming a leader in community college; and several key points of transition or transformation within their professional career to date. Specifically, each participant's storjourn is presented thematically under five

headings: Initial Contact, Setting and Environment, Personal Herstory, Path to Community College Leadership, and Points of Transition and Transformation. In each of the participant's storjourns I included essential excerpts from their audio interviews to describe deeply their life and work experiences and to lend credence to the legitimacy of the pathways and tools they developed and used to successfully lead as out lesbian leaders. Also, a brief summary is provided at the end of each storjourn as a snapshot conclusion that includes participant's reflections and revelations.

The Lesbian Leader Participants

As designed by this study, five lesbian leaders participated who held the position of Director or above, representing ages 37 to 62 years old. Position titles of participants included Director, Associate Dean, Dean, Executive Vice President, and President (in this instance President is an interchangeable title with Executive Dean of Campus). All identified as *lesbian* (as opposed to bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or intersex). Their current or retired positions were held at five different community colleges located in 3 states in the United States. All leaders held their position for more than one year, with approximately 95 combined years of leadership between all participants as out lesbian leaders in community colleges. This Chapter presents the voices and themes from the interviews with the five lesbian leaders using the pseudonyms Gloria, Savannah, Rhoda, Zora, and Josephine. At the end of Section I, in addition to the voices of these five participants, I have also included a raw and decisively open Personal Disclosure of my own account as a lesbian leader

in community college. In preparation of being immersed into the profound and insightful storjourns of these five lesbian leaders' voiced experiences, the journey through their storjourns begins with an essential glossary of working definitions to inform the reader of meaning and necessary context of term usage.

Glossary: Working Definitions

Coming Out. Coming out in reference to this study is a lesbian leader participant making it known for the first time to one or more persons in her workplace that she is a lesbian. That is not to say that the lesbian leader has not already come out in her workplace rather that she continues to come out over, and over, and over as new people enter her professional life and experience. As example, in Savannah's comments about her new secretary/assistant who had been working for Savannah only 6 days at the time of our interview session, Savanna had for several days been thinking about how she was going to "come out" to her new assistant (even though Savannah had come out a decade or more earlier at her college). In her words,

> The time I really think about it is like times like now, okay here's a new employee and when is going to be the right, comfortable, time to come out? I end up protecting people and that comes out a lot on the [*Voices of Courage*] video, how people protect others. I think I protect people from being uncomfortable. In think initially they are uncomfortable [when I come out to them as a lesbian] and then they're over it, if that makes sense.

Denise Denton. Denise Denton in reference to this study is included in this working glossary because of the profound impact her death had on the lesbian leader participants of this study. Dr. Denton was mentioned with no prompting by four out

of five participants during the organic discourse of the interview sessions. Dr. Denise Denton committed suicide a year ago June, 2006. She leapt to her death off the 44th floor of the tallest apartment building in San Francisco where she shared a residence with her partner. One of the youngest Chancellors in United States history at 46 years old, Dr. Denton left her partner of more than 8 years, Gretchen Kalonji, her mother, colleagues, friends, and communities across the country grieving and devastated. As the new Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Cruz, Dr. Denice Denton was the first *out* lesbian Chancellor of a major University in the United States. She was also the first female Dean of Engineering at a major research university in the United States. Her passing came after numerous death threats and a rock thrown with such force through her home window that reports indicated it would have killed her or another if they were sitting in the chair by that window. She was both lauded and hounded during her brief time as Chancellor of UCSC. Lauded for her tremendous energy, leadership, and innovation, and hounded for the salary she was provided through normal negotiations and for the Board of Regent's controversial hiring of her partner. Many continue to feel the attacks on Denice Denton for her negotiated salary and the fact that her partner was hired in a position at the college were exceedingly sexist as well as homophobic.

In his statement, University of California President Robert C. Dynes said Denton's death was "a tremendous loss for the entire University of California family... she was an accomplished and passionate scholar whose life and work demonstrated a deep commitment to public service and to improving opportunity for

the disadvantaged and underrepresented." Dr. Denton is described in her eulogy from the University of Washington where she had worked earlier in her career, as a pioneering leader who significantly advanced the state of research, the quality of teaching and mentoring, and diversity in engineering and technology across the nation. She was a powerful and highly effective force for change, an inspiration and role model to countless engineers and scientists through her dedicated efforts. She lead change in her own institutions of higher education and local community, and served on influential national committees. Denton cofounded the center for Engineering Learning and Teaching at the University of Washington, as well as multi-institutional Center for the Advancement of Engineering Education, which is now a used as a model for other major research universities including Stanford, Harvard, and Princeton. Dr. Denton received many awards and honors including the Presidential Young Investigator Award in Electrical Engineering from the National Science Foundation in 1986, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring in 2004 and the Maria Mitchell Women in Science Award in 2006 for her work in developing programs at universities and with neighboring organizations to encourage women and girls to study science, technology, engineering and math (Denise Denton, n.d.). Applying my definition of transformation found in I of this study, in the context of a lesbian leader in higher education, Dr. Denice Denton certainly met and lived this definition. As a leader she profoundly influenced the transformation of students, staff, faculty and community members. Her legacy will live on.

Hegemony/Hegemonic. Hegemony is defined for the purpose of this study as the processes by which dominant culture maintains its dominant position. As example, the use of institutions like community colleges to formalize power; the employment of a bureaucracy to make power seem abstract (and, therefore, not attached to any one individual); the inculcation of the populace in the ideals of the hegemonic group through education, advertising, publication; and the mobilization of a police force as well as military personnel to subdue opposition (Felluga, 2003a).

Heteronormativity: Heteronormativity is defined for the purpose of this study as an action that is deemed typical of heterosexuals. The term heteronormativity describes situations wherein individuals who vary from heterosexual orientation are marginalized, ignored or persecuted by social practices, beliefs or policies in other words, those punitive rules (social, familial, and legal) that force nonheterosexuals to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity (Felluga, 2003b). This includes the idea that human beings fall into two distinct and complementary categories: male and female in which sexual and marital relations are normal only between people of different sexes and each sex has certain natural roles in life. Thus physical sex, gender identity, and gender roles should in any given person align to either all-male or all-female norms or heterosexuality is considered to be the only normal sexual orientation. The norms this term describes or criticizes might be overt, covert, or implied. Those who identify and criticize heteronormativity say that it distorts discourse by stigmatizing alternative concepts of both sexuality and gender and makes certain types of self-expression more difficult (Heteronormativity, n.d.).

Herstory. Herstory is defined as "history" considered from a feminist viewpoint or emphasizing the actions of women in a narrative or chronology of events in a woman's life.

Lesbian. Lesbian in reference specific to this study is a female-gender-born woman who believes that from conception, the womb, and at birth she was and is a lesbian; that being lesbian is not a preference or lifestyle; that being lesbian includes having a deep-rooted and shared lesbian culture, history, beliefs, practices, and ancestors all of which date back to the beginning of humans (the word *lesbian* is believed to have been derived from the Greek Island of Lesbos, where the poet Sappho lived in 600 B.C.. Sappho was an intellectual as well as a poet and wrote poems that spoke to her love of woman); that she is not by any stretch attracted to *all* women, but that as a lesbian-identified woman she is attracted to and seeks out deeply fulfilling emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, social, and sexual relationships with willing partners who are same-gendered people (women); that, as is the case of every one of the participants in this study, lesbians may seek, maintain, and thrive in long-term, committed, relationships wherein a legal bond, i.e., marriage, would have been entered upon by both partnered women if marrying each other were not at the local, state and federal levels against the law. To this last regard, the combined number of years that the five participants in this study have been in their current, monogamously committed, long-term relationship with their respective partners totals 81 years.

Out. Out in reference specific to this study is best defined as being *fully out* about being lesbian in the same manner, and in every way, that the participants' heterosexual counterparts at their respective community colleges are *fully out* about being heterosexual.

Storjourn. Storjourn is a term I developed out of struggling to describe what I heard, witnessed, and experienced as a participant interviewer during a total of nearly 20 hours of voice interviews wherein I was privy to not only each lesbian leader's remarkable story but also her journey. It was not just her story, nor just her journey. Her *story* was to me the telling of her core experience of her life thus far. Her *journey* was to me the describing of the transformative path that her story had taken thus far in her life. In this study, it was critical to give voice to both the lesbian leader participant's story and her journey respective to the goals, research questions, and outcomes of this work. Therefore, I humbly coined the term *Storjourn* to describe at once that which is the combination of one's life story and one's life journey.

Women's Music. Women's Music specific to this study is included by use of selected lyrics that are scattered throughout the text. Women's music lyrics are included in this study as an integral and inextricable part of lesbian culture (as music is significant to nearly all cultures) and are therefore critical to this microethnographical research methodology. Although the words on paper alone cannot hold as intense an impact as actually hearing the music played and sung by the courageous pioneers who dared to carve an indelible niche wherein the personal

became political through their musical contributions, their inclusion nonetheless adds an important element. Women's music came into being in the early 1970's in response to a women's political movement that gave women musicians "both an understanding of the ways in which they were shut out of the male-dominated music industry and the collective consciousness to organize" (Pollock, 1988, p. 14). The result of this movement produced women's recording and distribution companies, concert production companies, a music circuit, and a distinctive sound that came to be known as *women's music*, which was a "sound, characterized by accessibility, intimacy within musical groupings, woman-identified lyrical themes, musical eclecticism, and the musical integrity that comes from not trying to reach mass audiences" (p. 14). There were very few positive women's images in pop music up until the 1970's when "the lack of inclusion of women in the mainstream made it necessary for women to create a separate space for women to create music. Lesbian and feminist separatism was a development of women's music" (Garafalo, 1992, p. 244). Artists such as Meg Christian, Chris Williamson, Holly Near, Margie Adam, Ferron, Sweet Honey and the Rock, Barbara Higbie, Teresa Trull, and Vickie Randall were among the first to write, sing, perform, and produce via companies such as Olivia Records, a production company collective that has since expanded its business more than 30 years later into *Olivia Cruises* and remains very successful today. All artists listed above are known for their "messages of raw truths, lyrical, melodic music dealing with the cyclicity of relationship, questions of survival and identity, and optimism amid fear" (Answers.com Entertainment, n.d.). In her 25th

national Women's Music Festival Speech of June, 19, 1999, singer/song writer/producer Margie Adam defines women's music as "the fuel that kept women like these [women lawyers, medical professionals, psychiatrists, bankers, etc.] going when professors and bosses said women just weren't good at arguing legal concepts, women couldn't be doctors and psychologists because people wouldn't feel safe being treated by a female, women couldn't be bankers or investment advisors because people wouldn't feel comfortable allowing females to handle large sums of money" (Adams, 1999).

Section I: Lesbian Leaders Who Open Doors and Hold it Open for Others

> *Either you will go through this door or you will not go through…the door itself makes no promises. It is only a door. (Adrienne Rich, 1962)*

Storjourn 1: Gloria

Initial Contact

I met Gloria as a result of a chance meeting at a League for Innovations Conference held in Louisiana in spring of 2007. My proposal to present on my dissertation topic, *Lesbian Leaders in Action: Influencing and Transforming Community College Culture*, had been accepted at the conference under the Leagues' presentation strand of *Innovative Leadership*, and Gloria was a random member of the audience. Her comments during the interactive session led me to speak with her after the session. In the course of that conversation, we talked about my doctoral study then exchanged professional information. After my Oregon State University IRB approval, I contacted Gloria via email and asked if she would be willing to participate in the study. To my deep gratitude, she agreed.

Setting and Environment: Home

I met Gloria for the second time at her home in an older, well-established locale of a cosmopolitan city on approximately four months after our chance meeting in Louisiana at the League for Innovations Conference. Gloria lives with her partner of 13 years, Alicia, in a 1920's bungalow situated just off a busy street in an inner-city neighborhood surrounded by similar homes owned by mostly middle to upper-middle class, white, professional couples or families. I climbed up the steep wooden stairs to a small porch where I was welcomed with a large smile and congenial hug from Gloria before being invited into a modest-sized living room. Alicia was sitting there on the couch with a tentative smile and an aura of slight discomfort. Gloria proudly introduced Alicia who reached out a hand with shy intelligence. The adoration between them was obvious. In seconds she was up and out of site never to be seen (by me) again. Gloria explained later that Alicia is shy at first and then terrifically gregarious upon getting to know folks better.

Gloria offered me a seat at the dining room table where we sat for the next five and a half hours engaged in an intensely moving interview session. The dining room was suitably filled with personal items and pictures of both Gloria and Alicia's family members. There were objects collected through the years displayed on windowsills, on shelves, and in cabinets. In the corner nearest to where I sat, there was a rack that held a unit with cords coming out like an octopus for plugging into multiple cell phones. As I plugged in my laptop to take field notes, sharp sounds came from the kitchen. Gloria stood up and let Buck and Francine, their two wired-

haired dachshunds, loose in the dining room to check out their visitor. After the dogs settled back into their daily routines, we drank tea, coffee and ate cheese, fruit, and goodies from a local gourmet coffee shop. I asked Gloria about her home setting and environment.

> My haven is my home, where I don't feel like the filters are out, in the sense of what I may be feeling or thinking or saying or doing. I think about for example, the other day, late in the evening, we had just come in from a dog walk. We ended up lying on our backs on the deck, and I was lying on Alicia's arm, and didn't care about anyone coming around the fence. You know, this is our home. This is our dynamics. In the last year, I had my sister visit and other family members visit me. But my family never really visited me when I had a partner. So this is the first time for both sets of relatives to come visit us. And it was great. I felt that this is my home and this is where I have my power.

Setting and Environment: Work

I arrived around 9:00 a.m. to a small, new, rural community college campus built in 2000 situated approximately 15 miles northeast from Gloria's personal residence. The September sky was clear and the air smelled clean. The old Douglas firs surrounding the campus lent a woodsy yet stately feel. The grounds were freshly mown. I was instructed to park in the two-tiered parking structure, a structure that seemed oddly out of place since so much seemed to have gone into architecturally fitting the new campus buildings into the existing rural landscape. Deciduous trees were just turning their autumn reds and browns. I entered in to a stone, glass, and steel, four-story building and was immediately greeted by a woman behind an information counter. She sensed that I was new to the campus and assisted me immediately. She directed me up the elevator, then down the hall to the Executive Vice President's Office. Fresh carpet and modern colors and materials provided a

comfortable and welcoming physical environment. The furniture is like new and is strategically placed throughout campus building hallways and common areas inviting passersby to sit in conversation with each other. Generally, the atmosphere felt welcoming.

An outer-office door was open to the inner office door that showed Gloria's name and title. I stepped in to find the Vice President's Assistant who gave me a warm and professional greeting before she stepped a few feet away to let Gloria know I had arrived. Gloria emerged, greeted me with a smile and handshake, then introduced me to Bette and asked me into her office. Gloria's office was long and narrow. Her desk was situated toward the back and faced out towards the windows and view. There was a round conference table and chairs nearer the front and corner windows that looked out from the third floor of the building to a serene, natural wetlands just beyond the parking structure. Gloria's office had a sense of importance, slightly reserved, and was neatly decorated with intricate, colorful tapestries, leadership awards, and binders of every kind appropriate to administrators in higher education. Things were organized and orderly. Her furniture was modern, new and professionally comfortable. On her desk was a picture of Alicia. I set my things up on the round table and began the workplace interview. I asked Gloria to share some information on her college's demographics.

> We have 1660 FTEs and 2500 headcount students, plus about 250 employees. I don't know how many fulltime faculty identify as other than heterosexual I am going to say like 5 out of 30 of our fulltime faculty are gay. Part-time ranks probably another 8 or 9. As far as staff, no one that works for me [is gay]. But as far as administrators or other staff that I'm aware of, probably about 4 or 5 of

> them are gay. What does that amount to, maybe about 20 people or about 10 percent of our total employees are lesbian or gay.

Personal Herstory and Education

Gloria identifies as a Hispanic, lesbian woman. She was born in a small town in Texas, population 13,000, in 1955. She came to the west coast when she was in her mid twenties. Gloria has a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policies, a Master's Degree in Counseling, and a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Secondary Education. Gloria talked about who she is:

> But in that setting [work], by myself, it's a hard one sometimes, because being a lesbian, being a Hispanic woman it is all part of who I am. I don't see myself compartmentalized or in different shades. So this is Gloria, and I try to walk that talk as far as who I am.

Path to Community College Leadership

Gloria's first professional position was as an elementary school counselor working with a federal grant with five schools in the district. When the grant ran out, Gloria worked as a secretary for the two years while she attended her Master's program fulltime. Upon graduation she was offered a position as a Personnel Interviewer then later promoted to Assistant Director of Personnel before leaving the post in 1983. These posts were meaningful first steps for her professional career.

> When I completed my Masters one of the employees there, a really neat woman, wanted to hire me. So, I interviewed for the job. And the director of the program didn't want to hire me. It was very clear that he didn't think I was qualified and competent because I was young, and I didn't have a lot of experience. But she fought for me, and I got to work for her for almost 4 years.

Gloria's career pathway lead her to several positions in nonprofit until she landed a position as an Assistant Director at a major research University. Gloria remarks about how she came to a career in higher education.

> It was sort of like happenstance. I didn't really mean to get into higher education until I was being supported by my boss [to do so]. You either politically get to know somebody and know people on your way up or you pretty much stay where you are forever.

Gloria was promoted to an associate director position and later to a full director's position within the area of Student Services. She worked at the University for a total of 13 years before applying for a dean's position at a nearby community college. She was chastised by her direct report, a vice president at the University, for taking a position at a community college. He indicated to Gloria that to work at a community college held less prestige and power and was a step down in her career track. Gloria ignored her supervisor's opinion of community colleges. She was offered and accepted the position of Dean of Health Occupations and Physical Education. Gloria successfully held this position she dubbed, Dean of H.O.P.E. (the acronym created by the title) for approximately 11 years.

Gloria's next career step came when she applied for and was offered her current position as Executive Vice President for Student Learning at Community College B, a newly built college within the same general geographical area as she had worked and resided for over 25 years. Approximately five years into her career as an Executive Vice President for Student Learning, Gloria decided to apply for the presidency position that had come open at Community College A, where she had worked earlier as a dean. She talked of her apprehension and of her friends' and

partner's trepidation and words of warning regarding being lesbian, being out, and about having filled out the application packet.

> I think, initially, I wanted to be very, very out there [as a lesbian]. I have about four or five people that I use as mentors and mirrors, including my partner. Everybody was like, well, you really want to tone it down a little bit. You've got the neon lights [saying] "I'm gay" or "I'm lesbian." I said well okay, if that's going to be a turn-off to people then I don't want to do that if a person's going to be in my face because I'm gay. So I did, I toned it down. It was a struggle because even at the point that I turned in my [application] materials, it still felt like I wasn't maintaining my integrity. Because I was out in my current job, and it was like, why am I doing this again [going back in the closet]? It was a struggle, I thought, is it worth going after this job? Because my experience has been once people get to know me, it's not an issue, but initially, yeah, people will be prejudiced; they'll put roadblocks up. And you have to figure out how to connect with them, win them over, and those kinds of things.

Gloria knew the Board of Trustees for Community College A was a conservative one because she had been a dean at that college for several years. She had come out at the University where she worked for 13 years, then went in the closet for the most part while a dean at Community College A for 11 years, then back out of the closet as an executive vice president at Community College B. She talks about holding her pen in hand and hovering over her application for the presidency at Community College A and about agonizing over editing, or de-lesbianizing (Spradlin, 1998) references in her vitae and application that highlighted her successful work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT) related events or organizations during her career at the university and at her current position as vice president. She told about deleting from her vitae her work with pride foundation activities in order to "get through that first screening and not have that blocked for me." Beyond getting past the first hurdle of an interview, Gloria shared

her intense apprehension (and that of her partner) around the pressures imbedded in taking a presidency as a lesbian leader in a place where she could not be fully out, with a Board that was known to be conservative in philosophy and practice.

> I had decided to apply for a presidency at a community college where I had been a dean. I thought I had a pretty good chance at it. So, at the time someone said, you know, you should talk to Denice [searching her memory for her last name], Denice, the woman who committed suicide, Denton, Denice Denton. I had actually known her, not very well, but we had our offices in the same hallway at one point in our careers. I thought, yes, I should call her up and just sort of talk to her [about positioning for the presidency]. But I didn't, life got busy…and you know what happened to Denice…but I think it's that whole dynamics, you go some place thinking you're going to get the support you need [indicating like Denton at UC Santa Cruz], and then you don't. It's like you don't have the support you need locally, you're kind of out there, you're expected to be successful and it's a lot of pressure.

Gloria was not offered the presidency at Community College A. She continues to enjoy a very successful career as Executive Vice President for Student Learning at Community College C where she is fully out to all staff, faculty and students. She remains philosophical about whether she will ever try for a presidency again. With regard to her next career step, Gloria shared, "If I leave here, I'll probably go for another Vice Presidency somewhere at a larger community college."

Points of Transition and Transformation

There were particular points in each of the participant's personal storjourns that were, both in the lesbian leaders' and my opinion, a transitional or transformational event, experience, or time in their careers. One such event that Gloria spoke about was a time approximately 4 year ago when she was, as a new Vice President, asked by her president to review all faculty up for tenure. When I

asked about instances she could point to in which she felt were discriminated against by other people, specifically because she was lesbian or because of her lesbianism, at first she said she could not think of any. Amazingly, in fact, all of the lesbian leaders in this study initially answered the above question with virtually the same answer. Then every single participant went on in the next minute or two to tell the most unbelievably powerful and remarkable stories of what most people hearing their stories would have described as courage and triumph in the face of blatant discrimination. Thus it was when Gloria thought about it, after a moment she told the two following stories that were so powerful and so poignant, they moved both of us to tears.

> Well probably something that comes to mind [in answer to my question about discrimination against her being lesbian], it's all around this same time in my life. It's when I got outed to the Board of Trustees, which was an interesting set of dynamics. It was a very weird dynamic. When we didn't tenure these 3 faculty members, they pursued a lawsuit against the college. One of the last things they did, as sort of a last hurrah before settling with the lawyers, is they came to the Board of Trustees meeting during the public comment time. There was one female and two males that were not tenured. The female got up and relayed a story from when, maybe 6 months earlier, I had the *Offshoot Couple* on campus for a learning community event to do some of their songs and to do a Q and A with students [on diversity]. I was invited to come and I did. They also invited any faculty members on campus who wanted to come to this event for students. So, the two [faculty members] that were not tenured were both at that event. During the presentation, one of the presenters says to the students, do any of you know a lesbian or gay person? And, literally, only about 3 hands went up in the crowd. At that time I actually supervised student government on campus. So, I took it upon myself to out myself to the group. So, I raised my hand and said to the [large student] audience, 'well, as the highest ranking lesbian on campus, I'm going to let you guys know that I'm a lesbian, and I work with you. Maybe you didn't know that I am a lesbian, but it's important to know that you may not always know who people are you may not pick up on someone being lesbian, but that's why it's important to acknowledge and validate people wherever they might be[in their lives], because that's where they are.' Fast forward 6 months or so, so this woman

> says to the Board how she felt threatened when at a college event I stood up and said that I was the…actually she said, 'I felt sexually harassed when Gloria stood up and said that she is the highest ranking lesbian on campus.'

I asked Gloria if she was sitting there in the Board meeting at the time the faculty member accused her of sexual harassment.

> Yes, but my back was to the audience, my face was facing the Board. To my right, was the faculty president, who was also a lesbian, not so sure how out she was, but she was a lesbian, and I knew she was. So, after public announcements, the Board asked for a short break. One of the Board members wrote a little note, it was really sweet, something to the effect of 'we believe in you,' and signed her name to it. As they took a break, she just came and dropped the note on my leg. The lesbian faculty president walked by and said to me, and I was really thrown off by this because I wasn't expecting to be attacked publicly, she said to me, 'I don't know why you are so upset, it's not that big of deal.' I just looked at her and thought…to be accused of sexual harassment in public is not a big deal? I know we can get caught up in those things, I know I've done it, instead of supporting 'your own' you get caught up in it. In my younger years I wasn't always sure that people always supported me because I was lesbian. Now I'm more comfortable. And I think that's helped to clarify who I am.

I watched Gloria's face as it softened, her voice was strained with emotion and tears were edging around her eyes. I asked her what she felt inside in that moment as she sat their in her College's Board of Trustees Conference Room with all Board members, her president, faculty, students, and community members present or sitting in the audience. She shared the following;

> I was devastated. I didn't know what the Board felt about me. I felt confident that my president would support me, but I didn't know where the Board was coming from. To know we were in the middle of a lawsuit…I was very unsure for a long time. I'd been humiliated and my integrity had been challenged. I felt like it came out of left field. I wasn't prepared for it. It was the end of the year; I was really stressed out. It turns out within a month the whole legal part of the tenure question was resolved.

Gloria was observably devastated even in the moment, four years later, by the accusation of sexually harassing a faculty member on the grounds of standing up, being authentic and coming out to a large group of students and faculty during a college-sanctioned, learning community event on diversity. I asked Gloria to describe any changes that occurred in her sense of power, her sense of confidence, or her ability to be fully all of who she knew herself to be as a leader, a lesbian, a Latina, or as a woman. By the tears she showed at the telling of her story, I made the statement that the event was still with her. Gloria said, "Yes, it probably always will be." We talked about how this event impacted her leadership since that point. I asked Gloria how the event had diminished or strengthened her ability to lead at her college.

> I would say for a couple of weeks I kept trying to figure out what I could have done differently. And I don't think I could have though…done anything differently in terms of my reaction. I got teary-eyed when I talked about it, and couldn't really talk about it for awhile [wipes tears away]. But then, I learned from it and continued on. Except for the first year faculty, I've hired every one of the faculty since then. I've set the tone and said if you want tenure, you have to jump this high. I've made it clear that I have an obligation, that we are hiring quality faculty that are student centered and outcomes oriented. I probably encouraged poor people to leave the college before they came up for tenure. I learned to be more proactive with people who were not a good fit to get them out the door sooner. I was probably very cautions about things I said for probably about five or six months after the Board meeting event. I really don't think that what I said in front of those students was inappropriate, I *was* the highest ranking lesbian at the college and by saying that I was letting them know that we were at all levels of the college.

Gloria told this story with such detail, such clarity, and such emotion even four years later. This was a hugely transformational event in her career. She was an Executive Vice President making professional decisions about faculty member's

tenure, not in any way thinking about being lesbian, and yet the reaction to her decision by some faculty members had not to do with Gloria's decision making at all, but instead focused solely on Gloria being lesbian.

When I asked about policies and her influence on policies, Gloria had an immediate reaction and response. She was still reeling from an incident that had occurred only a few months prior to our interview. Her partner was about to have surgery. As with any caring couple in America, Gloria wanted to be home to care for her partner post surgery. She submitted her request for family leave benefits. Though for heterosexual leaders in community colleges across the nation this is a non-issue, for Gloria as a lesbian leader it was a very frustrating, hurtful, and demeaning experience:

> Our College has always maintained that the same rule applies for domestic partners as for straight couples. But when Alicia was going to have surgery, I asked for family medical leave to stay home and take care of her after she came out of surgery. So, the forms just had like "spouse" and "wife." I said to Alicia, I was surprised that the language on the form was not more neutral. Erin said, are you sure you get leave? And I said yes, I'm sure. So, later I put in the form and asked for two weeks off, got the doctor's note and everything. I turned in my slip signed off by the President of our college, and it went to HR. Then one of the Payroll clerks calls me up and says, we can't grant you that leave because our policy does not include domestic partners. I was like, what do you mean doesn't included domestic partners? We have the [State Domestic Partner] contract; we've always supported domestic partners at our College [this college opened its doors for the first time in 2000]. Well, when I really started looking at the policies, some did and some did not included domestic partnership. They were all over the map. So this employee, he said that he wasn't trying to pick on me, but I felt picked on regardless: he'd gone through the state regulations, the federal regulations, and said there was nothing about domestic partnerships, only about married couples. He was really combing the policies and drawing the line with the Human Resources Director on this. So, the HR Director finally looked through all regulations, and found a policy that basically said that 'we support domestic partnership for all employees.' And the President overrode the HR employee.

> I said to the HR Director, if we're really going to grant domestic partnership, shouldn't we be cleaning up all of our policies to make them standardized? She said yes, and is probably working on it now that I said something. But a part of me got angry. Because when he called me he said, "I just want to let you to know I'm denying your request for leave, and I'm going to talk to my boss about it." And I thought, who the hell are you? The president signed off on it, the HR director signed off on it. Everyone had already signed off on it. I don't get this frustrated and angry very often, but I said to Alicia, if they deny me the leave, I think we may be going to see the Women's Law Center, because everything at the college says they will honor domestic partnerships. It's only two weeks [family leave] but still, we're not living our values at our College. If our policies say that they're going to honor that. I mean, we're not living our values. So, I said to the HR Director, if we are really going to be granting this domestic partnership shouldn't we be cleaning up the policies? She said yes. She's working on it now but all of the policies have not been updated, all the forms have not been updated. So, if someone else comes along right now this could happen again, this HR employee could say the same thing to another person, that you can't do it because you aren't following the rules. So I think we have some work to do as a college.

Time and again lesbian leaders in our community colleges across the country submit requests to their Human Resources Departments for a variety of benefits that are enjoyed by their heterosexual supervisors or by those heterosexual employees they supervise. Time and again lesbian leaders are denied the same or equal rights to basic benefits (Kenney, 2007). Often lesbian leaders receive the same dismissive and demoralizing responses from their Human Resources Departments, as did I on a number of occasions over the past 15 years working in community colleges. Like Gloria's experience, countless times within the three community colleges I have worked, the Human Resources Department told me that they can do nothing about "it" because "it's federal law" (Kenney, 2007).

Storjourn 2: Savannah

Initial Contact

Savannah and I met for the first time briefly at a state leadership conference about seven years ago. We were later re-introduced to each other by the president of her college who was an inspirational, strong, intelligent woman. Her president had pushed hard on issues of diversity both inside and outside her college. I had heard Savannah's college president speak on a number of occasions and was always impressed by her compassion, brilliance, and her message of inclusivity and educational equity for all within community colleges. I am not sure how Savannah and I came to know each other as lesbian except that I was totally out in my college and community and had garnered a certain amount of positive media attention and state recognition amid community college leaders for my work with LGBT students and issues specific to college policies, rights, and regulations impacting those who identified as other than heterosexual. As I recall, I was visiting Savannah's campus to have lunch with her president who had graciously offered her mentorship to me as a new leader in community college. In the course of our conversation, the president told me of Savannah's idea to create a video called *Voices of Courage*. The video would feature lesbian and gay colleagues at their college answering questions like: When did you first know you were different? And, what do you think is the difference between your experience and that of your straight colleagues at our college? I was speechless. I was astonished to hear of such an important and ground-breaking project. I was equally astounded to hear the pride, support, and excitement

with which this community college president described this amazing, upcoming event. She was making the *Voices of Courage* event a professional development activity for all staff and faculty. I had not known another community college president like her.

After our lunch, the president put me in contact with Savannah, who invited me a few months later to one of the two *Voices of Courage* events. It was the remarkable and transformational leadership shown by Savannah via her influential video, *Voices of Courage* that inspired the specific focus of my dissertation. After experiencing the *Voices of Courage* event, I discarded my initial focus of exploring the passive and adaptive behaviors of lesbian leaders, instead focusing my dissertation work on exploring the proactive and transformational behaviors and leadership of lesbian leaders in community college.

Four months ago, I contacted Savannah and reiterated to her what a powerful impact her *Voices of Courage* project continued to have on my life, academics, and career. I asked if she would be a participant in this study. To my great, great, joy and honor she agreed.

Setting and Environment: Work

I pulled into campus and wound around the expansive, green fields shaded by a number of tall Douglas Firs. Brick buildings formed a circle around a common outdoor area crisscrossed with concrete footpaths and scattered with picnic tables and strategically placed benches for impromptu conversations and scheduled gatherings. A 40 year old and well established campus, the college setting

immediately felt welcoming and inclusive. Native American symbols and artwork were carved into edifices, grounding the campus in its history of intentional efforts in diversity and inclusivity. Posters are neatly displayed throughout the campus replete with slogans and mottos, all underscoring the importance and necessity of inclusivity on their college campus in every regard, including sexual identity. Although most posters and diversity statements focused on the standard areas of diversity (race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and class), one poster caught my eye immediately upon entering the Career and Counseling office where Savannah's office is situated only a few office doors away. The poster read: "Trash it…because it's a waste—racism, homophobia, sexism, hate, prejudice, discrimination." I asked Savannah to describe her work environment and the climate at the college in her office when she arrives each morning. In a warm, decisively engaging Texas drawl, Savannah described herself and colleagues within her immediate environment at work,

> I'm pretty warm. I mean these people [those colleagues in the Counseling Department Office setting] really care about each other. Whenever anybody's in trouble, they really rally around even though there's little factions of people.

As I slowly scanned Savannah's office, it was jam packed with color, bright, fun, happy, colors. Numerous leadership awards and appreciation plaques are lost amid pictures of smiling colleagues, mementos of the past 30 years of service day events, sayings about laughter and compassion, and myriad of engaging knickknacks, all of which garnered far more attention than the numerous academic binders full of counseling and administrative policies and materials. Savannah's office was a metaphor for her life and leadership: full of creativity, constructive

accomplishment, compassionate action, triumphant transformation, relationship cultivation, and always in real, genuine, living color.

Setting and Environment: Home

Savannah was hesitant to invite me to her home to be interviewed in her personal environment and home setting. About half-way through our interview that took place in her office at her college, Savannah apologized and said a bit embarrassedly that she was sorry she had not allowed our interview to take place also at her home. She explained that her partner was an intensively private person. In the absence of an interview in her home setting, I asked Savannah to describe how she felt at home when she thought of her environment there. I asked her who she was at home. Her response,

> Well, I'd like to think I'm a whole lot like I am here [in her college office and workplace]. We've got two dogs, two cats, we just lost one. We are both collectors I mean my home isn't unlike these walls here [laughed and pointed to her office walls as she scanned the items that provided visual texture and told a story]. We are both usually really tired when we get home. We just veg out, hear what our day was like. We're both TV freaks, movie freaks, video freaks. We've got probably as many really close friends who are straight as lesbian and gay. There's not a lot that goes on in our town in terms of any activities. Mainly, on weekends, we are either here or at the beach. We were there last weekend. We hang out, cook meals together, drink good wine, play games, you know…

Personal Herstory

Savannah has a Master's degree in Counseling with a concentration in counseling for the deaf and impaired. She grew up in a small town in Texas and was the daughter of a Southern Baptist minister and a sociable and outgoing mother. Savannah points out that her grandfather, father, and all her uncles were all Southern

Baptist ministers. I asked Savannah to think about the fact that she herself was gregarious and warm and connecting, and asked her what role she felt her personality played in her life and work as a lesbian leader. She responded:

> I think I've always been that way. My mother's one of the most gregarious people in the world. There's not a negative bone in her body. I really believe in emotional intelligence; I think I was born with it. And it has only really served me well.

Path to Community College Leadership

After finishing her Master's in counseling in her home state, Savannah was ready for a change. She had been working at a school for the deaf in Texas. It was 1972 and she thought seriously about joining the Peace Corp as a way to learn about other places, people, and to give service to others in order to make a difference in their lives. I asked her about her next career step that brought her to the west coast.

> When I was about to go in the Peace Corp, I'd been kind of dappling around with trying to find any sort of counseling programs and working with deaf people. And this small 4-year college in rural [state], they had a four-week counseling the deaf program. I figured I needed to go in the Peace Corp to learn who I was, to get away from family and friends, to figure out who I was. Well, I figured I didn't know anybody in [state] either, so I accomplished the same thing by traveling all the way to there from Texas. While I was here [in new state] they offered me a TA [teacher's aid] position with the [4-year college] working with the regional resource center for the deaf and asked me to teach classes on it.

I asked Savannah how she made the move from the four-year rural college to the community college where she now works.

> I wanted to stay here in [state] to work after I finished the deaf program but there just wasn't any work at the time. So, somebody called from a community college in Texas and said hey, Savannah, we need somebody to come head up our services for deaf students. So I went back there to Texas for a year but really wanted to be here

> [current state]. Then I heard the person in the job here left. So, I packed up my car before I even got the job. My parents thought I was insane. And I said oh I'm sure I'll get the job. It never entered my mind that I wouldn't get the job, and this is the crazy part of the story. Three good friends of mine and I, I kind of talked them in to moving too, we were kind of on this plan to move to [state], all of us. During my interview for the new position, I guess I talked about the four of us moving here from Texas. And at the end of the interview, this guy on the interview panel says, now we're pretty sure we want to hire you, Savannah, but our college is supported by voters. We just got to be careful that we aren't going to hire somebody who's lesbian or shacking up.

Savannah's account of her first interview at the community college where to this day, she still works after 32 years was shocking and disturbing, even for the uninformed workplace landscape of 1975. As she continued her account of the event, Savannah exclaimed, "Now, I had never been with a woman in my life at that point!" When I asked if she even had an inkling she was lesbian at the time, Savannah responded, "No, not at all! I was totally shocked [at what the interviewer said]!" It was a poignant yet disturbing beginning to such a distinguished career at the same institution for more than 3 decades of service. I asked Savannah how she responded to the interviewer's question of whether she was a lesbian or shacking up, or both. In her words,

> I just said well I'm not! I mean I was stunned. So, these three friends came to pick me up [the friends from Texas] and we went out to eat. I said y'all won't believe what just happened! So, we start talking about it and the more we talked about it the more incensed we all got. Finally, I said, I'm just not sure I want to work in a place like that. I mean, how could anybody say that? So by the time we got through the surprise of it all, I had pretty much decided that this might not be the place for me. So, the same person from the interview called me the next day. He said, you know, I want to apologize for that conversation. We shouldn't have said anything like that. I said to him

> boy, you're really right. In fact I spent most of the evening thinking about if this is really a place I want to work. And he said Savannah, just please trust me. You were our unanimous decision [for hire]. We really want you, please give us a shot. So that's how I actually started here at this community college. Isn't that wild? So, why would it be so unusual for a woman to talk about three other women making a major move from Texas to Oregon? Two were teachers and one was a nurse and then me. What would have been so unusual about that that they would leap to shacking up or lesbians? Isn't that wild! Isn't that crazy?

Crazy or not, Savannah had the wherewithal to know what was and was not acceptable, professional, appropriate, and inclusive actions and behaviors in the community college work setting. Her integrity and authenticity as a leader was apparent from her first point of contact in 1975, and her commitment to what is fair and equitable for all students, staff, and faculty has only deepened and broadened over the years. Savannah would go on to be responsible for multiple areas within the college, predominantly within the counseling and Developmental Education areas. She would also become a much respected confidant of several presidents of the College and be asked to lead college-wide efforts in professional development and in-service events that served to influence and transform in ways that have permanently changed the culture and behavior of a college with over 500 employees and 35,000 students.

Points of Transition and Transformation

Not long after she began working at her college and living in her current town of residence, Savannah saw a flyer for a lesbian community group and began attending the gatherings. Soon, Savannah came out to herself then other close friends. Some years later Savannah met her current partner, Faith. Savannah and

Faith will be celebrating 20 years as life partners in 2008. I asked Savannah about when she knew that she was a lesbian. In her words,

> Oh gosh, how did I meet this woman [laughs]? I met this woman and just kind of fell in love with her. I just went wow! How can this be wrong? So of course I started reading, and that got me looking back in my life and I could clearly identify times in my teenage life that I had a crush on other girls. Of course having a Southern Baptist minister it was really easy for me to shut down.

It was that unwillingness to 'shut down' who she was any longer that eventually would lead Savannah to come out time and time again throughout her career at the college. Savannah talked of wanting to create and maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment at her college. As I walked around the college campus where Savannah worked it was easy to believe that all were welcome in this place. The signage, attention to multicultural artwork, and extensive student services areas tell students, staff, and faculty that this is a place where what you say and who you are matters. However, many years and a great deal of struggle by individuals and leaders such as Savannah had gone into the college's current climate of inclusivity. Savannah explained that diversity at her college was not always inclusive of all diverse peoples and culture, especially not those who were lesbian and gay. I asked Savannah to share more about her own struggles around coming out and discrimination at her college. I asked her to expound upon points of discrimination that were specifically focused on her being lesbian Savannah at first, like all other participants, could not pinpoint one incident. Then, within moments, she remembered and told of a harrowing, painful, and remarkable feat of leadership that

underscored the authenticity and poise she continuously portrayed as a leader at her college for more than 32 years.

> It started out this student was telling people, "Savannah's lesbian, don't trust her," don't go to her for anything. So, it was just nasty. I'd been there in that position about 5 years. It was the beginning of my 15th year at the college, that's about when all of the ADA legislation came around, and we had a deaf student here [at the college] who, he and I got into this weird power struggle. He was learning about ADA, so he decided I think that he wanted my job. He wanted me fired. He accused me of not applying the new ADA laws in the right way, and that I was denying students ADA rights. And this is what moved me out of deaf services. And again, I wasn't out yet. But he started something at the beginning of the year telling all of these deaf students don't trust Savannah, don't go to Savanna and he said to the females be careful, don't go to Savannah because Savannah is a lesbian. Oh, it was in 1988. Because that was the first year that my dean, Rachel, was here, and that's how we got to be so close. And this went on all year. It was the most horrible year in my life. At first it started with me and then it kind of got to oh, yeah, the interpreters got involved in it. And this guy, he wasn't gonna quit. I think our vice president at the time who would later become our president, I think he was scared to death that somehow it would hit the news that this poor little deaf boy...it was just ugly, it was nasty. My dean, who would also later become our president, ended up having to interview our deaf students and people in the deaf community. So, anyway, that whole year was just a mess for me. I was so disillusioned. My dean was very supportive, my direct supervisor was supportive, and the president appeared to be supportive. But it just didn't move along people were terrified. We had to bring in attorneys, and it got to be at the hearing level and the deaf student did not show up. It finally got resolved the week of graduation. So, it went on all year long. And in the end, the student was told that he could never come step foot on the college campus again; he could never take our college's classes. Now I heard a rumor that he got paid off, but I don't know if that's true. I've asked [the former college president] point blank, he always says no; but I have my doubts.

We talked about what good had come of this harrowing test of leadership. Savannah talked about the lifelong friendships that were forged during this experience with her boss at the time, Samuel, and her dean, Rachel, who would

eventually leave the college, then come back to take the position of presidency for the last 6 years.

> One of the best things that came of this is Samuel who was my boss [at the time] is now my really good friend. This deaf student had gone to him during that summer. And Samuel had believed what he was saying [that Savannah was denying students ADA rights]. He [the student] was very charming and likable on one hand, but on the other hand he was evil. So, one of the good things that came of this whole thing is I got to be good friends with Samuel...because at first, of course, I was just furious at Samuel. I said 'how could you even believe that; it's so not true!' He and I have been close friends ever since. Rachel and I, my former dean who later became our college's president, that's how we got to be really good friends too [through this incident]. But I, at that point, I was thinking...in fact, that's when I wrote a letter of resignation to the president...because I was so disillusioned.

We discussed her president's leadership at the time, and how he responded to the student's accusations. In particular, we discussed how her president had responded to the student's use of his perception of Savannah's sexual orientation as lesbian, and the student's comments and accusations about Savanna being lesbian. I asked her if her comment about disillusionment was in response to her president's behaviors of leadership during this year-long incident. Savannah responded,

> Partly, yes, because the president didn't really step up. And he and I knew each other before too. We had gone through the same counseling program together. But I don't think he liked to get his hands dirty really. He didn't really step up. Yeah it was just a hard, emotional year. I essentially wrote a letter of resignation. And then he called me and said 'I'm not going to accept this, we'll figure some other place for you.' So that's when I first started doing any real supervision in developmental education. I started supervising the adult basic education and GED staff. I did that for a year. The following year I became co-director of developmental education. I was in that position for several years but my background wasn't developmental education. I really didn't know anything about

> supervision. So it just wasn't right that I got moved like that because the president wasn't willing to stand up for what was right and support me. And so when this position for director of counseling came open, I thought I'm going to go for that. That's the first time I put together an application or resume or anything since 1975. At that point it was the director of counseling, since then I've inherited CWD job placement occupational skills training, student life, and disability services.

This incident of homophobia, unfounded accusations, and numerous investigations and interviews involving students, staff, faculty, and community members had gone on for an entire year. Through it all, Savannah stayed true to herself, showed great courage and leadership, and was eventually not only exonerated of any wrong doing, but was given a promotion. A critical outcome of this event was that she made two life-long friends, Samuel and Rachel, who support and respect Savannah's leadership to this day. Savannah and I talked about how this incident was also a catalyst. It was clear that by being outed, so to speak, by this student, the impact of how Savannah dealt with this challenge, how she walked through this challenge with integrity and grace impacted how others saw her, impacted her career, and impacted her relationships with her colleagues in the most profound way. Savannah noted that this was a truly transformational experience for her.

Storjourn 3: Rhoda

Initial Contact

I suddenly found myself struggling to find lesbian leaders for my study. I had sent out numerous emails expecting to have my participants solidified in a week'

time and instead my solicitations were being declined time after time. The lesbian leaders I had hoped to become participants, one chancellor, two presidents, and one vice president, all wrote back their support for my study and apologies that they did not fit the fourth criteria of my study: to be fully out as an open lesbian in their respective colleges. I began calling or emailing every lesbian I knew in community colleges across the country, or who knew a lesbian in community colleges across the country. This strategy landed some terrific, new professional connections, but ultimately no new participants. I started getting worried and put out a call for help to fellow doctorate cohort colleagues. Via this email request for help, one of my closest friends in the doctoral program put me in contact with her former campus president, Rhoda, who had recently retired as Executive Dean of Instruction (interchangeable with campus president title), and I am forever grateful both to my colleague for her help, and to Rhoda for agreeing to share her amazing wisdom, strength, and grace of 23 years as a lesbian leader in community college.

Setting and Environment: Home

Because she had recently retired as Executive Dean of Instruction (as stated synonymous with the title of campus president), I met Rhoda at her country home situated approximately 45 miles from a small university town. Nearly 25 years earlier, Rhoda had bought her home and property replete with an outhouse, wood stove heat, and sparsely scattered neighbors who lived miles from one another. The setting is still very quiet and isolated from any nearby towns or travelers however Rhoda has modernized her home, adding household conveniences through the years

without losing any of the serene, country charm. We sat outside under an arbor of grapevines heavy with ripening grapes. The terraced, slate patio was expansive and quaint. This was a welcoming, warm, and joyful environment. I immediately felt at home. I sat facing Rhoda from across a wrought iron table inlaid with decorated tiles and taken up with plates of fruits, crackers and cheeses laid out for us to snack on throughout our time together. My view beyond Rhoda was a mesmerizing forest of every color of green, orange, and brown. There were waves of ferns, monumental firs, and deciduous trees already losing their mottled autumn leaves in the slight breeze. I asked Rhoda to describe what her life and surrounding community was like in such a small town setting over the past 25 years.

> There was a lot of change over a long period of time. There were a lot of different times of our lives through the '80s, some really transitional times for women and for the women's movement. Of course, it was the same here [in her small town] because there were these communal lesbian groups. There was always a focus here on the lesbian community either positive or negative depending on where you were. There was always a lot going on in this community about being gay and then there were the measures, the political measures that happened in [state] in the late '80s. I found myself actively participating in those in starting a human rights organization in our county and becoming part of the original founding group of that.

Rhoda described events, policies, academic efforts and the like too many to count but all amazing accomplishments she has made in the area of human rights, educational equity and political and social justice. Rhoda is modest about her feats and deeds that resulted in a better community. She is not, however, the least apologetic for standing by her convictions even in the face of controversy or professional and personal strife.

Setting and Environment: Work

I asked Rhoda to close her eyes and to think about her office at the community college where she had worked for 23 years. I asked her to envision sitting in her chair with her computer in front of her. I asked her to think about her office setting and the pictures she had on the wall. I asked her to also describe how she felt in the office. In laying out this visualization and line of inquiry regarding her office place setting, I was actually meaning for Rhoda to describe the last office setting she worked in during her presidency. However fortunately, her answer was far more comprehensive and decidedly critical to providing greater depth into the importance of place, setting, lesbian culture, and lesbian cultural practices and beliefs.

> I think the various offices that I had over the years had different energy and the one I was probably the most comfortable in was when I was a counselor or the head of the counseling department. This was partly because when you're in counseling, you're in a different world; you're in a world for the most part where people are really open and really loving and wanting you to be who you are—it's a *counseling* world. And as you move up into the deanships and some other positions, you're more aware of some of those less open energies that are all around you and that are part of your new world and part of your new job. There were different energies as I went to different jobs. When I was the dean of students, I was in the office that the previous dean of students had occupied, and there was weird energy in that office from the beginning! One night, when I first got the job, a bunch of friends of mine and me, we smudged the office when nobody was there; it was so cool! We felt like there was something really funny in there. In fact, this gal who was my secretary at that time, she brought the smudge and everything, and we had a group of about five of us, and we were in there smudging the office. We were kind of laughing about it because our former boss thought of himself as the hippy captain of the whole world. So, the fact that we're in there smudging his bad energy out was kind of funny in of itself. We did the smudging that night, then afterward we all went to leave. We

> were driving out of the parking lot and this huge electrical storm just started happening. We all just thought, "this is funny, oh no, what's happening!" But after that the office had a good feeling.

Before she moved in, Rhoda employed an old yet still often practiced lesbian cultural ritual called *smudging* to cleanse her former and decidedly homophobic boss's office space. Smudging consists of burning tightly dried and bundled sage, cedar, or sweet grass and moving the smoking wand throughout the entire room, house, or office in a slow and meditative fashion. In this ritual, Rhoda, her friends that day, and most lesbians in general believe that bad energy, vibes, spirits and the like are expelled and a "good feeling" is restored to the space as a result of smudging.

Personal Herstory and Education

Rhoda grew up in a moderate-sized, contemporary town about 30 miles from a major cosmopolitan city in a west coast state of the Union. She attended a Catholic grade school and high school. Rhoda received her undergraduate degree in Counseling and her Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling from a University in her home state. Rhoda has identified as lesbian since she can remember. She met her partner, Sara, via a mutual friend. Both Rhoda and Sara were working at the College at the time. The two of them shared their coming together story for me that day as we sat balanced in wrought iron chairs on a rocky slate patio munching grapes from the arbor till the fall air cooled and the sun was lost behind the towering evergreens. Listening to their story of how Rhoda and Sara met more than 27 years ago was a tremendous treat and an unforgettable highlight to my research road trip. Rarely do lesbians have the opportunity to hear each other's love stories. Nor do

most lesbians have the remarkable chance to meet and befriend role models as inspiring, funny, brilliant, and passionate as Rhoda and Sara. The two sons Sara and Rhoda raised together are long out of the home now. The two educators are retired and spend most of their time between relaxing in their country home, building a new beach house with friends, and enjoying the loving relationship they clearly feel lucky to have discovered nearly thirty years ago.

Path to Community College Leadership

Upon graduation from her Master's program, Rhoda began work as a high school guidance counselor at the Catholic high school in her home town. She worked at the high school for approximately seven years before moving to a new state, where Rhoda felt she could be more of whom she knew herself to be as a lesbian. Rhoda explains how she came to work in the new, rural setting in a state south of her home state and town.

> I moved down here after I got with a partner who was also a teacher at the high school where I was working. We moved down here to southern [state] partly because it was sort of the back to the land time of the late 1970s, but the cool part of it was that we were down here in a community where there are numerous groups of out lesbians. There was communal lesbian land here around us in many different areas and it was a really active. They [lesbians] were in active communal housing groups at that time. So it was really fun for me to, first of all, identify more as a lesbian. [State, City] had been my home town and it was difficult to be who I wanted to be and also be a counselor in a Catholic high school. It was hard to struggle with that. But the Jesuit priests that I worked with all knew about my sexuality, and I felt quite comfortable with them, but not with the greater community, and not with the high school kid's parents certainly, or the high school kids. It just felt like it was really time for me to be farther away from home and be in a place where my family wouldn't be impacted by what I chose, how I chose to be. So, we came down here [a rural community college south of her home state]. It didn't work out with that

> relationship, but in the long run I got a job with children's services division, where I worked as a case manager with the sexually abused kids in this community. It was a startling, sad, and difficult 18 months of my life that really had a profound impact on me. [As a case worker in children's services] I saw a part of life that I hadn't really even participated in or been around that much, it was really hard.

After nearly two years as a counselor working with abused children, Rhoda was exhausted. She was eager to be where she felt she could make a difference in the greatest number of lives. Rhoda describes leaving her position in children services and being a community college leader.

> By then I made some really good friends at work and had a lesbian community of friends here that were in various professions. I was building a pretty nice life. Then I met Sara in 1979. When we got together I was in the process of transitioning jobs. I was trying to get to the community college because I figured that would be a place where my skills both as a counselor and also as a high school teacher would fit as an outreach counselor or something. I wasn't even exactly sure, but I knew I didn't want to stay in that children's services work because it was too hard. It just broke your heart, and it was just too hard to do every day. I thought with what I've learned now, maybe I can go to the community college and actually help. I was thinking women in transition, primarily because that was a population that I'd been working with too, the women that had found themselves in really difficult situations after changes in their lives. I did get a job at the college as a community college counselor on campus. Over the years I became the head of the counseling department. After that I became the dean of students.

Rhoda felt that dean of students was truly her calling, more so than any other position she had held in her lifetime, and specifically any position she'd held within the community college realm. She talked about feeling closest to students in this position, and that she could best impact the positive outcomes of students' lives in this post. But she had to fight hard for the position. Rhoda talked of preparing for hours before the day of the interview. She was ready, prepared, well studied, and her

partner, Sara, had even bought Rhoda a new 'power suit' as she described it. Rhoda shared more on this experience,

> I felt like this was a job made for me the dean of students job was the job I had really aspired to. I really thought I could make a real contribution there. So, when I won that job, and it was a tough, you know, it was a tough process getting there. There were some issues in that process that I felt like being a lesbian was maybe being a handicap for me in terms of getting that job...because the former dean, I don't think would have picked me had he still been there when I applied for the job—but he had left on a medical leave.

Rhoda had sought out the community college as the place she could most make a difference in the lives of students. She had held her first position as a faculty member and increased her purview over time from counselor to eventually hold the top position of campus president in a career that spanned 23 years as a dedicated lesbian leader to community college students, staff, faculty, and community members until her retirement last year. Rhoda notes,

> Then there was a transition at the college in terms of the college structure and we opened a new campus. At that point I became the executive dean of the whole campus here, the main campus. So that's where I ended up my career. I was there 23 years.

Points of Transition and Transformation

Rhoda talked about a transition point in her career early on as a tenure-track faculty member in her third year of probation, just before she was to go before the Board of Trustees for permanent status. She had joined a local community-based political group that championed causes for human rights by either campaigning to support or oppose measures and similar legislative efforts. She decided to go to the president of her college at the time and make him aware of her plans to accept the

nomination of president of this very public community activist group. She wanted to let her president know and to come out to him as a lesbian. Rhoda felt it better to tell her president in person than for him to find out via a media source. I asked Rhoda how she felt coming out to her president at the time,

> I thought it was really scary; it was a scary thing to do, because I was already in a tenure track, so I wasn't as worried about that, but it depended on who—the president at that time was somebody I thought was compassionate and had a heart that I thought was in the right place. I didn't know exactly where he was on the issue of being a lesbian but I thought he was a good man.

However, Rhoda went on to say it was good that she had not taken the activist post while her former president was still at the college. She said that the former president had just left when she decided to get more active in the human rights group.

> Before that we had a president that I think would have fired me if he could have figured out how to do it. And even when I was getting tenure which was after three years at the college, THAT president tried to railroad me out.

I asked Rhoda to tell me more about that president's leadership and the particular incident, and she shared the following,

> Well, he [the president] was really trying to go after a colleague of mine, a guy that was very politically active and spoke up against him [the president] on many occasions. This president was a guy that was just a nightmare and ended up getting out on sexual harassment charges—he was there at the time and I was a brand new person, I'd been there a couple of years and he liked me at the time. I mean he didn't figure out any of this until I was in my third year and it was the end of the probation period. I was going for my tenure or permanent status we called it at the community college, but this other guy who was my colleague in the counseling department was the head of the teacher's union and was actively against him [the president]. So the

> president couldn't get at that guy because he was protected all over the place. So, the president tried to get at me. The president kind of let my colleague, Kyle, know that if Kyle continued with his path [not supportive of the president], that as president he could find a way to get rid of me because I was vulnerable

I asked Rhoda to clarify this point. I asked her if she meant that the president would "get rid" of Rhoda because she was a lesbian. Rhoda answered,

> Well, I didn't know that; I mean at that time I didn't know if he knew or not. All I knew was that he was using me as a pawn in a political game between the union and the president—but then the head of personnel, the Human Development area. He told me later that during this same period he and the president had to discuss my tenure, and they had to bring it up to the Board of Trustees whether they were going to grant me tenure or not. Kyle told me later that the president said to him, "Well I don't want to give Rhoda tenure because I hear she might be a lesbian," and Kyle knew that I was a lesbian.

I asked Rhoda to describe what she felt when her colleague Kyle had shared the conversation he had had with the president regarding her tenure and her identity as lesbian.

> I was just stunned. This is the other part, he said "I don't want her; and how do we know what she's going to do once she gets tenure?" This was the part that hurt. I thought, what do you mean? What do you think I'm going to do, race off and start attacking women students, or what is it you think? Kyle said to the president, 'What do you think she's going to do? You know she's been here for three years. Rhoda's been an outstanding person. You even gave Rhoda an award last year as an outstanding faculty member. Do you think she's going to change all of a sudden because she gets tenure?' Well the president didn't want to have that kind of discussion obviously with Kyle. Of course later my colleagues and I, we all talked about it and they joked, "Yes, I guess she's going to get a motorcycle and start charging around campus, picking up women, or something." It was kind of –it was funny but it really hurt, and it was like geez, I've done all this work here. I've worked my ass off for this college in the three years I've been here, and he thinks, what does he think I'm going to do?

This would be one of many times that Rhoda described squeezing through very painful and challenging moments in her career. Time and again, Rhoda came out the other side of these events or incidences an even stronger lesbian leader than before the incident. Rhoda consistently looked for the silver lining in all experiences. She was resolute in her conviction that who she was as a lesbian was good and right. Even in the tough and scary times when others such as this president would threaten her security or her career, Rhoda refocused her energies on what "it was really about."

> It was difficult but it also sort of made me think that it isn't really about that it isn't really about what he thought; it was really about what I had done and what I had accomplished, and the people that I had dealt with were all really supportive and I had this support of the faculty association and all the rest of this stuff and so I just kind of had to start distancing myself and around that same time he was in his own trouble up to his eyebrows and so luckily he was gone within another couple of years.

Storjourn 4: Zora

Initial Contact

I met Zora about a year before we sat down for this interview. A friend and colleague of mine from my doctoral program had pulled me aside after class one day to ask me a question. He is an Executive Dean at a community college. He knew I was lesbian because I was totally out in our doctorate classes we attended together. He shared with me that he had a dean that was struggling with some issues within her purview. He said that she was a dean of a nontraditional area for women. He said he thought that probably some of the issues might have to do with her being lesbian.

My friend wondered how he might support her and sought my advice on how to broach the subject with her. We talked for some time. I hope there are many more administrators like my Executive Dean friend out there leading colleges who, although they fit the epitome of the dominant culture as did he, they continuously seek to support and champion those community college colleagues who live and work in the margins and underrepresented groups of our society, as did Zora. I offered to have his dean contact me via phone or email and told him that I was glad to support her, and him, in any way. A few months later I happened to be in his town and stopped in to see my colleague and friend at his college office. He took me on a tour of the college campus that included Zora's office. It is in her office that we first met. We sat down and talked, just the two of us, for about 45 minutes. We talked about a challenge she was having with one of her faculty, we talked about homophobia in the workplace, and we talked about my doctoral study focus of lesbian leaders in community colleges. We also talked about a little known secret at the time: Zora was going to the doctor's that afternoon to find out if she was pregnant. I left her with my contact information and told her she could contact me anytime for help or support. A little over a year later, I contacted Zora through my friend, the Executive Dean, and asked her if she would consider being a participant in my study. To my tremendous delight and deep, deep gratitude, Zora agreed to be a participant. Our interview began that day in September with Zora holding her amazing and beautiful, three-month old, baby daughter in her arms. Zora was on maternity leave at the time of our interview.

Setting and Environment

It was a chilly morning for September as I crossed several bridges to a modest section of town just south of a large cosmopolitan city center. The neighborhood where Zora lives with her wife, Kim, and daughter, Bella, is a pie-shaped grouping of residential houses that climbs up a steep hill overlooking industrial buildings, steel yards, and a smattering of small businesses on one side. The other side of her truncated neighborhood is bordered with a busy road. I parked on the steep hill, turned my tires to the curb, and climbed the precipitous driveway to the right side of a duplex dwelling. Zora answered the door with her new baby daughter propped on one hip, gave a kind smile of recognition, and invited me into a small living room. The room was comfortably neat. Children's toys were here and there about the space with a rocking swing near the overstuffed couch. The duplex was a diminutive split-level with one main bedroom and the baby's room upstairs, the living room on the entrance level, and the kitchen on the lower level. We headed down the stairs and sat down at a wooden kitchen table that looked out through a sliding glass door to a small, fenced yard that had two chairs facing the direction of absent sunlight, and one fir tree prominently situated in a corner near the back of the tiny lot. Kim came downstairs, and we were introduced. Her quiet nature was calming yet guarded. Her smile was a bit tentative, as if she were sizing me up to make sure that her family was going to be protected and safe in this process of story telling, of personal divulgence. However, within moments in our exchange of a handshake and words said and unsaid, she seemed convinced that all was fine. Her

nod of acceptance was nearly unperceivable but there all the same. She confidently transferred Bella from Zora's arms to her own, and the two headed off up to the top floor. It was an overcast day, and I was grateful for the light that the glass doors allowed into the small, utilitarian space where we sat. Zora put the kettle on for tea. We settled in across the kitchen table from one another and began the interview.

Personal Herstory and Education

Zora was born in the United States and lived in a Midwest state until the age of four. She attended grade school and high school in Japan. Her parents were missionaries, and she moved quite a lot from town to town as a young person. She talks of not being able to make and keep long-term friendships due to the frequency of moves to new homes and new schools. Zora attended a small, Christian college on the east coast where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology. Some years later she applied her passion for working with her hands by enrolling in a flight mechanics program. She had always had a love of airplanes and flying. She received her Airplane and Power Plant (A&P) license to become an airplane mechanic from a two-year program at a community college on the west coast. Zora's Master's degree is from a Leadership Institute Program at a University on the west coast. She has a Master's in Applied Behavioral Science with a focus on "trying to do more of the emotional and coaching part of leadership." Zora talked about her Master's experience and why she felt it was an "absolutely wonderful, wonderful program, and it changed my life." We would come back to her experience in this Master's program many times throughout the interview session. Clearly, this program was a

transformational experience for Zora, and for her this educational experience shifted the course of her career and her life. I asked Zora to talk more about why her Master's experience changed her life.

> Well part of the theory is that in order to help somebody else, you have to do your own work first. When you walk into an organization and you are sitting on the sidelines and you are watching them do their thing and suddenly an alarm goes off you know that something's wrong here and you address that issue. This program helped me to get clear about if it's a personal issue that is raising the alarm or if it is an issue out here in the larger group. You have to know your own self first before you can go in and do this kind of work. You need to know that you can say, like, 'no that's mine and I need to keep my mouth shut' or, 'no that's theirs.' [The Master's Program experience] Changed my life; glad I did it.

Regarding her personal herstory, Zora married her partner, Kim, and the couple has been together for approximately 6 years. Kim and Zora held a union or marriage ceremony. While they describe themselves as "married," they are painfully cognizant that legally they are not seen as bound to one another, nor to their child in the same way as are heterosexual couples and their subsequent children, adopted or biological. Zora spoke about their extensive legal work and process to "adopt" Bella, their child since birth. While Zora is the biological mother, Kim is not recognized in any way under the law as a parent. Therefore, Kim and Zora had to undergo months of scrutiny from the state social services system, including home visits, before the final step of going before a state judge in a courtroom and receiving final approval to adopt their own child. Zora and Kim live in a modest neighborhood with their 3-month old daughter.

Path to Community College Leadership

Zora's career began as a social worker after she graduated with her Bachelor's in sociology. She worked handling large case loads until she, "got fed up with the system and I said I can't do this; I want to work with my hands, I want to see the end product of something I do." At this point, Zora decided to become an airplane mechanic. After she received her Airplane and Power Plant (A&P) license, Zora talked extensively about her experience with her first position working on the flight line of a large aeronautical corporation. Zora describes this position as a, "Great job. You are outside, you are doing your work, and you get to see the final product." Zora was not long in that position when by chance one day a group of Japanese businessmen passed through her area. Someone she worked with remembered that she had lived in Japan and called her over to help translate. Because she could understand their questions and respond to them in fluent Japanese, Zora was immediately summoned to a new position "inside" to provide customer quality support.

Zora was a rising star at the large aeronautical corporation where she worked. After five years and heading up a division with hundreds of employees, she was sent on numerous and important business trips, and was slated by all to go far in the company's career ladder. Yet, Zora was in turmoil. Her personal values did not match her job duties, "My job eventually felt like I was working hard everyday to make money for them over there so that they could have more money." She spoke about yearning for work that was focused on more humanitarian efforts and that

challenged her to "be a better person." Her life and work in the aeronautical industry felt in opposition to the authentic life she sought. Also, Zora spoke of the challenges of being completely closeted. No one knew she was lesbian. She needed a change. She talks of the shock felt and expressed by those who championed her leadership and supported her climb to unknown heights when one day Zora just quit. She quit her corporate job and began a life-changing experience through her Master's work. In her words,

> I have this thing of what guides me in my life and for me it's what kind of human being do I want to be. I have this vague vision of this person that I want to be. I can see it. That's the human being I want to be. When I make choices in my life, I compare it to if it's going to help me to be a better human being. If it is great, if not—no thank you; I'm going to move on. So I think that in the process of getting my masters degree, which was so life changing, it changed the way I thought about things but it also gave me the tools that I needed to become this authentic person. So, I came *out* during that process during the masters program; I came *out* to my family and friends. Everything in my world turned upside down due to this master's program. The aeronautical job, I know I could go anywhere or do anything [at that corporation] but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I thought okay, I really love this coaching, consulting, I love this [Master's] program; I want to get into this. I'm going to quit this job and I'm going to find and apply for something more in line with my values and what I want to do.

After quitting her corporate position and after finishing her Master's program, Zora was unemployed for several months and found, "it was a pretty hard time it was, you know, scary....one year unemployed and I wondered if I was ever going to have a life again." Zora had just started dating Kim, who would later become her wife and the co-parent of their daughter. Zora briefly took a position teaching at a high school until she was asked to interview for an Associate Dean of Aviation

position at a community college where she had applied months earlier. Despite a bizarre experience during her interview for the Associate Dean's position, Zora accepted the position and was later promoted to a full dean. Zora tells about her experience in the interview,

> I went to the interview, and it was horrible. There was an instructor who physically turned his chair around, turned his back to me and looked the other way. He was one of the faculty members that I was to be responsible for. They [the 6 other interview panelists] kept going on as though nothing was happening. I think initially when he did it, turned his back to me, they stopped and looked at him and my sense was they thought 'there is nothing we can do about this and they just kept going. I thought, this place is really screwed up. I think I felt ...I felt like...he is trying to intimidate me. What feeling would that be? It wasn't so much fear, I didn't really have fear, it was more...frustration maybe and questioning, "What is going on here?"

I asked Zora what happened for her after she left the interview at the community college where she now works. She told me about her immediate reaction and why she ultimately decided to take the position after it was offered to her only a few days after the strange interview. In her words,

> After the interview I had gone home, I was laughing this is a joke this place is so messed up that people are turning their back to you in an interview. That is a pretty clear sign that something is wrong and yet they're calling me to tell me that they want me in this position. But having just finished my masters program, my thought was: this is the *best place* for me to start because it is a playground. Who cares—if I get fired, so what? I've lived through not having a job, and I know that I can get a job, so what? If I get fired, I'll get fired, but is there ever going to be a better place than a place like this to practice the tools that I have just learned in my Master's program? I just kept thinking of the experience as a playground, but it's peoples' lives so that on the one hand I had to take it seriously and honor that it is peoples' lives I am messing with - on the other hand, it is already so messed up, how much worse can it be? All I can go is uphill from

> here. So I took the position. I wanted to practice these tools I had just learned to see if they actually worked.

Zora spoke with a kind of assured confidence and conviction that was simultaneously and uniquely gentle and reflective. She described this point of decision making, this critical time of choosing her future path as a leader in community college, in a way that was so freeing. She was remaining true to herself to chose to take the Associate Dean position not because it made her feel financial safe, or because it was a title change boost to her career, but for altruistic reasons that aligned with her values as transformed through her experience in her Master's Program. She would not realize it at the time, but her personal and professional values as metamorphosed through transformational action would also align in nearly every way with the altruistic mission of community college: open access and educational equity for all.

Points of Transition and Transformation

Zora had grown up in a conservative missionary family. She was the only participant in the study to have lived outside of the United States of America during her formative years. Zora lived in Japan from age 4 to 18 before moving to the United State to attend college in Boston. I asked Zora when she first knew she was lesbian. She chuckled and said that she first had an inkling that she was a lesbian when she was in her second year of college, in her early 20's. Her roommate was a young woman much like herself who had also grown up in a missionary family. I asked Zora what happened for her in that moment when she experienced that visceral

realization that she was different than everybody else, that she was lesbian. Zora grew quieter and her smile softened then faded. She answered,

> I thought of killing myself. Given my background, my parents were still missionaries in Japan when all of this was going on, very conservative and religious. And that's how I was raised, and that's how I was. I was one of those folks. I was one of those really conservative, religious folks. That's who I was when I left my missionary community to come to college. I was this conservative, religious type of person who I was raised to be. So my first 4 years of college were absolute hell. I had never lived in America. It was the most difficult transition in my life.

We talked about why it was so difficult of a transition for her from Japan to America. Zora described the utter isolation she felt when her American-born college mates would reference television shows or other types of pop culture as a way of connecting with each other and finding common ground—even to use a payphone was an unknown experience that for Zora was new and had to be learned. I brought the conversation back to the moment she consciously acknowledged to herself and to her roommate that she was lesbian. I asked her what happened next,

> Why didn't I kill myself? Life just went on; I decided I didn't want to kill myself. I wanted to survive. So it was just this kind of thing that I kept inside of me that I didn't go to very often. I didn't think about it or talk about it. And it became an issue because Cindy and I became really good friends. Because she also grew up the way I did. Her parents were missionaries. So we had this problem because we became roommates and ended up in this relationship, very into this relationship. We had this dilemma. We said okay what do we do? We made choices to not enter into a sexual relationship.

This was a transitional point in Zora's life for a number of profound reasons. We talked about what the implications of her self acknowledgement as lesbian meant to her at the time. Zora shared how being lesbian impacted her former identity as

heterosexual, her new identity as American, and her constant identity as Christian. Given her missionary upbringing, I asked Zora to talk more about what role her identity as Christian had as she grappled with being lesbian back in college when she and her roommate first discussed their mutual feelings for one another. Her words,

> Just that it was wrong, wrong against God, against our parents, that our whole reality would be shattered if we acted on this. But it was more about God. It's really interesting, nobody really talked about it. I never even really knew what a lesbian was until I was in high school. I don't think it even ever entered my reality.

Zora had begun our interview by stating that she did not necessarily see how being lesbian had to do with her position as a dean at her community college. And, throughout the first half or so of telling of her storjourn, she did not see or talk about the interconnectedness of her leadership and being lesbian. However, about half-way through our interview, Zora had a breakthrough. This breakthrough occurred after I asked Zora to talk more about when anything about being gay entered into her reality. She stated the following,

> I do remember once in high school there was a guy who came over to Japan to teach our high school Biology, and he suggested to us students that perhaps...perhaps, being gay could be a biological thing and that we just don't know yet. And he was fired immediately [claps to define the finality of her high school teacher being fired]. So, even though nobody ever really talked about it [lesbianism], it was just not okay and you weren't able to talk about it. And we had a gym teacher who was fired too because somebody spread a rumor that she was lesbian. She was American, a missionary.

This was powerful. I wanted to know more about the impact of these events in Zora's young life and how the (above stated) experiences continued to influence

her life and work as a lesbian leader in community college. This is part of our cultural experience, the oppression of others who are, or who are thought to be, lesbian or gay. We spoke of what that experience must have been like for Zora: to have two educators in her high school, *two of her teachers*, fired virtually in front of her for issues or accusations pertaining to being gay. I thought back to the beginning of our interview wherein Zora had stated that she felt safe as a lesbian, that being safe was not an issue for her as a lesbian. Yet, subsequently, in the hours of telling her storjourn, the interconnectedness between her lesbianism and her leadership in community colleges had become very clear to me. A pattern had emerged and Zora recognized it too. In the telling of this last experience in high school, Zora suddenly realized she had referenced or described numerous experiences or leadership decisions having to do with *safety*. Unintentionally, Zora recognized for the first time on a conscious level that the leadership decisions she had made in her career path and as a leader at her college were directly related to her early experiences of feeling unsafe. Conscious or not of being lesbian in her teens, Zora realized at that point in our interview how her cultural experiences as a lesbian, such as experiencing fearful acts of oppression, played a daily role in her leadership around the safety of others: specifically students, staff, and faculty. In the telling of her storjourn, Zora had referenced "safety" so many times that she said with a slight smile, "wow, I'm talking about safety again" and she laughed out loud at the recognition and her epiphany.

To further explore her realization of the interconnectedness of her cultural experience as a lesbian with her decision making as a community college leader, we talked about the importance of the high school teacher experience. We talked about how, at 37 years old, Zora remembered the details of her high school teachers being fired like it was yesterday. I asked Zora to describe how she felt her biology teacher's immediate termination (*fired like that!*) for proposing that being gay was biological impacted her life and career. Zora said, "Here's the thing, my mom was the one who pushed it and went to my high school principal back then and said that we needed to fire him."

A week after starting her new position at the community college as Associate Dean of Aviation, I asked Zora how it was that she came out as a lesbian to her staff and faculty. Zora stated that she had held a retreat a week into her new position in order to get to know those within her purview. With her transformational experience of her Master's program driving her forward, Zora was ready to test out the tools she had learned regarding collaborative leadership and to bring her entire, authentic self to her new leadership position at the college. During the retreat, one of Zora's faculty members asked her if she was married. Zora took this moment to come out, and she shared that she was "partnered with Kim." I asked Zora how she felt internally after she came out in her leadership position at the college in comparison to how she had felt as a closeted leader at the aeronautical corporation. Zora answered,

> I felt so good. Up to that point, I had been closeted all my work life; I was closeted. I was never out; it felt very freeing to me. It was like, okay, I have nothing to hide now, no secrets, no nothing, and I don't have to be afraid. I guess feeling free, it was more around the

> freeing—there was no fear. But at the [corporation job] there were consequences that could arise. For example, one of my manager's was a very conservative, Christian male guy. He made a lot of assumptions about me because I grew up as a missionary kid in another country. So, he assumed that I believed the same thing he did...and I never said otherwise. We traveled overseas together. There was time off the clock when we were eating and talking about family. I just kind of kept quiet and listened to everybody else's stories. I was afraid of what would happen. My fear was around not being seen as how I was being seen in that moment...because I was quite well respected. I was the go to gal. I got to do things a lot of others didn't—like in terms of the international traveling for meetings. I think that with my ability to get things done came a lot of trust. Interestingly, after I came out and started my job here [at the community college], Kim and I decided to have a commitment ceremony. I invited him to the ceremony. He wrote back and said 'I don't believe in what you are doing and I had no idea this is who you are...'

Zora stated how "it's a good thing I didn't come out there" because she recognized she was fearful when she worked at the corporate job. When she was closeted she somehow felt others would see her "in that negative light rather than a positive light, and that it would somehow influence their decisions that they made" about her career path, capability, and potential opportunities like travel or interesting projects. Looking back at her aeronautical career Zora stated,

> I don't know what would have happened if I had come out then. Today, I would have come out because that is just who I am today and I would have still retained a very good core group of friends. And that would have been just fine. But at the time I was just terrified. I thought if I come out I would be the butt of all the jokes I'm going to be the stereotype. That's where I was really beginning the transition and to think about being lesbian, about is this really who I am? My point was that at [the aeronautical corporation] my fears were not so much about my career, but around my relationships with people because they are really important to me. I was afraid that I would lose my friendships; I would lose the connection with these folks, and I didn't want that. It is much harder to come out when you have already been someone else in an organization versus coming in new to an

> organization and just saying this is who I am. I think that is just a lot easier. In some ways, I took the easy way out by coming out in a new organization rather than coming out at [the aeronautical corporation]. Eventually, though, I came out to the folks at [the aeronautical corporation] that I was still in contact with; I invited them all to my commitment ceremony

Zora was fearful that if she brought her whole lesbian self to her leadership position at the aeronautical company, she would lose "their trust" at the least, and at worst her safety would be in jeopardy. She talked of a poignant and powerful point of transition and transformation wherein she was suddenly very aware of a dichotomous moment that splintered her perspective in a profound and life changing way. In her words,

> You know, I see it differently now. But going to school through the A&P School, I was always in the man's world; I was the only woman and I had to make some choices about how I was going to be accepted and how I was going to go about doing that. That's what people who live in other worlds [other than that of dominant culture] have to do. As a woman in the A&P school my choices were: I could be one of the guys, and turn into a guy, or I can choose to be someone who totally isolates themselves and says fuck you; I'm just going to do my little work over here and move on. I could see a woman taking on these sorts of roles to try and survive. So, for me to survive at the A&P School, I became one of the guys. I became so much one of the guys that on graduation day we went out on one of the guy's boat on the lake, everyone was drinking beers, diving in the water, doing their thing, and one of the guys handed me a drink and said 'ladies first!' And the guy standing next to me grabbed the drink out of my hand and said, 'no, she's not a lady, she is one of us!' In that moment I had two very separate and powerful reactions. One was "Wow! I have made it in; I am one of the guys; they've totally accepted me." The other was "Holy shit! What did I give up to get here, and who am I? Because I am definitely not one of the guys." So it was this very powerful moment when I graduated and I never forgot it.

After describing this epiphanous moment, Zora talked of moving beyond survival and living beyond the cage of fear that had kept her closeted and fragmented as a leader. Zora was no longer willing to compromise who she fully was as lesbian. She knew that at the aeronautical job she was "still trying to be one of the guys and using this mode of behavior as her "survival mechanism." However, in her new dean's position at the community college she was ready to bring her whole self to the leadership experience.

Storjourn 5: Josephine

Initial Contact

When I first met Josephine, it was in a van on my second day of work. Colleagues from colleges were traveling to a workshop about an hour's distance away. Josephine described our encounter,

> Oh my god. I still recall meeting you and I think I was telling that story about people's hair in Colorado where I used to live. And I don't know how the heck that come up in that conversation. Anyway, we were in a van. Yeah, and when I told that story that somehow included me talking about being lesbian, you were sitting in the front and you went… [shows my reaction to her comment in the van by snapping her head around, as if she's looking from the front seat of the van to the back, as it was in our first encounter]. You whipped around! It's like you thought you were in the van full of typical heterosexual faculty members and then suddenly, it was like, oh! You know, and it was kind of like what Laura [Director of Nursing who is African American] was saying about her daughter going to an all-black college. I've seen the dynamic Laura's talking about with black people at our college who come together. It's that feeling of an instant connection on some level, like...I'm black too and I don't have to explain myself to you. And when I met you I felt that same kind of connection because we're both lesbian. It's like, I don't know you at all but I know there is something that we have in common. And there is a story that we probably share. So it's that kind of feeling. It's

> funny I came home and told my partner there's a new dean who's a lesbian. I was pretty excited about it.

Soon after meeting for the first time, Josephine and I talked about my doctoral work. She shared that she had applied to a prestigious East coast university to begin her own doctoral path at a teacher's college with a focus on community college leadership. The common focus of our doctoral work and our shared culture of being lesbian formed a natural and quick bond. Once approved to move forward with the research phase of this study, I contacted Josephine and asked if she would be a participant in my study. To my great delight she agreed. Her input as both a program director and a full-time faculty member who is herself going through a doctoral program has been invaluable. I am very grateful for her insights and candid disclosure of her experience as a lesbian leader in community college.

Setting and Environment—Work

Josephine describes her work environment as one that is far more inclusive and tolerant than that of her former community college work environment in Colorado. We met in her office located in the ground level of a large, 65 thousand square-foot, two-story, academic building that houses the math and sciences programs and classes at her college. Josephine's office is a large space with a tall ceiling and windows that are too high to garner a view. They let in only a small amount of light. The walls are bare concrete; the space has a 1950's industrial feel. Years of books, binders, and miscellaneous medical equipment are shoved onto shelves and crammed into spare spaces. Dilapidated chairs sit mismatched next to each other for Radiologic Science faculty to sit in during meetings. Josephine's desk

is covered with stacks of papers. Two 3X5 picture frames rest at angles on her desk in front of her as she sits down behind her aging metal desk to ready for our interview.

I asked Josephine how, if she thought about the environment and climate on her college campus, she would describe the inclusivity or exclusivity on campus. Josephine stated that when she first came to her community college setting, it felt like an "old boys club." When asked in what way, she stated:

> It felt like an African American old boys club. And I – I don't know, I felt like this palpable thing–when I went to meetings. It's like they've got it all figured out. I think that there's a lot more overt effort made to raise people's awareness, to be inclusive. But I think, you know, humans are humans. People are racist without thinking they are or meaning to be and a lot of it is because of ignorance. People are biased in other ways as well. I don't think too many people would consider themselves hateful...but I think sometimes religion comes into play especially with gay issues. And you know, people feel the tension, so obviously it's real.

Personal Herstory and Education

Josephine was born in a state located on the East coast. She is 48 years old. She talks of always feeling different than her siblings and parents. There were very clear messages that Josephine received early on in life from her father, mother, and siblings that took her years overcome, such as if you cannot do something extremely well then do not try. I asked Josephine to talk more about risk-taking.

> My family is major conflict avoiders and risk avoiders. I am like Hillary to my family. You know, blazing the way up Everest. That's how they look at me because I left. I moved away. I climb mountains. I run marathons. I do these things that nobody in my family would dare to do. So for my family I'm just out there because I'm so different than them when it comes to risk taking – they don't get me for a number of reasons. For many, many reasons I'm just not like

> them. But I was not always like that...I grew up in that family, and I used to be afraid to take risks. It took me a long time – it's been a long, long road to get to the point where I will do something that is hard and continue to do it until I succeed. You know, I used to just say, it's too hard. I can't do that because that's how everybody else in my family is. My sister is profoundly unhappy. When I talk to her about it, I ask her, "What can you do? You have these things that you're interested in, why don't you try them?" Well, she says, 'I don't want to risk it, or 'I can't go to school', or 'I don't want to go back to school,' or 'it's too hard.' Anything that is hard at all or difficult for my family...it's understood like you don't want to do that. It's almost like my family doesn't recognize that there's growth that happens when you take a risk. It's like either you're good at something or you're not and you shouldn't bother. So if it's not easy for you, you shouldn't try to do it.

Despite the early messages that led to self doubt, Josephine persevered to receive her Bachelor's Degree in Community Health from a university in the Midwest. Sequentially, her next degree was an Associate of Science Degree in Radiologic Science from a community college near the same geographic area. Josephine later received a Master's Degree in Adult Education from an online university Master's program. Currently, Josephine is enrolled in a full-time distance education doctoral program at a major university on the East coast wherein she travels via air to the university from the West coast to East coast once a month.

Josephine currently lives with her partner of 21 years, Sara, in a progressive suburb of a large city located on the West coast. Sara and Josephine met while still in the Midwest through mutual friends. As Josephine spoke of her own educational path, and about how her education tied in to her being lesbian, she shared that her partner Sara taught high school physical education and biology for 10 years. I asked Josephine what it was like for the two of them going to school, working, and living

in this rural, Midwest town where they met. She related that it was stressful, frustrating, and depressing much of the time because of the homophobia and conservative attitudes towards those perceived as different than themselves. To this regard, Josephine shared an experience that impacted both her and her partner, Sara.

> Where Sara went to college, they rounded up the teachers and athletes in a room and they said to them, "you will not be gay here. If you are caught at a gay party, if you caught anywhere gay, you will never teach, you will never get your teaching certificate." I mean, she was like, she remembers being all lined up with her teacher classmates and having that speech read to them. It was like, if you want to teach here, you will not go to these parties. You will not be seen at a gay bar. You will not…you know, no public displays of affection. It was like a whole list of things. Unreal.

When Josephine and Sara were first together, she said that Sara "had to be really careful" as a high school teacher in their state. I asked if Sara was out at all in the first few years they were together while she worked as a high school physical education teacher Josephine said, "She couldn't have been. She would have been fired instantly." The homophobia and stressors that came along with constantly being treated as outsiders wore Josephine down, so they decided to move. I asked Josephine to tell me why she and Sara moved to the west coast. In her words,

> Well, Sara had decided she was done teaching high school and so she got her Master's in Public Health. She was sort of moving into a new career. And both of us, we were just sick of being in that community. I just had this feeling all the time..., like you know, my hair was this short and people would walk up to me in grocery store and just go, 'well are you a boy or a girl?' You know, they would say stuff like that all the time! It was just unreal! We had a pink triangle on our car and we would occasionally have people like threaten us in the car or, like a guy would drive right up next to your car and go like this to you [Josephine moves her finger violently across her throat as if slashing it open]. You know just horrid stuff like that. Also, at one point, we

> lived right next door to a bunch of frat boys basically. So, it was like a big party house all the time. I'm sure it was them. They were leaving like porn on our car and things like that. You know, just subtle little – nothing, necessarily physically dangerous. Nothing where I felt like somebody was going to kill me maybe, but just this constant behavior towards us like our neighbors think we're not okay. That kind of feeling.

Josephine has lived in a busy cosmopolitan city on the west coast now for approximately 19 years. She and Sara bought a home 10 years ago that is approximately 20 minutes drive from her college campus, located in a busy enclave inhabited largely by those with liberal minds and open hearts. Josephine says she fits right in with her neighborhood surroundings and neighbors. Even more importantly to Josephine, she does not stand out as different as the eclectic community that surrounds her. She is one of many, many lesbians coupled and living together in the area in homes they mutually purchased and inhabit like any other family. Josephine and her partner have a small circle of close friends and spend much of their free time hiking or playing with their beloved two dogs, Willy and Jess.

Path to Community College Leadership

When asked about her path to a community college leadership position, Josephine talked of early feelings of frustration and lack of joy in jobs she held after graduating with her Bachelor's Degree in Community Health. For more years than she wished, she did not encounter an easy or clear academic or career path. She talked about being directionless and her feelings of deep depression. In her words,

> Well, I sort of meandered. I really didn't have a clear path for a long time. I changed colleges, I don't know, three or four times. I just was sort of a directionless person in high school, and I didn't have a clear talent that sort of pointed me in one direction. So, I had no idea what

> to do. I think I probably would have been a person who was better off not going to college right away, but my parents didn't go to college and it was a really important for them that all of us went. So they were like, you're going. And that's it. So I really wasn't ready to make a decision. My sister was in Elementary Education, Special Education. She suggested I do that. So, I went to college and was having some problems with depression. I kept thinking that a change of environment was going to fix things. So, I went from place to place. I never stayed anywhere longer than a year until [state]. I stayed there the last two years and graduated. But I changed my major about halfway through to Community Health, which I really liked, but I still didn't really know what I wanted to do. I was a Women's Studies minor so I thought, a job at Planned Parenthood or doing something like that sounded really interesting to me. Until I found out that they paid like five bucks an hour. And I kind of needed to live. So, when I got out of school it was really hard to find a job because it was a rural area and a lot of people who went to school there tended to stay. So there were not a ton of jobs.

Fed up with small town attitudes and lack of opportunity, Josephine's depression worsened as her options seemed to her narrow and unrewarding. She was ready for a change but spoke of feeling lost and trapped. A fortuitous conversation with a patient at the medical office where she worked changed the course of her career. Josephine acknowledged her early bias about community college education and shared the following insight,

> I was just working in a doctor's office as a receptionist, and I was just miserable. But there was a patient there who was an instructor in an x-ray program at the community college. I was kind of getting interested in medical things. She suggested that I might like that program. It was funny because my idea about a community college was that it was less than, you know, a university degree. And I had a little bit of an attitude about that, so, I said well you know I have a Bachelor's degree. Why would I want to go back and do that? But I was starting to really feel like I was never going to do anything that I was going to enjoy as far as a job went.

Josephine spoke about the outcome of her decision to return to school and complete a two-year community college degree in Radiologic Science. She underscored how her willingness to put her bias and fears aside and take a risk, ultimately changed the course of her life. Josephine spoke of finding her calling and shared details of her path to teaching and leading in community college via a two-year vocational technical degree,

> So, I went through that program and it really did change my whole life. I mean, it gave me a direction to go. So, I graduated from there and then I worked for several years in the field until the community college had an opening for a faculty position. The faculty there was like, you know, you really work well with students. Since I already had a Bachelor's degree, I met the qualifications. So, I started teaching Radiologic Science at the community college.

Josephine took a circuitous route to what would be a life-time career as a teacher and leader in community college. After teaching for two years in the Mid-west small town community college, she packed up and moved to the West coast with her partner, Sara, after successfully applying for and being offered her a position as a tenure faculty member where she currently works. After two years, the Director of the Radiologic Science Program left and she was offered the Directorship. Josephine has held this position now for four years and has been a successful leader at her current community college for the past 19 years.

Points of Personal Transition and Transformation

Small town living was tough for Josephine. Most of the time Josephine felt she had to be closeted about being lesbian whether it was in her career or about remaining safe in what she described as an unpredictable and sometimes vengeful

environment and community. However, graduating with her Associate of Science Degree in Radiologic Science and after accepting the teaching position at the same community college, her depression had diminished and her self confidence increased with her acceptance of a new career as a full-time instructor in Radiologic Science. Josephine decided to come out to most with whom she worked each day. She talked of feeling far more sure of herself and looking forward to her work each day like never before. However, as an instructor in the Radiologic Technology vocation, Josephine was expected to teach at clinical sites located in area hospitals and clinics. It was immediately clear to Josephine that the environment at the non-college sites was unpredictable at best and potentially punitive and violent at the worst. Josephine spoke of the "nightmare" she encountered at one such clinic site.

> So when I had that job and I was out at the college, I was doing clinical instruction at two different hospitals. And one of them, it was a horrible nightmare working there. The chief radiologist was a total homophobe and told gay jokes constantly. And this was the hospital were Matthew Sheppard (See Glossary for full definition) would later die. You know, I'm like, oh great, just to make it even a thousand times worse. Well, you know, since I was out at the college where I worked, it was kind of like known that I was gay. But at the clinic site, there were probably four people in that department, technologists, who were also gay or lesbian, and they specifically came to me and said to me, 'look, we like our jobs. We want to keep our jobs. You cannot be out here..." You know, it was a weird position to be in because I was not an employee of the hospital and they were. I felt like if I said anything about this guy's behavior… like this Radiologist was such an asshole, and he should not be allowed to work here with people when he is like this. I felt like if I made trouble, it would impact them because you know…I mean the worst that could happen to me is the clinic site administrators could say, 'don't send her here,' but I didn't get my paycheck there. And the four gay technologists, these were all people who worked there…

Josephine and I talked about the impact of her choice to heed her clinic colleague's pleas to remain closeted in the hospital clinic environment where she taught and trained her community college students throughout the week. She talked of her internal struggle with this choice to not come out and of what it was like to endure day after day of ridicule from the one person who should be modeling healthy behaviors instead of spewing destructive ones of divisiveness and hate. Josephine described the emotional torture she and the four others who shared her lesbian and gay culture felt in their work environment via the words and gestures of the chief radiologist in charge of the clinic site. She spoke of feeling torn by her own convictions to be all of who she was as a leader in community college versus the pleas from her clinic site colleagues who begged her not to come out for fear of retribution. I asked Josephine to talk more about how it felt to work under these conditions and about what she thought would have happened to the clinic technologists if she had come out in the clinic worksite. In her words,

> Well, they probably had a legitimate fear that they would be fired. I really honestly believe that. You know, and I'm sure he [the chief radiologist] knew I was lesbian. He did it [ridiculed via gay jokes and slurs] because that's how he controlled people. He was controlling their behavior and he also made a lot of racist jokes. There was not any person of color that worked there except for housekeeping staff. So you know, he would say stuff in front of technologists and me but not in front of the housekeeping staff. And nobody, *nobody* called him on it. There was a tech there who used to refer to the secretaries as the *sex*retaries. And you know, people would laugh. Nobody said anything. It was just this horrible place to be because I felt like if I said something people could get fired. And part of my problem was that I was brand new. I didn't feel like I was very skilled. And I think that if I had felt like super tech, super instructor, I would have maybe had more courage. But because I felt like I didn't really know what I was doing yet, it was really hard.

Josephine sat in front of me that day in her office as we forged through the interview process. Through her actions, words, and long list of accomplishments over the past 23 years, her confidence, skills, and self assuredness was unmistakable, as was her humility. A kind of personal transformation had happened for Josephine from who she had been as the intimidated new teacher who protected the fate of her colleagues through self-imposed silence in the face of ridicule to one who had today reached the "super tech and instructor" level she had sought. To this regard, I asked Josephine to describe what differences she saw in her present day leadership in community college as opposed to the early days she spent teaching in the rural clinical site she had just described. In her words, she described her transformation,

> You know, it's really different now because I feel like, I feel very accomplished. I feel like I'm good at what I do. I feel like I have unique skills. So it's much easier for me at this point in my life to just say, "I don't care what people think." You know, and of course living and working where I do now is a whole different world than where I lived then in the mid-west.

Personal Disclosure

> *Could it be you ask too much lovable lady?*
> *From a world that's out of touch, beautiful woman*
> *So you're hammering at a door that will not open*
> *And your beautiful soul is weeping (*Margie Adam, 1974)

Upon reading the next few pages, the importance of including my personal disclosure in this dissertation is evident given the critical role that bias plays in a qualitative critical ethnographic study wherein "it is essential that researchers define their position before embarking on an ethnographic study, [and wherein]…a researcher's philosophic stance determines what he or she will study as well as the

framework for data collection and analysis" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 146). Also, the literature and citations included within this study intrinsically share, and in many ways describe, aspects of my life story, or *storjourn*, thus far.

My educational background includes the study of world literature, English, organizational development, adult education, and higher education administration. My first home was a trailer. I am the youngest of three siblings, and I was born on February 21, 1961. Our house was parked on an angled strip of asphalt on a single-lane cul-de-sac in Southeast Portland. My earliest memory is of playing with my big brother and rolling a round, white hassock up and down the narrow hallway that connected my parent's bedroom at the rear to our tiny kitchen at the trailer's bow. My family eventually moved to what was then a farming community and middle-class suburb of Beaverton called Progress, Oregon. In a neighborhood full of grade school aged children, I was the only child whose parents both worked full-time. During the week, my mom did not get home until early evening. I remember my friends frequently asking me why my mom was not home to make us an after-school snack. I developed a feeling of abandonment and recall secretly wishing that she would stay at home like all of the other moms on my block.

My father was diagnosed with diabetes when I was 10. Largely uncontrolled, my father's mood, voice, and behavior rose and dipped in correlation with his erratic blood sugar levels. Much like communicating with a practicing alcoholic, I learned to read between the lines, navigate the unpredictable, tiptoe around volatile issues, and respond to the dictates of a command and control style of parenting. I was often

left feeling constrained, unlistened to, unfairly judged, and powerless. While I did well academically, I frequently struggled with those in authoritative roles. I recurrently vacillated between overachieving and pleasing those in command, and wholly rebelling against restrictive rules and being told what to do.

At age13, I recall opening my parents' bar for no apparent reason and gulping swigs of scotch and bourbon before school. This soon became habit along with stashing vodka in my school locker for lunch outings. That summer I experienced my first crush, which was far from typical and disparately unlike the crushes my girlfriends at school were experiencing with boys. I liked another girl. I had met her while visiting an out of town friend. I recall the embarrassment and shame I felt when a few months after we met, my mother probed for answers regarding long-distant phone calls and copious letters posted via mail each week to my new friend. The tone of my mom's voice, not her questions, told me that there was something profoundly wrong with my behavior and therefore profoundly wrong with how I felt about this girl.

Heavy drinking, speed, acid, and pot helped to drown my sexuality and anesthetize my emotions, as did overeating. For as long as I can remember, food was always my first drug of choice, which often led to emotional torment. For instance, I remember my father calling me "Chubs" and "Rhino Ass" since early childhood as if these were terms of endearment. Later in high school, my softball coach explained that I was one of the best on the team, but that he could not use me because he did not "want any fat girls" out on the field—he said it did not bode well for the team

image. Today, I believe that shame and self-loathing around my lesbianism coupled with my body image led me to commit countless drunken and dangerous acts. Good grades and lettering in sports kept my parents and teachers at bay and in the dark.

At age 22, and after nearly 10 years of abuse, I stopped drinking and drugging. As the fog lifted, I had to face who I really was, am, and always have been. Integrity, honesty, love, rectitude, trust, goodness, relationship, and personal responsibility, values that I hold dear today, were integral in my decision to end a 4-year marriage to a man and to fully embrace my true core identity as lesbian. I had made a decision that was extremely painful, yet I was in alignment with what my father had instilled in me since childhood: *to thine own self be true*. Ironically, almost immediately upon coming out to my parents (telling them I was a lesbian), they disowned me and did not speak to me or see me again for nearly four years. It took decades to mend, bridge, and resolve the mutual hurt and disappointment around my coming out and being lesbian.

Not long after I fully acknowledged my core identity as lesbian, I began attending a food disorder group to address my issues around overeating. I attended a group for some time until one day a few months later my therapist suggested individual counseling. At one such counseling session, I was raped by my therapist. The fallout of this horror nearly stole away my soul and my life. The trauma and emergence of deep self hatred sent me spiraling into a place only rape victims know, a place from which they pray that they some day may escape. I felt unfathomable

shame, humiliation, and betrayal. Visceral fear of losing my own perception of self-identity gave me the courage to fight back, forgive, and evolve beyond survivor.

Many themes continue to weave their way in my leadership experience and life's web, including, optimism, integrity, love, courage, immense passion and a worldview that calls for social justice, action, cultural and educational equity, and that sees all people inextricably connected and sharing in what it means to be human. My history and experience as I have described them in this personal disclosure serve to support and empathize with those lesbian leaders whose voices have been heard, and whose stories have been told, as a result of this research.

For over 24 years as an out lesbian in this society, and most specifically as a leader at my community college(s), I have experienced life from the margins. The dominant heterosexual culture has continuously attempted to dictate the rules and tell me what I can and cannot do. Throughout my life as a lesbian, I have been called names, spit on, threatened, unjustly terminated specifically because I am a lesbian, treated with inequity under local and national laws, denied due promotions, denied due process, and made to feel unsafe in my own college (work setting), neighborhood, state, and country. This is because of the bigotry, ignorance, and hatred that is allowed by and exists in those who have yet to understand or accept lesbians as full members of humankind. I submit that themes of my childhood such as abandonment, not fitting in, constraint, not being listened to, not being good enough, oppression, unfair judgment, and powerlessness are inner themes shared by many lesbians who are leaders within community colleges. I sought to find the

changes lesbian leaders have made through measures of influence and transformation at their respective community colleges in order that someday their acts of leadership may be replicated at community colleges across the United States.

I have tremendous passion for life and believe whole-heartedly in the goodness of all people. My history and experience tells me that like me, people strive to learn, evolve, and transform themselves and others for the better. I am duly aware that my life experiences color and bias my perception. However, it is my firm belief that my background, culture, and bias serves to strengthen this study, and that my 15 years of work experience and success as a lesbian leader in community college(s) lends certifiable credibility to the study as a whole.

Section I Summary

Boleman and Deal (2001) write that leaders must, "search for meaning, passion, and a sense of life's deeper, spiritual purpose." Individuals and leaders who think, act, or lead from a place of what I perceive as spiritual bankruptcy, bigotry, narrow thinking, and social injustice either do it out of deliberateness or ignorance. It was my intention through this study to effect a change by opening up the voices and experiences of those lesbian leaders who have and continue to influence and transform the dominant culture of their respective community colleges. This study gives a voice to those who have largely been silenced (the silent minority). The courageous lesbian leaders in this study who shared their storjourns and how they influenced and transformed their cultures by their action rather than reaction (or no action) effectively influenced and transformed the inequitable cultures of all

community colleges nationwide, not just their own. Their willingness to stand up and be counted, to have their voices be heard beyond the safety of their office walls, has provided other lesbian leaders a pathway to follow and tools to use in order to become and continue to be wholly successful leaders. In this way, this research has informed and transformed higher education on the subject of lesbian leadership as related to social justice, tools of action, and educational and cultural equity forever. We just "can't turn back."

Section II: Lesbian Leader Interview Themes

> *Is it worth the price we pay, or the lives we lost along the way?*
> *The only answer I can see, it's got to be*
> *For I have seen the vision and I can't turn back, can't turn back,*
> *And all my dreams are riding tonight, can't turn back, turn back,*
> *I know where I've been, you won't scare me back in,*
> *That old closet cannot hold me again, for I have come to win,*
> *For I have seen the vision and I can't turn back, can't turn back,*
> *And all my dreams are rising tonight, can't turn back, turn back.*
> *(*Meg Christian, Carnegie Hall, 1978)

Section II presents the findings thematically as a microethnographical accounting associated with the study's two research questions: (1) What ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges *influence* the dominant heterosexual community college culture? (2) What ways do lesbian leaders of community colleges *transform* the dominant heterosexual community college culture? The research questions were used to focus and guide the analysis while emerging themes served in showing similarities among each participants' cultural application as lesbians and their storjourn as out lesbian leaders in community college. I went through a rigorous process to reduce the themes to six profound themes. The following six themes

emerged as common to all participants' experience as lesbian leaders in community college: Relationship Building and Coming Out in the Workplace; Safety; Mentorship; Policy and Power; Influencing Community College Culture; and Transforming Community College Culture. In addition to revealing thematic commonalities, Section II divulges and makes public the actions, pathways and tools that these five lesbian leaders in community colleges used to influence and transform their respective community college cultures in terms of social, cultural, and educational justice and equity. Their actions have proved to be successful on a daily basis and throughout the progression of their careers as out lesbian leaders. These pathways and tools were made public through this study for all other lesbian leaders to follow and use, such that they become or remain out lesbian leaders who bring their whole selves to the leadership experience each day so as to influence and transform their respective community colleges across the country.

Relationship Building and Coming Out in the Workplace

Every leader participant told about how they came out to colleagues and students, why they came out, and the critical role that coming out played in their ability to be successful in building relationships within the community college environment and structure. The way each lesbian leader chose to come out in a variety of settings differed, however all participants spoke about a common focus: to build relationships with others with the purpose of developing and maintaining trusting relationships towards a more inclusive community college environment. Savannah described a time in a staff meeting wherein a self-identified Latino co-

worker shared with his colleagues his experience with local police profiling. He talked about how many times he had been pulled over on his way driving to or from their college campus. Savannah could see and hear from her colleagues' reactions that they "were still not getting it." Savannah realized in the moment that one way to support her Latino colleague would be to divulge her own diversity and experience of oppression,

> Because people were still not getting it. And people were not understanding about profiling and racism. So all of a sudden I was aware that I was about to disclose that I was a lesbian. So I said you know when I first got this job, I know that some of you all really, really, really, didn't want me. And I can't help but wonder if it's because I was a lesbian. But, nobody said a word, nobody said a word. And then afterwards maybe only two people came up to me to say thanks.

The experience of having to repeatedly come out in their workplace over and over throughout their career as new faculty, students, staff, and administrators entered the participants' work lives was common to all the participants including Savannah. Although all leaders told me about the mental and physical exhaustion they experienced as a result of constantly assessing and divulging their lesbian identity, all participants also spoke of using these moments of coming out as a means for broadening their colleague's and college's experience of diversity in general. This was done intentionally and unintentionally. That is to say, as opposed to only focusing on their own experience with the hegemonic culture they worked within, the participants all expanded their intent when choosing to come out to contribute to a more multiculturally aware community college culture by sharing about their own identity as lesbian. As the excerpt from Savannah's storjourn above connotes,

participants such as Savannah succeeded in influencing multicultural awareness and inclusivity on campus by revealing that they were lesbian and simultaneously championing those college members who also represented marginalized or *othered* members or groups on campus.

Each leader told me about a visceral feeling of fear and exhilaration just prior to coming out in a large community college related group event or an intimate staff development workshop. None planned the moment in advance per se, but all participants shared at least one or more such stories with me during our interview sessions. Each told me how they realized only moments before they spoke to a group at their campus that they suddenly felt compelled in the moment to speak their truth for the good of all. They talked of the need not just to speak out regarding their own lesbianism and sense of authenticity, but more importantly their need to stand up and be counted alongside those who felt othered. Leaders said they spoke out in this way to build collegial relationships and increase acceptance and cultural awareness of those like themselves who were "different" than what was considered the norm at their college. To this regard, Rhoda shared an intense experience that exemplifies one of these moments. In Rhoda's words,

> This president, the one I ended up coming out to, he was a compassionate person and he stepped in as an interim; it felt like a new day [in contrast to the president that did not want to give Rhoda tenure because he thought she "was a lesbian"]. It was at a time when gay rights issues were big in our community and whole state. So, I just felt it was time you know? I was feeling more open and more like what can be so bad about me being an open lesbian at the college? The day I actually came out in a meeting to large group of people, there were probably 90 to 100 people in that room that day, and it was probably two years after I got my tenure. We were having a

> sensitivity training they called it in those days—I think it was really more aimed at cultural diversity around racial diversity, which is always kind of what the college meant by diversity. They never really thought about a broader perspective, so I felt like that was something I had to offer broadening the dialogue about diversity and that it didn't mean just racial diversity. The reality was in this community it meant every kind of diversity. It meant the hippies versus the loggers; there were cultures within those two communities that were powerful and they hated each other. There were all kinds of groups and different dynamics, and then of course there were the political parties. But the issue of sexual orientation was not one that was ever on the table. Sexual orientation was never even discussed as being part of diversity. I remember thinking to myself in that moment that day, 'I'm going to *have* to address this because I can't sit here and act like I'm not part of a minority that should be recognized!' I remember very clearly sitting in this one lecture hall and thinking to myself, 'I'm going to say something today, I can feel it coming, I can just feel it!'

Rhoda's voice raised and her eyes widened as she told me about the electric energy in the room that felt good and positive—ripe for the testimony she felt compelled to speak to 100 or more faculty, staff, and administrators present that day in the staff development forum. Rhoda continues,

> It was happening! I just thought, now's the time! So, I just sort of said this statement out loud about, 'As a member of *another community*, as a lesbian, and as a member of that cultural diverse community...' And you know there were people in the room that day that were just falling over, but I just kept talking. The people in the room that knew me, well of course they came up afterwards and said, 'Way to go Rhoda!' I said, 'I knew it was coming out, I could feel it coming!' I was sitting right next to a guy that day who was a new Director of Human Resources under our new President and he just never missed a beat he just leaned over to me after I spoke out and he just said "Rhoda, I'm really glad you said that and I'm really glad you broadened the dialogue."

Similar to Rhoda's experience, Savannah told me about the deep concern she felt during a staff meeting when she and her colleagues were asked to share

something that was “different” about them. Disappointed at the lack of awareness in the room regarding what the word “different” meant and wanting to broaden her colleagues’ perspective of diversity, Savannah describes the feeling she had just before she came out to her entire Counseling and Advising Department, stating, “I really feared I was going to have a heart attack.” The story in Savannah’s words,

> This was at our very last meeting of that year and it was a staff development on diversity. And one of the questions to everyone in the group was, ‘When did you first know you were different?’ And we were all to sit there and write and think about it and write out what it was about each of us that was different. And my heart started pounding in such a profound way that I really feared I was going to have a heart attack. I didn't know what I was going to do. It makes me choked up now just to think about it. I looked at [our President] like can you read my mind? I mean, I really, I thought I was going to have a heart attack. And then they were asking people to share about what was different about them. And one person said well, ‘I lived in a little bitty town, and I've moved to a city.’ I mean they were saying things that I felt weren’t that profound, you know? So, just about when they were going to go on to another subject I finally said, ‘I have to say something.’ And I got choked up. And I said to everyone there, ‘I knew I was different in the seventh grade when I had a big crush on Bonnie Hackett.’ And then I fell apart. And I got all worked up. I mean these people in the room with me that day at the college, my colleagues; they are people I love for the most part. And everybody, they were all crying after I talked the people were just crying. At the end of it all everybody but two people came to me with open arms.

All leaders told these particular stories of coming out in their workplace and building relationships with amazing detail and visible emotion. These were and remain profound experiences in their lives. The leaders stated that even today, in some cases years after they came out in these big ways, students and college colleagues mention the impact that particular moment had for them and their subsequent experience at the college.

Safety

Safety was a tangible and somber theme that permeated the fundamental core of each lesbian leader's storjourn in life and work. Safety was spoken about multiple times through every interview by every leader on virtually every level from personal safety to professional safety, from student's safety to college-wide and community/world-wide safety. Josephine said she consciously thinks about safety when she sees a gay or lesbian student or somebody who identifies as other than heterosexual. She immediately thinks about how she might help them to feel more comfortable in the classroom or college environment. As the Director of their Radiologic Science Program and their instructor, Josephine stated, "I do I feel protective I don't want students to have a bad experience here. Where I used to work at a community college in the Midwest, I would have wanted to wrap students up in armor and send them to school. Here, I don't feel like that's as big a concern." When asked about the possibility of violence and being singled out, Josephine's response was similar to that of the other leaders as she noted, "Yes, it could happen here. So…Yeah, I know what it feels like to not be included or not be allowed in. I mean it's different than race. Although it's similar because, you know, people hate you just because of who you are." Being hated for no reason other than that they were lesbian was felt and experienced pervasively by the leaders. Gloria spoke of a recent incident involving a student who was violently acting out on campus. She said she thought twice about staying late on campus for a number of weeks, not knowing if he would target her because she is an out lesbian.

Zora spoke of a policy she sought to help improve the situation on campus because of acts of violence involving defaced posters she saw, which were brought to her by students from the Queer Student Alliance student organization on her campus. In her words,

> There was one issue; we were having problems on campus every time we put up flyers on campus about LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender] meetings. The flyers were being slashed and defaced. So I was involved in trying to help make policy on campus about that. And about bringing that to the forefront and making sure that it got the visibility that it needed to have. Because it was sort of simmering, the students noticed nothing was being done about it. The throats of the people pictured on the flyers were being slashed. The posters had these two women holding a little girl and the women's throats were slashed and their hearts were carved out. This creates an unsafe environment. This is not safe.

Zora talked about being shocked when she saw the posters and immediately thinking, "This has to STOP! I was sort of numb…I just thought, this is not okay, not okay. So somehow we need to take action." As with the other leaders in this study, Zora did take action and met with her immediate supervisor, the vice president "to bring visibility to the highest level, the vice president and president, to make sure they were aware of the issue and to make sure they were going to deal with it." Zora recounted her meeting with the vice president and stated, "I remember talking about feeling unsafe. I remember saying, 'This is a big deal. This is a big deal. Don't ignore this.' I remember saying something about one of our missions is to be inclusive at our college, and this will keep that from happening and we do not address this." When I questioned Zora as to whether the figures printed on hundreds of other posters posted on campus were getting their heads sliced off or their hearts

cut out, or if they were ever defaced in any way, Zora stated, "no, just *these* posters, just the LGBT posters." I asked if Zora remembered her vice president's response that day when Zora brought the violated posters to her attention. In Zora's words,

> I remember that she [college vice president] heard me. The look on her face, she stopped what she was doing. Three quarters of the time when we met for our weekly standing meetings, she couldn't keep from shuffling papers or prepping for her next meeting that was coming up. It was a very rare moment when she'd stop and focus. She stopped. And I felt like she actually heard. She stopped, she listened, and I thought…okay. She knew it was personal. I didn't make any attempts to hide that. It was just very...I think I said something like, 'as a lesbian woman this is terrifying and you've got to do something about it.'

Two lesbians were murdered in a town located only a few miles from Rhoda's college campus in 1995. It was reported that the killer saw an add in the local paper placed by one of the women who was a real estate agent, and whose ad indicated she was a lesbian realtor serving the gay community. The killer admitted to luring both the real estate agent and her partner to a home where he bound and gagged them, then shot them dead in their own truck. Rhoda talked about the impact the murders had on her partner Sara and their life and workplace. Both Rhoda and Sara were working at the college at the time that this killer with an MBA from Golden Gate University was arrested for murdering the two lesbians. Rhoda said, "The campus is only a part of the community you exist in. So, even though you would probably say it borders on a more liberal part of the community a little bit, it's still just a reflection of the community. We lesbians were nervous at community college, which is really only a reflection that lesbians were nervous all over the state.

I mean when the two women were killed in our city that had a profound impact on everybody here." Rhoda was campus President at the time that the murders took place. Rhoda made clear that the fear was palpable for lesbians on and off campus. In her own words,

> You know that scared everyone (the murder of two out lesbians), and it scared us…we were scared Sara and I were scared and it was during a time in our state when the anti-gay measures were still going on and [political] signs were everywhere reminding you that it wasn't okay to be gay. You know I had visions sometimes of coming home and finding either our property on fire or some thing sprayed across our gate or you really were afraid there was real fear and fear of death. We had friends that would call, straight friends, and say, 'Is there anything we can do? This seems so scary this whole thing is so awful and so scary.'

Rhoda told how everyone felt frightened and vulnerable after the two lesbian women were murdered only miles from her home and college campus. She talked of being scared and angry all at once. She mentioned her frustration at those who told her, 'Rhoda you should do this or you should stand up and say this or that' in response to the murders in her community. Rhoda had been an outspoken leader in her college and community and it seems there was an expectation that she would do something however Rhoda retorted, "NO you don't get it! I have to watch out for my physical safety, I have to watch out for my partner's safety." Rhoda spoke of her partner and her raising their two sons and how she cautioned others at the time of the murders, "You have to be aware. You can't just be some stupid idiot that's not paying attention to what's going on in our town or our state around how

lesbians are being treated." It was "very scary times" for Rhoda, her family, and her community. She describes reactions from her country neighbors,

> So, I think people were nervous. You know we have one friend on the other street over there she wanted to come over and smudge our place and our other neighbor up on the hill who's a motorcycle riding guy, great big guy. He wanted to come and beat the hell out of anybody who might try to mess with his neighbor girls. You know, that's where you live, you live in the middle of this kind of hippy awareness and wonderful energy kind of thing and then you live with a guy who rides a motorcycle who just loves you because he loves you and if anybody fucks with you he's going to beat the shit out of them. He's just like that, and that is this community and you know, love it or leave it I guess.

Rhoda talked of feeling pressured to do more and speak out on the murders. She was encouraged to out others and to rally a group together to fight the bigotry and quell the fears. She describes her thoughts,

> Some will say 'You ought to come out; you ought to do this or that.' I've always been respectful of where people are. I have no idea what shoes you really walk in at your house or in your neighborhood or in your family. I don't know. So, I'm not going to tell you how you ought to do it. You can look at me and I will try to be the best role model I can be. And I will try to live my life honorably knowing that I am a role model; but I will NEVER tell you how you ought to live your life...and I think that's just...that's who I am I guess.

We both sat in silence for a moment. After Rhoda's account of how she, her partner, and lesbians on campus and in the community were impacted by the senseless murder of a local lesbian couple, Rhoda went on to talk about continuing to work tirelessly to overturn repeated state bills and measures that were enacted every election with the sole purpose of diminishing or eliminating civil rights for lesbians and gays in her state.

Josephine, Savannah, Zora, Rhoda, and Gloria all repeatedly told stories throughout their storjourns related to issues of safety. All leaders expressed a similar and somber wish—that some day laws that protect lesbians as well as anyone who identifies as other than heterosexual will be written and upheld at the federal, state, and local levels of the United States.

Mentorship

A theme that arose amid the storjourns of the leaders is mentorship and the role mentorship plays in their careers or in the success of those they have mentored as out lesbian leaders in their respective institutions. The participants often spoke of being pioneer-like lesbian leaders who felt they had to cut their own swath and develop their own pathways through the intricate and often homophobic, heteronormative, community college culture and systems. However, in every instance, the leaders in this study indicated the importance of several key, heterosexual, mentors in their lives who made a difference just at a most critical moment in their careers. To this regard, when asked about mentors in her career, Gloria shared in her words,

> This dean who first hired me after I got my Master's degree, she's the person who encouraged me to get my doctorate. She said she, you may be very competent, but without your doctorate nobody's willing to give you a second look because there's too much competition out there. She was a white woman married to a black man. He was a professor. I was Hispanic and lesbian but not out to her. I think she was someone who really understood the inequities in higher education and our society.

Savannah and Rhoda have worked at their respective colleges for a combined total of nearly 55 years. In their time as college leaders, both spoke of many college

presidents coming and leaving throughout their careers. In common, however, the two of them spoke passionately about a critical relationship they each built with one president in particular at their college who made a difference in their career and their ability to influence and transform their college culture. Rhoda spoke of a white, male, Jewish, heterosexual president, Steve. She could "tell him anything" and count on him to "support me and also always give me the truth." Steve ultimately played a key part in Rhoda's leadership role when he asked her to be President/Executive Dean of a large, sister campus in the District. Rhoda felt that Steve understood her skills, her passion for student success in community college, and he recognized her ability to bridge differing communities and diverse groups. In her words,

> When Steve talked to me about it, and he said this is what I want to do, I want to make this the president of this campus. We call them the executive deans and I want you to take this campus because I think it's going to be the hardest of the jobs because this was where most of the old-time faculty is. They're not going to adjust well to some of the changes, and I think you have the ability, the power to bring these people along who have different opinions.

Similarly, Savannah speaks of one of her presidents as a great mentor and agent of change in her career and in the college's culture. Rachel has recently retired as president at Savannah's college. However, Savannah and Rachel formed a deep bond over the years that was principally born of issues and events specific to lesbian and gay inclusionary efforts (or exclusionary efforts) on campus. The two forged a leadership team at their college that was profound in their ability to work together to serve and transform their college's cultural awareness and its overall culture as a whole. Savannah referred to their teamwork quite often throughout the telling of her

storjourn. The most profound event that the two collaborated on was creating, facilitating, and championing a video of lesbian and gay colleagues and employees at their college called, *Voices of Courage* (mentioned earlier in Savanna's storjourn, p. 93). In reference to the kind of support Rachel provided Savannah as her mentor, Savannah talked about an email that her President, Rachel, sent out to announce the *Voices of Courage* event. Savannah stated, "There was an original email that went out from Rachel, the president. She really took some grief for this. She sent out the first email inviting people to the first *Voices of Courage* professional development event. She got some pretty disturbing emails in return. One email she got back just said ***B.I.B.L.E***. She took a lot of heat for supporting the event." It is clear to me regarding both participants—Savannah and Rhoda—that their relationship with their respective college presidents included mentoring relationships wherein the role was often reversed, and the mentor learned just as much from the mentee.

Another common thread to all leaders was the role they themselves played as mentors to other students, staff, or faculty at their colleges. One such story Savannah told occurred a year after the showing of the *Voices of Courage* video in which 16 formerly closeted lesbian and gay employees at Savannah's community college agreed to be interviewed on video tape and then participate in an open forum facilitated by the college president. More than 500 faculty and staff viewed the video in two sessions and interacted in the answer and question panel session. The woman Savannah mentions below is one of those employee colleagues, who came to the staff development day and experienced the *Voices of Courage* event. Even 4 years

later, Savannah continues to be surprised by how many students, staff, faculty, administrators, and state and national colleagues have been impacted by this amazing event envisioned and brought to life by Savannah's own courage. Below is just one example. In Savannah's words,

> Probably about a year after the video this woman from the business office comes down and tells me, 'I recently married, and my husband's daughter and her partner are pregnant.' It was near Mother's Day and the woman asked me, 'Do you think I should give a card to just the one who's pregnant? Or do I give a card to both my daughter-in-law and her partner?' And I love that because this was what it was all about. We wanted people to have conversations about it. I love that she asked this question because this is what it was all about for us; and that's what we kept saying. We want people to have the conversations with each other. We want people to open up so we can talk about being lesbian and gay or homophobia or feeling uncomfortable, or whatever. We can ask questions. And it made me so happy that she asked me that about the cards! I mean this is a year later as she felt safe to come ask me that question. It just made me happy; I just thought this is great!

The transformation of all lives touched by *Voices of Courage* continues to this day. Savannah said she feels that the event is now woven and imbedded into the cultural fabric of her community college.

Rhoda also spoke about a poignant moment wherein she realized the impact of her mentorship and the transformation that came of her leadership specific to her lesbianism. Rhoda had championed the initiation of a queer student organization on campus, which was born out of the outcry and lesbian and gay community-wide response to the murder of two out lesbians only a short distance from their campus. The two women were partnered and were well known and loved as parents to their children and activists of peace and diversity. Rhoda spoke of a positive outcome that

occurred as a result of mentoring a lesbian student on her campus. Rhoda said that after the aforementioned lesbians were murdered, she saw in her student mentee (and from others on campus who did not normally talk about lesbian and gay issues) a "kind of a compassionate thing that happened that I think was real; you could feel it." Rhoda talked of her pain and the realization of how violent people could be "when they act on their hatred" and how "in a lot of ways, it changed some hearts really." I asked her to talk more about the change and how her role as mentor helped to bring about that change. Rhoda stated,

> I think it was the beginning of some greater change here with our students. It was powerful for them because I think the queer club and a lot of the different things came out around that time, came out then. And you know some of the women that were most active in the club and even the people that ran it, some of them were our former students of mine, which really made me proud to think that our lesbians were stepping up to take it on—to be more out and to be more political. One student in particular that I really mentored for a lot of years when she was with us at college, she has ended up being a very vocal leader in the community. Now she's a member of the staff down at the college and very, very out, very political. I think that's the influence that you have maybe as time goes on, that people saw you take hard steps [as a community college leader] and what was hard in my day, they wouldn't even recognize as hard now, the same thing with feminism.

Power and Policy

The lesbian leaders participating in this study have worked a combined number of approximately 105 years of leadership and service in community colleges. All leaders talked about a noticeable difference between how they define their power now in comparison to when they first began their respective positions in community college. As example, when asked about her power and who has the power at her

college, Savannah answered in her Texan drawl, stating, “I don't know, I think I'm pretty lucky because I've been here a long time and I like people and so people like me. What you put out you get back.” Each leader held in common a belief that her sense of personal and professional power increased as her own understanding of who she was as a person, as a leader, and as a lesbian gained in clarity. To this regard, Savannah talked numerous times of her ability to have a direct line of communication with nearly all presidents who presided in her 32 year career at her college regardless of her changing position title. She spoke of her ability to connect with and be more open with each successive president as presidents took their posts and as Savannah’s years in service accumulated. Savannah remained humble in her reasons for why she had such influence and why she had the ear of her college’s highest leader. She would not describe her influence as power, although anyone else probably would. Savannah’s response to the question, ‘Who has the power at her college’ tells it all when her Southern colloquialisms are deconstructed. I only had to look into her sage eyes alive with passion, hear the authenticity imbedded in her every word, and feel the remarkable truth that flowed nonverbally from her effortless smile to know why presidents and thousands of students and colleagues would most certainly describe Savannah as one who has power at their college.

Similarly to Savannah, Gloria talks of the difference she has felt in her sense of power as the years have begun to add up. She has been an out lesbian Executive Vice President of Instruction at her college now for 6 years. In her words, Gloria is

the "highest ranking lesbian at the college," and such a statement is evidence of her increasing sense of professional power. In her words,

> I think it helps that I've been there for 6 years. I think when you've been someplace that long…Like if you asked me this question in 2001, it might be a different answer. I think I was still finding my power in 2001. Probably I wouldn't be as sure of myself around faculty. I was probably a little more tentative about not offending faculty or staying on their good side. Now I feel very self confident that I am the vice president, that I'm in charge, that I can tell the faculty not to do something. And I can set the tone. Not as easy my first two years.

Zora had become adamant about retaining her own sense of authenticity and personal power; her answer was immediate regarding who had the power on her campus. Zora stated, "The power at our community college is held by one person, and that is our president. She is old school." Zora spoke about her president's influence on the educational environment and differences between herself as a lesbian leader and others such as her president who were not lesbian but in a position of power and influence. Zora explained how her president demonstrated her power and the differences in their application of power as leaders on campus.

> My president yells and she screams. She unfortunately yells and screams before asking questions. She never listens to the answers. So, I have a really hard time with our president. I think she has many great, strong qualities. I think she is really good at raising money. She is really good at working with the legislature really good at that type of thing. But when it comes to leadership, we are at opposite ends of the scale. Within my first month there, we had a huge confrontation. I wrote her a letter because I couldn't confront her—because she doesn't listen. I wrote her a long letter saying I was going to quit because she had threatened me. I didn't even know I had done anything wrong. I just went in there, and she started screaming at me and threatening my job, loud enough that they had to shut the door. I'm like, 'Holy moley!' She didn't even ask me a question! She never asked me what happened, nothing, just yelling.

Zora described her power more in terms of her ability as a leader to empower others. She found her greatest success in terms of her power through her commitment to being an authentic person and leader. Authenticity, such as her decision to come out at the all-staff meeting she held in her first two weeks in her post as Associate Dean at her college, remains her source of influence. Zora told me she is convinced that others are better able to listen and trust her as an out lesbian leader because she is exactly who she claims to be and faculty and staff can see through anything "less authentic."

Josephine is powerful not in her ways of being quick to react but quite the opposite. She is a contemplative leader and says she finds power in her ability to reflect, digest, and then act upon her leadership decisions. She spoke about her habit of waking up very early each morning to write in her journal about particular challenges at work and seeking solutions via her journaling process before exacting her power at work. True to her ways, Josephine had take the list of questions I had provided her prior to our interview to the airport to study the morning before boarding a plane to attend her doctorate courses across the country. She talked about her thoughts regarding her power

> I've been thinking about it. I thought about the question of who has the power or my sense of power Sunday when I was at the airport. I've been thinking about the difference that it makes to have experience and to feel really confident in my abilities and how much that adds to having power. I feel like if I really know what I'm doing and I'm pretty good at what I do then it will be okay. Whereas before, when I was at my job in the Midwest, and I was new to community college teaching, it was like – I don't know. It's hard to articulate. If I

> was an incompetent person *and* I was an out lesbian, then that's really bad. But if I'm a pretty competent person, and I'm good at what I do, then it's not going to impact my ability to have power as much. I don't know it's sort of like I'm representing my people or something. It's easier to be *out* and feel powerful if I know that no one can question my skills.

To all participants, having power also meant having the ability to impact policy at their colleges. Although some leaders were more forthcoming and clear about the power they held at their college all leaders acknowledged they used their power as a way to influence change at the policy level of their institutions. Gloria shares a poignant example of her power and ability to influence policy around the inclusion of sexual orientation in her college's "diversity statement." In her words,

> For me 'diversity' includes a litany of what diversity means including sexual orientation. I think it's important when I'm somehow involved in helping to define diversity, or I'm in a college setting where I'm being questioned about diversity, that I include 'sexual orientation.' I think a lot of people don't value sexual orientation. For example, several years back we were about to hold our interviews for part-time faculty. The director of Human Resources [HR] was developing forms for part-time faculty member's medical leave and job announcement. When I saw the forms the HR Director sent for our review, all of a sudden the term 'sexual orientation' was missing from the College's diversity action statement. I said, 'no this is wrong, sexual orientation is included in our statement.' The director of HR wrote me back and said, 'I'm just following federal standards.' I wrote back and said, 'No, this is not about federal standards, this is about our college's values—and our values include sexual orientation.' I wrote again saying I want to change it. I told her we can go take it to the president with this. The HR director wrote back and said, 'I don't really care how you write it.' So, I did, I re-wrote and changed our college's diversity action statement. And the job announcement for part-time faculty came out with 'sexual orientation' written on it. I honestly don't know who originally took sexual orientation out. To say that we're not following federal law! But that's the kind of thing that I do. When I read our catalog or hiring

> advertisements, I check our diversity statements and look to make sure that we're including 'sexual orientation.'

As a leader, Gloria conveyed a confident and optimistic approach to her work and in our interviews was adamant about the importance of fairness. She conveyed her belief that policies should be and always remain equitable and consistent for all students, staff, faculty, and administrators at her college. However, Gloria talked of her disappointment when recounting repeated instances of policy making that she felt were written or changed to serve only her heterosexual colleagues, leaving her and anyone like her vulnerable to legal disparities and cultural bias. She spoke of her resolve to continuously address the inequities imbedded in old and new college policy and stated, "That's what makes it hard. Maybe it's the political side of decision making. You don't really know who's scratching what out on a policy, or who's comfortable, or who's uncomfortable, but I think as a leader you have to keep bringing it up, and keep asking people to put in the fair language."

Rhoda talked of having been an out lesbian leader at her college an in her community for more than two decades when she said she began really noticing that "sexual orientation wasn't included in our mission statement and wasn't included in our policies at the college." She told me that it "wasn't really until probably the last seven years or so around 2000 that we started really rewriting policies to make sure that they reflected what we wanted them to reflect." It was at that point when Rhoda said she was "pushing hard" to include sexual orientation in all college and board policy "until it became an issue with the board." Rhoda was an Executive Dean of

Instruction/Campus President by this point and present at all cabinet meetings. Rhoda explained,

> We were discussing sexual orientation and policies. Everybody that I worked with knew that I was gay. However, when I asked to have sexual orientation put into policy we didn't know whether or not it could really happen because of the politics of the board and the conservative nature of the community. The board members were using all the buzzwords that people use to never move forward on changing the policy on sexual orientation. You know saying things like, 'Yeah Rhoda, I know that's really important and I totally agree with you but, but, but…'

Rhoda, in common with the experiences of leaders Gloria, Zora, Savannah, described a similar feeling that all described feeling inside when they sat in College Board and administrative meetings "battling out" policy issues on sexual orientation. In one such Board meeting, Rhoda shared how she felt inside during a heated discussion on sexual orientation policy issues. In her words,

> Yeah, I felt like, shit! This is who I am you are dissing me like this sexual orientation policy is nothing important! I remember another time that I felt the same way; it was at a city council meeting here in city where they were trying to do a proclamation to designate one day in our city as Human Diversity Day.

Rhoda said that it was a time in her state when gay rights was a hot political button, and many on the city council, at the college, and in the community were adamantly opposed to adopting a city-wide proclamation celebrating human diversity that would include lesbians and gays. As college president and an active community member, Rhoda knew all of her city council members by name. When it looked as though the proclamation for Human Diversity Day was going to be shelved and sent

to obscurity, Rhoda took up the charge to pass the city proclamation in a passionate dialogue with two city councilwomen. In Rhoda's words,

> A couple of the people on the city council that I knew pretty well said to me, 'Rhoda, you know it's just...fighting this right now, it just feels like we have so many other things in our city we're trying to fight right now.' I remember looking at this one city councilwoman right in the face—she also worked at the college and I knew her—I said to her, 'You know, Sharon, if not now, when? I mean I hate to sound like this is the most important thing in the whole world, but how do you say being lesbian or gay is NOT important? If you're not going to do it now, what are you ever going to stand up for?' Another city council woman there at the time just looked at me. I said 'This is about me! This is about my family! This is my life! This is the lives of many, many 100s of people in this community and if you're going to say that it's less important to fight for our right to be included in this community then why is that? Is it that I'm less important? Is it that who I really am as a person, as a lesbian, is less important?' The other city councilwoman looked at me and said, 'Rhoda, you're right.' Then Sharon, the first city councilwoman, looked over at her because Sharon thought she had an ally in this other councilwoman. But she just looked right back at Sharon and said 'Rhoda's right we have to do this and I'm going support it." And so they did. The city council supported this proclamation and we had a Human Diversity Day. The mayor proclaimed it diversity day for the whole city. Well, there was all kinds of political backlash about it...but you know in the end it happened at the right time. It was a huge battle that we felt we had won.

Whether writing new policy to provide consequences for those who deface LGBT meeting notice posters on college campus, constantly reinstating a sexual orientation clause on a sea of college related HR forms, or fighting city hall to instate a proclamation of Human Diversity Day all leaders in this study were out lesbian leaders who used their professional power in ways that changed policies and provided a more inclusive and equitable culture for all.

Influencing Community College Culture

For the purposes of this study, I have defined i*nfluence* as a manner of leadership that sways or affects the culture of an institution like a subtle to moderate wind—mostly imperceptible or intangible by nature—yet conditioning and persuading nonetheless. All participants talked of many such subtle changes they helped to bring about towards a more inclusive and equitable culture for their college through their leadership. Josephine talked about choosing appropriate moments with her students to mention something about her "partner" in context with the class dialogue or subject. She also spoke of the hundreds of times she corrected her colleagues' racist or homophobic language in the 19 years she has worked in her current community college setting. Zora talked about her work with students and executive administration to help make her campus a safer environment by talking about her own experiences as a lesbian and as an out lesbian leader in corporate and public organizations. I have chosen two specific examples among countless examples I heard in listening to the storjourns of these five lesbian leaders. The first example came from Gloria.

Gloria said that often it was her more subtle leadership decisions or actions that ultimately resulted in swaying and persuading the college culture towards a more inclusive stance. In common with the other leaders, she described well placed comments, suggestions, or informal approvals as opposed to directives that helped her institution to move forward on an idea or action. An example of her ability to influence change is noted in the passage below where Gloria describes a casual

conversation with a few faculty members who wanted to do something to balance out a barrage of Christian oriented posters that Gloria said blanketed nearly every hallway, column, or wall on campus. Gloria's community college is located in what she described on a number of occasions as a "pretty conservative" locale with a strong fundamental Christian community both on and off campus. In her words,

> This one day this faculty member came to me and asked, 'would it be ethical for me to put signs up stating that our college values Muslims, Hispanics, Blacks, etc?' I said, 'Yes, go ahead.' The faculty person asked me if they could talk to someone about how Campus Crusaders for Christ was plastering their signs everywhere. I said, 'Yes.' I told her who to see in Student Services. So, in about two weeks, I saw a decrease in the Campus Crusaders signs and at the same time saw a balance of other religious group's signs.

I asked Gloria if she felt that her decision to pave the way for this faculty member resulted in influencing change towards a more socially or culturally equitable college campus. Gloria replied,

> Yes! We need to bring it up; we need to initiate this kind of change to bring balance and equity. When I was a dean at my last college, the nursing students have a ceremony every quarter. In those 3 ½ years, there were a few students who would say, 'I want to thanks Jesus Christ for getting me through this Nursing Program.' By the time I left after 11 years, it was more like 60% of the students were thanking Jesus Christ. It wasn't good or bad; it just sent a message to other students and the rest of the campus that you must be Christian to be accepted or to be a part of our community college. And that's how it felt like in the beginning at the community college where I work now. But I think we have an obligation to represent the students who may not be as comfortable on campus because they are not equally represented.

The second example of influencing community college culture came from Savanna's storjourn. Savannah also initiated subtle but noticeable change towards a more inclusive community college culture through acts that to her seemed small and

inconsequential. She talked about when she bought some “little glass hearts in a store” approximately 2 ½ years ago. She bought one or two hearts, then and handful more, and so on until over weeks and months she found herself “hiding these glass hearts in places in peoples’ offices when they weren’t looking.” In her words,

> I would hide the little glass hearts among people’s desks when they weren't looking. I'd send them in an envelope in inner-office mail on campus. And nobody knew it was me! Like before board meetings, I would put them out on people’s chairs or on their notepads before the board meeting. Even the people I didn't know I gave one to them. Anyway, it became kind of a fun addiction for about two years now; this thing’s been going on a while now!

We both laughed as Savannah shared her secret good deed. I asked her why she hides the hearts in peoples’ office on campus and she stated,

> Just for fun. Just to make people happy. All of a sudden they would get a little heart and they wouldn't know where it came from. And some people when they found them put them on top of their computer where they can see them, and some people keep them in their pockets now. I think it just makes them feel good to get one and have it. I will just leave them in bizarre places like a computer or bookshelf. And the funny thing is people got to where they noticed that they hadn’t received one of the hearts.

I asked Savannah if she had thought about how this subtle influence, this action of surreptitiously placing colorful glass hearts in peoples’ offices around campus, had anything to do with her being lesbian and specifically being a lesbian leader in community college. Savannah said she did not know if there was a connection. We continued to talk about the possibility of a connection and Savannah talked more about how placing a heart in peoples’ offices was about making people feel good and happy, or perhaps it was really about making sure everyone felt included. Savannah talked about a surprising realization that hit her after a few

months of secretly placing hearts she discovered that those who *did not* receive a heart starting talking about it—they cared and wanted to be included even though they did not know who was doing the good deed. Some people just, "weren't my favorite people" Savannah noted, and "there are thousands of people on campus." However Savannah realized that because they did not know who she was, she really had an opportunity to bring joy to her colleagues' lives regardless of whether they were her favorite people or not. Savannah talks of the moment she realized she needed to give hearts to everyone, including those who had been less than supportive of, or vehemently opposed to, multicultural initiatives on campus. Savannah described one such incident,

> Well, one of the women who really had a hard time with the pink triangles after seeing the Voices in Courage video, she wrote me a lot of mean, long emails. She ended up making a purple triangle to combat the pink triangle and wrote the word 'HOPE.' So, she was one of the people who I wouldn't have given her a heart to. But she said something to someone else about how she had not ever gotten a heart. And that person told me about what she'd said not knowing I was the one placing the hearts. So...so, now she's gotten a number of hearts and she has them sitting right there on the top of her desk. From me! You can tell she feels really good about being included now because she's got hearts like everyone else.

Savannah laughed then became contemplative. The impact of her actions came into focus for Savannah perhaps right in the moment of our interview. For the first time she said she realized that this fun way to make people "feel good" really became a way to bring all people together, even in the case of this woman who was adamantly opposed to including lesbians and gays as an open and included population on campus.

Though there were hundreds of examples of influencing dominant community culture provided in the more than 30 hours of interview tapes from the five lesbian leaders, the preceding examples of Gloria and Savannah' leadership showed they acted in ways that seemed inconsequential at the time yet eventually made a persuasive impact in the dominant culture. To this regard, Gloria approved and supported her faculty members in their request to balance out a dominating distribution of religious posters and messages on campus resulting in posters never before seen popping up on campus supporting Muslim, Jewish, and other cultures or groups. Savannah surreptitiously gave hearts to hundreds of unsuspecting staff, faculty, and board members resulting in a positive change in the person most adamantly opposed to lesbian and gay rights on campus demonstrating a better attitude and collaborative behavior after she too received not just one, but a number of hearts over the past two years since Savannah began giving them out. Both Gloria and Savannah influenced dominant community college culture in ways subtle like a slight breeze, but impacting nonetheless.

Transforming Community College Culture

For the purposes of this study, I have defined *transform* as a manner of leadership that causes obvious or deep-level change to occur like rays of sun to a failing plant, improving and permanently altering the cultural tendencies and patterns of individuals and of institutions in ways that create a metamorphosis, opening the door for social justice, and educational equity. All leaders spoke of moments or events during the course of their work in community college as out lesbian leaders in

which they experienced a profound transformation in their college and themselves as a result of their leadership. None of the leaders had thought about their leadership experiences quite so intentionally as to articulate their leadership as *transformative*. However, through the telling of their storjourns all leaders came to realize and describe in specific detail their inimitable actions that directly contributed to permanently profoundly changing their colleges' culture to be more socially, culturally, and educationally equitable places to learn and work. I have chosen two of the most powerful examples of transformation directly brought about by the leadership of two lesbian leaders: Rhoda and Savannah.

Earlier in this Chapter, Rhoda's story was told of how she came out to her entire college during an all-staff development day. She described sitting in a professional development workshop amid 100 faculty and staff that day when the conversation turned to a discussion on diversity. Rhoda found herself compelled to speak her truth about a kind of diversity that "just never gets talked about." This part of that story belongs under the heading of *transformation* because it was her courage to *come out* to all that day as a Dean of Instruction at her rural college that forever changed the culture and course of the college. I asked Rhoda how she *felt* when she began to speak out loud in that moment on that day when she was about to come out to all colleagues. She acknowledged that everything was on the line. In her words,

> I was scared, my voice quivered and my heart was beating. I was very, very aware of who was around me, who was sitting there…I was aware of the room. It was like this super awareness, and I was measuring and weighing and trying to think of how to say my words—what impact they're going to have.

Rhoda talked of wanting to make who she was "normal" to others. She wanted to come out in a way that "wasn't just like, here's Rhoda holding up a flag." Rhoda explained that she was trying to relate her next words to the topic of diversity in a way that she would be heard and others in the room would make the connection that she and people like her were a part of what is defined as "diverse." Rhoda stated, "I was trying to be appropriate and I wanted whatever came out of me to be related to this whole conversation—not in a way that outing myself was the important part of the conversation. But in many respects, it really was." Rhoda continued her thoughts and talked about the enormity of her actions and of coming out even though she was "the only lesbian administrator ever" that she knew of at her college. In her words,

> I look back on it it was a time a really change thing for me to make this day and for the rest of the campus I think it was huge because there were many other lesbians on the staff and nobody was totally out. I mean there were people that we all knew. There were probably eight to ten lesbians that were full-time faculty and staff members at the college that I knew just in my realm—nursing and business. But nobody had really felt like it was safe to come out. I am sure I was the first lesbian administrator at the college that there ever was, ever.

I asked Rhoda about the impact of her actions and to describe what happened the next day, the next week, and what she saw that changed after she came out to the entire college that day. Rhoda stated, "I would say that probably the biggest impact was really inside of me, a sense of being free and being who I am and being proud of myself." She shared that even in high

school she had never "made up stories" about her life or "faked it by talking about men." Rhoda's voice was strong and engaging, her story engrossing as she talked about sitting there amid 100 faculty and staff with all eyes on her. Rhoda said, "There is still something really big about just telling the truth that day." She said she was proud of herself for having the courage to be herself and stated, "I felt like for the first time in my work life I had stood up, and it felt really freeing. It felt like no more! No more! There was this huge debt piece and huge heart piece lifted for me. I just felt I could take a deep breath again. It was a really good feeling."

As I listened to her story, Rhoda repeated, "This was huge this was huge." She said her peers, "were proud of me and were pleased that the diversity thing was going to be bigger than this constant battle that diversity's only about racial diversity." Rhoda's actions broadened the definition of what was "diverse" at her college and initiated the conversation about changing policies to reflect that expanded definition. She told me that once she came out that day, her colleagues "could see it in their own ways that my coming out and making the connection to *what is diversity* would have a positive impact." Rhoda then made the connection between her own transformation that day and the college-wide transformation that came that day and the days and weeks and years later as a direct result of Rhoda coming out. In her words,

> I think every body felt maybe that this was the beginning of something important about our culture at the college. I think friends

> especially felt proud that I had spoken up even though it was hard and scary. After I spoke it wasn't only about a diversity workshop or diversity day. After I came out and told the truth about who I am and how being lesbian was connected to our discussion on diversity, the dialogue on diversity got bigger than people expected and in a good way. It was the beginning of people feeling free to talk more about their own feelings and being a part of a culture that nobody had ever recognized as theirs, whether they were southern, or black, or had grown up poor or whatever it was they related in to in common with another group. People connected what I said to their own uniqueness, and they had a sense that maybe there was a bigger dialogue about to happen at our college now.

Rhoda's leadership that she later realized led to college-wide transformation was unintentional and unplanned. However, Savannah had a dream of doing something intentional that she would also describe during her storjourn as "really big!" Savannah told me, "This college loves diversity and really diversity has been at the heart of our values here for a long time." However, Savannah went on to explain, "But lesbian and gay issues are the one area that just went nowhere here. Nobody ever wanted to talk about it. I just became more and more aware of it through the years." As she sat in her office an answer came to her out of the blue in October of 2003. Savannah says she remembers the moment this audacious goal emerged. In her words,

> Then one day I just literally had a vision. I saw staff telling their stories on a videotape-like documentary. I saw that it would be delivered to staff for all to watch. I really saw it as an educational opportunity for the people that we work with, straight people we work with every day, to know what our lives are like living and working here at the college as a lesbian or gay person.

Savannah took her vision to her colleague Simon who had since come out after Savannah had shared her lesbian identity at division staff development meeting

mentioned earlier (see Savannah's storjourn). She told Simon her vision and asked if he would co-produce and edit the video. Simon agreed. The next task was to come up with the list of people to videotape. Savannah stated, "Simon and I came up with a list of people that we either knew for sure or suspected or heard through the rumor mill that they were gay or lesbian. We thought that since we have 500 employees, we should have at least 50 people on this list who were gay and lesbian." Although, Savannah said she and Simon were surprised to find they could not think of more than a half dozen. They realized their lesbian and gay colleagues were so closeted that they were closeted from each other as well as their heterosexual counterparts at the college.

Savannah wanted to help change her college's culture to be more accepting and inclusive of lesbian and gay faculty, staff, and students. She knew it was a lofty goal. She determined the video would have her lesbian and gay colleagues answering questions about what it is like to be lesbian or gay on the job at their college. She needed buy-in to make her bold idea a reality and "told the president about it early on." Savannah and her president had already weathered numerous challenges regarding acceptance around lesbian and gay rights at their college. Savannah said her president was "amazed at the idea" and immediately supported the production and creation of the videotape they would later title, *Voices of Courage*. The president not only supported the making of the video, but with unprecedented courage as a president of a large college in a conservative town, she determined the first showing of *Voices of Courage* would be at an all-college sanctioned faculty and staff

development event. Through her president's leadership, *Voices of Courage* was institutionalized. Savannah described the scene the day *Voices of Courage* was shown to over 400 faculty and staff in their college auditorium with standing room only.

> Well if we hadn't done *Voices of Courage*, I don't know. It was huge. Showing that video and having that panel discussion led by the president that day was one of the biggest things I think has ever happened on this campus. In fact people still say all the time that this was the best professional development staff development we have ever had on this campus. And faculty came! And they don't always come to stuff, and they were there!

I asked Savannah how she built a cadre of video participants, and she said, "I would have to go up to people and say, 'I'm a lesbian: I have a hunch you are.' It was hard. It was a really different experience. And most people they didn't buy in at first at all. But then they would think about it and agree because I think they realized how important this was not only for themselves but for the whole college." Savannah said she sent out blind copy emails with the questions she had come up with including:

1. When did you first know you were different than everyone?
2. How did you come out to your family?
3. How did you come out to your friends?
4. How do you feel like your daily life is different than that of your straight colleagues at the college?

It was this last question, number four, that Savannah said she felt was the most powerful question as she considered the responses from her colleagues included on the *Voices of Courage* videotape. While the first 14 or 15 participants were reluctant

to speak out on the video at first, Savannah said the momentum grew and people being videotaped really got involved. Her emotion was palpable as Savannah told me about one colleague, Edward, who is on the video and said, "Edward had just retired. And he had worked here at the college for over 30 years and never came out to anybody! Ever! To anyone! But he came out that day in the video and on stage afterward." Savannah continued to describe the power of this event. In her words,

> There were a number of people who had never come out to anybody here at the college. So that first day, we kind of just told our stories. And it was huge! Powerful! I mean it was just so powerful. It gives me chills even now. I said, 'Are ya'll willing to do this?' Almost everybody said they didn't want any students to see this. So that was our first big decision. If we could figure out a way to do it that it would just be for staff and faculty. So then one by one people said, 'Well if you're going to do it then I'll do it! If you're going to do it then I'll do it! And everyone just kept it going.

Savannah said that the video was edited from a whopping 7 hours of tape down to just 26 powerful minutes. She explained that the question of "How do you feel like your daily life is different than that of your straight colleagues?" was the most powerful question answered in the video and drew the most audible and visible response from the auditorium audience the day it was shown, "Because that's when everyone on the video started talking about their language, and how they edit everything they say, and how careful they are at work with all their colleagues. And that was the part that the people in the audience were just like amazed to hear and see in the video; there wasn't a dry eye in the house just about."

Savannah said, "The closer it got, the more nervous people got, and they were really nervous!" She said she glanced out behind the curtain, "and the

auditorium that holds 460 people, it was packed! It was packed!" Savannah described the moments just before she and the other panel members sat down with their colleagues, to view the *Voices of Courage* video that day,

> We all kind of met in a circle outside the auditorium that day. It makes me choked up thinking about it. We were really supporting each other because we didn't know what to expect. People were afraid they really were afraid that their colleagues in the audience wouldn't think as highly of them. That was the biggest fear. We all talked about that. We had reserved seats in front of the auditorium and a table behind the curtain waiting for us when the video ended. We had really big, nice nameplates that we left on our chairs so all could read them. I introduced the event at the podium using the microphone and people who I worked with said, 'God Savannah I've never seen you be this nervous: you were so clearly nervous!' And that really got people because they know I'm used to speaking in crowds. They knew this was really big. My partner was there, my good friends were there, a couple of close friends of the president's who I know were there, but for the most part it was just hundreds of our college's faculty and staff in the audience. So we just showed the video immediately.

After the video showed, Savannah described the scene to me. We both got chills as she explained in her words,

> The minute we stood up to walk on stage together, I mean everybody stood up! I mean everybody in the room stood up and just started applauding! We had no idea it was incredible how people reacted. People in the audience were just weeping. I mean there were people just weeping!

Savannah said the president facilitated a question-and-answer period between the audience and the panel for approximately 45 minutes. She wanted to know why her colleagues in the auditorium were weeping. Over the next few days it was told to her as she stated,

> I kept thinking, what is all this weeping about? Well then of course I found out over the next few days, weeks, and months. Colleagues in the audience that day came to my office to say, 'My daughter is a

> lesbian and I just realized I edit my language too. I hadn't thought about that before your video. I was able to go home and have this incredible conversation about how I don't talk about my daughter.' Then somebody else came and said, 'My brother is gay but nobody in my family will talk about it.' And someone else who is Latina calls me and says, 'I have 12 brothers and sisters and one of my brothers is gay, and now I feel like I can talk about it.' So, that's what the emotion was all about that day in the auditorium. It was about all of these people who had to look at their colleagues, themselves and their families honestly for the first time.

The final panel consisted of 14 lesbian or gay college faculty or staff members. The *Voices of Courage* video was dedicated to a long-time employee and retiree named Stanly. Savannah said the video was dedicated to him because

> We all knew that Stanly was the first person on campus who was clearly out and he took a lot of hits for it. Stanly told his story during the question and answer period about students spitting on him one time on campus after he'd come out.' People out in the audience were shocked and asked, 'Why?' And that got the dialogue really going about how we treat each other when we're different.

I asked Savannah to talk about how the panelists and she felt right after the staff development *Voices of Courage* event. In her words,

> I think all of us felt the very same thing the next day when we came to work. We felt incredibly liberated, just liberated! For the most part, people were wonderful about it. After the video people in the audience, hundreds, asked, 'What can we do?' So we gave them pink triangles and a sheet explaining what the triangles meant—that when you put the triangles in your office or whatever it shows students and others that it's a safe zone. And people got it about the pink triangles! All of a sudden there were pink triangles everywhere in the campus!

The transformation had begun because of one lesbian leader's vision was put into action. Savannah said she and her fellow panelists agree their college will never be the same because of the *Voices of Courage* event. She said a deep and permanent change occurred that day and the days to come for her college and for the more than

500 employees and 40 thousand students who work and learn within that institution and within their newly defined culture of inclusivity.

The first and second *Voices of Courage* event was held twice within weeks of each other in 2002. There were nearly 500 participants in the first event and approximately 300 in the second event. It was more than five years later, in September of 2007, when I interviewed Savannah and heard her storjourn, the story of an out lesbian leader and her amazing vision that lead to college-wide transformational change. After a few hours of interviewing in her office, I had asked Savannah to take me on a tour of the campus. As I walked the hallways, shook hands with faculty and staff in their offices, and travelled from campus building to campus building, I was emotionally moved, amazed, and thoroughly excited at what I saw, heard and felt. Regarding what I saw: the very same pink triangles that were handed out that day at the first *Voices of Courage* staff development day still remained on literally hundreds of doors, windows, walls, and office settings. I counted 4 pink triangles alone when standing in the doorway of the president and vice presidents' lobby area threshold. One triangle the size of a standard note card was taped down on the top of a desk near where the phone sat for use by those waiting to see the president (a new president had come on board a few months earlier and Savannah said the president seemed very accepting of all people). Regarding what I heard: Savannah introduced me to approximately 30 people from every rank, age, gender, and identity. Person after person, vice presidents, faculty, staff, it did not matter. Savannah's word choice in introduction of them to me was exactly the same. There

was no editing, no hitch in her voice, no pause in her explanation. However, the deeper proof of the cultural shift from how Savannah had first described her college campus culture prior to the *Voices in Courage* to that of the existing culture 5 years later lay especially in the response of those whom I met and was introduced to by Savannah. Every one of the people I met on campus that day had nearly the same response. In her Southern drawl, Savannah introduced me each time over and over in the same easy manner and said, "Remember the Voices of Courage staff development day? Well, Rebecca here is interviewing lesbian leaders and she's come to interview me." Every time the 30 or more colleagues with whom I shook hands said something such as, "Of course I remember that was an amazing day! I still think about it," or "I still have the triangle on my door. When are we going to do that event again? We should do it again." They were all clearly at ease with Savannah, me, and the terms "lesbian" or "gay" that were said aloud a dozen times or more during each respective conversation. Regarding what I felt: I felt included. I felt welcome. In fact, there was no one, from vice presidents to clerks, who showed any type of fear, anger or discomfort with Savannah or with me after learning about why I was there that day visiting campus. The people I met were random. Most people just happened to walk by, and Savannah called them over to meet me. All were genuinely pleased to meet me and completely comfortable with talking about lesbian and gay concerns or progress on campus.

The inclusivity I saw, heard, and felt as a random visitor walking campus 5 years after Savannah's vision was an amazing transformation. Savannah's vision

made real and tangible through the *Voices of Courage* video and president-lead panel question and answer staff development event was a monumental change from the silent, closeted, and painful place described by those employee's stories including Savannah's, in the *Voices of Courage* video. To reiterate an earlier part of this Chapter, at the very same college 32 years earlier, Savannah was directly warned by the interview chair in front of her interview committee members that Savannah had the job as long as she "wasn't a lesbian or shacking up with someone." Most certainly, through her vision, leadership and action as described in detail in this Chapter, Savannah influenced and transformed the dominant heterosexual culture at her college. As an out lesbian leader, Savannah profoundly and permanently changed her college's culture for the betterment of all.

Summary: Storjourns and Evolutionary Themes

As was stated at the beginning of this Chapter, in each of the participants' storjourns I included essential excerpts from transcripts of their audio interviews to describe deeply their lives and work experiences and to lend credence to the legitimacy of the pathways and tools they developed and used to successfully lead as out lesbian leaders. The tools and pathways that Gloria, Savannah, Rhoda, Zora, and Josephine used to influence and transform their respective college emerged and were brought to light in this Chapter through the telling of their storjourns in Section I and the six evolutionary themes in Section II that included: Relationship Building and Coming Out in the Workplace, Safety, Mentorship, Policy and Power, Influencing Community College Culture, and Transforming Community College Culture. In

addition to revealing thematic commonalities, Section II divulges and makes public the actions, pathways and tools that these five lesbian leaders in community colleges used to influence and transform their respective community colleges cultures. Whether subtle and persuading or obvious and permanent, these lesbian leaders' actions brought about a new and more inclusive community college culture for all to share and experience. The tools and pathways they used are extricated from their storjourns and the themes and outlined in list form in Chapter 5.Through their courage in the moment or long-range vision put to action, as out lesbian leaders in their community colleges, Gloria, Savannah, Rhoda, Zora and Josephine fundamentally changed their college cultures to be more socially, culturally, and educationally equitable for all.

CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

I'm thinking about the ones who aren't here and won't be coming in late
Home all alone, and the family, and won't be coming out tonight
So let's pass the kiss and a happy sad tear, and a hope the whole circle round
For the ones who are here, for the hate and the fear, for laughter, for struggle, for life
Let's have a song here for me and for you and the love that we cannot hide
And let's have a song for the ones who aren't here and won't be coming out tonight
(Meg Christian, Sung at Carnegie Hall, January 1, 1983, words by J. Calvi)

Prologue

Last year in the closing minutes of the oral examination of my proposed doctoral study I was asked a question by one of my committee members that stopped my breath halfway through an exhale. I stood suspended there in a momentary stasis

filled with a combination of confidence and sheer panic. One of my committee members posed the question, "So, what if it's just you?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"What if it's just *you* who has influenced and transformed community colleges as a lesbian leader?"

Although I remained confident that it was not *just me*, that there were many other lesbian leaders in community colleges across the country like me who shared similar experiences to mine, strong lesbian leaders who drew from their lesbian culture to apply tools common to those I used for furthering social, cultural, and educational justice at their colleges, I would not know for sure until I sat across the dining table from my first participant, *Gloria*, and began listening to her story, her journey, her *storjourn*, as an out lesbian community college leader. Within 20 minutes into the interview I knew my hypothesis was on target. My body relaxed and my heart continued to hurdle my brain for a minute or two in a leap-frog race to remain succinct in my interactions with Gloria because the emotion of the moment's revelation was so powerful. I knew then it was not just me.

Implications and Recommendations for Further Study

> *Our natural state is to be together. Though we keep moving away from each other, we haven't lost the need to be in relationship. Everybody has a story, and everybody wants to tell their story in order to connect. If no one listens, we tell it to ourselves and then we go mad. (Wheatley, 2002, p. 89)*

In this final chapter I present my own reflective and introspective analysis of this study. The evolutionary themes identified in the storjourns presented in Chapter

4 are woven in with my reflections on the research questions and implications of the evolutionary themes that culminate in a list of recommendations for future practice, tools and pathways. New or incumbent lesbian leaders in community colleges can use this list of tools, and pathways to influence and transform their respective heteronormative college cultures to be more equitable for all who learn and work there. The next section presents potential areas for future research to continue to add to the body of literature on the lesbian leaders in community colleges. In the final section, I offer my personal reflections of this dissertation experience.

Reflections on Evolutionary Themes

Six evolutionary themes were presented and discussed in Chapter 4: Relationship Building and Coming Out in the Workplace, Safety, Mentorship, Policy and Power, Influencing Community College Culture, and Transforming Community College Culture. A reflection on those themes is embedded in the list of tools. This tool list expands beyond the six evolutionary themes in order to extricate and make known every tool and pathway that emerged through the lesbian leaders' storjourns to best assist lesbian leaders to bring their whole selves to the leadership table. It is hoped that the storjourns of the lesbian leader participants of the study in relationship to these themes may assist other lesbian leaders to influence and transform community college cultures in order to destabilize hegemonic cultures and lead in ways that foster socially, culturally, and educationally equitable college cultures.

Recommendations for Future Practice: Tools and Pathways

I anticipate that the storjourns of how these five lesbian leaders influenced and transformed dominant, homonegative, and hegemonic community college cultures will assist other lesbian leaders in community college to consider ways to come out, stay out, and make a difference in the lives of those faculty, staff, and students who do not fit in the dominant margins of higher education. The following are suggested practices or tools and pathways that evolved out of the storjourns as possible ways to influence and transform dominant community college culture. The lesbian leaders in this study were all fully out on their job. They used the following practices, tools, or pathways to influence and transform their colleges:

- *Relationship Building and Coming out in the Workplace—Come out and stay out*: Lesbian leaders in this study came out early on in their careers and were authentic in all of their interactions. They spoke of countless incidents where they told their truth instead of lying about being lesbian in order to make it easier for others by "protecting" them. In this way people felt they could trust these leaders even if they did not understand or like that the leaders were lesbian. As Savannah told me, "I don't even know, I'm not sure sometimes of what doors my being out has opened."

  Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

  - In an almost boring way, weave into conversations typical workplace comments about your partner/spouse or lesbian-related organizations or activities.

- Find the right time but find it fast. Come out to the new colleagues who enter your professional realm at the college.
- Come out to others such as students when supportive colleagues are nearby or within obvious earshot so that being lesbian and sharing that you are lesbian does not come across as a secret.
- Lowering your voice or matching the lowered voice of the one you are coming out to may incorrectly give a negative message about being lesbian. Keep your tone average and subject matter neutral especially the first time you are coming out to someone.

- *Safety*: Lesbian leaders in this study all knew that safety was a real and serious factor for them as open and out lesbian leaders. However, they all came to realize that their safety and the safety of others like them increased when they were open about their fears and shared their experiences and ideas with administrators and others who could make a difference on campus or in the community. All lesbian leader participants were intentional about creating greater awareness regarding being lesbian and feeling safe. Three examples were when Zora demanded a policy on poster defamation after the necks were sliced and hearts ripped out of two lesbians depicted on a Queers and Allies student meeting poster; when Rhoda helped to pass a Human Diversity Day in her town not long after two

lesbians were murdered; and when Savannah came out at her staff development day in order to support her Latino coworker who had been repeatedly pulled over through racial profiling.

Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

- Champion college regulations or board policies that prohibit and provide consequences for defacing posters or college property.
- Create a 24 hour turn-around graffiti policy that assures offensive graffiti is removed before the message it sends sinks into the college's culture.
- Work with local or campus police to build relations. Invite law enforcement officials to administrative meetings and talk about LGBT related concerns. Invite law officials to LGBT student clubs. Ask officials to provide the campus with an updated log on campus hate crimes and information on how to prevent such activities.
- Encourage your heterosexual colleagues whom you know, like, trust, and who support you to speak out against violent or divisive behavior towards LGBT members on campus.
- Post pink triangle Safe Zone stickers in your office window, in the halls, and throughout the campus.

- Organize a take-back-the-night event where women march the campus and surrounding community as a group at midnight to show strength and solidarity in numbers.
- Educate and train school medical staff such as nurses to be or become multiculturally aware to include LGBT specific needs.

- *Mentorship*: Lesbian leaders in this study found tremendous support in the mentors who assisted them in their leadership. All talked about how important it also was for them to be mentored or to mentor other lesbian students, staff, and faculty.

Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

- Join American Association of Women in Community College or other such women-oriented or specifically lesbian-oriented professional organizations. These organizations exist in larger cities or can be accessed online from rural college locations.
- Become an advisor to a queer student club or help start one on campus.
- Offer to guest speak or be a visiting professor in classes taught in every discipline. Share a part of your life, work, or experience that will get students thinking about inclusivity and the rights and life of LGBT students, staff, and faculty.

- *Policy and Power*: Lesbian leaders in this study talked about major changes that they brought about in their colleges as a direct result of their sense of professional and personal power and their subsequent influence on policy.

Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

- Join any and all committees that have the charge of developing, writing, or revising college policies or regulations.
- Self elect or accept nominations to chair one or more committee, particularly those committees that hold the most influence on campus such as College Council, Curriculum Review Committee, Budget Committee, Committee of Department Chairs and Program Directors, administrators' meeting, executive meetings, and district or state meetings.
- Be purposeful and genuine about getting to know and mutually trust your college president and executive level staff.
- Learn and be knowledgeable about faculty and staff contracts, employee benefits, committee bylaws, and college goals, objectives, mission, and vision.
- Develop a new course on LGBT subject matter and pass it through curriculum review. Have this and related courses taught cross-curriculum or linked, such as women studies and political science.

- Work with human resource departments to change heteronormative employment practices, such as changing college policy on hiring practices and domestic partnership to include same-gender partners. Human resource departments that do not provide equal treatment or protection can be among the reasons why lesbian leaders in community colleges do not feel safe to exert their cultural uniqueness as experienced out lesbians through their leadership as administrators.

- *Transforming Community College Culture*: Lesbian leaders in this study were and remain transformational leaders. They envisioned, lead, and acted in ways that revolutionized their campus's educational environment to become a more inclusive and culturally equitable place to live and work. Savannah had a vision of creating *Voices of Courage* and she made it a reality. In doing so, Savannah forever changed her college's culture, policies, hiring practices, and most importantly, her leadership changed the way people thought of each other and treated each other on a daily basis.

Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

- Create your own *Voices of Courage* videotape or film at your college. Invite lesbian or gay coworkers to answer the four following questions:

1. When did you first know you were different than everyone?

2. How did you come out to your family?
3. How did you come out to your friends?
4. How do you feel like your daily life is different than that of your straight colleagues at the college?

- Next, film your colleagues and you answering the questions then edit the film to include the most poignant excerpts. Get buy-in from your president; ask the president to facilitate a panel question and answer period after the video shows.
- Coordinate and lead staff development workshops or all-college days on the subject of lesbian or LGBT culture.
- Build or identify a space, large or small, to house and staff a Multicultural Center. Students can run this center with proper guidance and mentorship.

- *Artifacts*: Lesbian leaders in this study all had a variety of lesbian related material or paraphernalia in, on, or near their offices and workspace.

Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

- Keep pictures of your partner, your partner and you, or your lesbian friends or family members on your desk or on your office wall.
- Have lesbian or gay books, zines, poetry, or gay authored reading material on your bookshelves, the type of literature appropriate to a college setting and environment.

- Update and hang posters that display lesbian and gay themes, famous people, or celebrations such as National Coming Out Day or June's Gay Pride Month.
- Display stickers or decals of pink triangles, black triangles, rainbows, sayings, quotes, coffee mugs.
- Rotate display cases to highlight cultural months such as Gay Pride Month. Include artifacts in display with cards that explain their cultural significance including smudge sticks, lesbian insignia, and pictures of famous lesbian figures.

- *Speak your mind*: Lesbians in this study found strength in refraining from de-lesbianizing their language. They all felt that editing their language was exhausting, demeaning, and took a toll on their mental, emotional, and physical health.

Tools and Pathways Used by Lesbian Leaders in Study

- Use appropriate pronouns in an oral or written sentence to describe the correct gender of your partner or spouse. Be ordinary about it.
- When contextually appropriate, say out loud words like lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT), queer, or any term that describes similar type identity. The more people hear these terms during staff development or diversity workshops,

the more the lesbian leaders in this study said, “It is no big deal to hear or say the words” to or around their colleagues.

- Help coordinate lesbian subject matter speaking engagements, brown bags, poetry slams or literary readings in the library open to all. Ask heterosexual counterparts to read the poetry or pros. By hearing the words associated with lesbian culture, a hegemonic culture is shifted and words such as “lesbian” become normalized for those who previously found the word abnormal or hard to say out loud.

Future Topics for Research

Current or past research specific to lesbian leaders in community college is sparse and noticeably inadequate in providing the kind of literary foundation necessary to support lesbian leaders’ transformational efforts. Specific areas of future study might include the following topics for further research:

- Relationship building, coming out, and staying out in the workplace: The personal and professional impact of being a lesbian administrator in community college.
- Developing and maintaining a safe campus culture and environment for lesbian leaders, staff, and faculty.
- Mentorship: Lesbian leaders mentoring lesbians to lead, influence, and transform in ways that support social justice through action.

- Federal, state, local, and college policies that impede or impact lesbian leaders' ability to realize rights equal to their heterosexual counterparts in community college.
- Heterosexually identified community college leaders who openly and actively support lesbian leaders and non-heteronormative college initiatives and cultures.
- Stop the verbal editing: Moving beyond filtering or de-lesbianizing language.
- Exploration on power in community college: Who has it, and how do lesbian leaders get power, use power, and keep the power?
- Human resource department structure and adherence to anti-gay/lesbian policy and regulations. Human resource departments as they exist in community colleges today deny lesbian and gay employee rights. Often it is the human resource department staff and administrators who knowingly or unknowingly interpret and exact discriminatory college policies and regulations in opposition to their mission of being a "human resource." Human resource departments can instead lead the charge to bring their respective college institutions into alignment with the overall mission of community college in America: open access and an equitable education and treatment for all.

Summary and Personal Reflection of Dissertation Experience

This study used a microethnographical methodology to explore themes and patterns that assisted in discovery of cultural knowledge and of uncovering and establishing the ways lesbian leaders in community colleges influence and transform their respective college. These five lesbian leaders all influenced and transformed their dominant heterosexual community college culture to become more inclusive, open and accepting of all who enter and work there. A list of tools and pathways was extricated directly from the storjourns of the participants and amassed as a culmination of evolutionary themes and this study's two research questions.

This qualitative microethnographic inquiry with a critical orientation was about research through the lens of applied *critical theory* constructs that sought social justice through reflection, action and change. *Ethnography* is the work of focusing on a group of people who have something in common and describing that commonality in cultural terms (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, p. 145). In this study, the common group membership shared by all five participants is their identity as lesbian. The purpose of ethnography is to understand the lifeways of individuals connected through the lesbian group membership (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Unique to ethnographic research, the focus is always on culture and on a group of people who have something in common wherein it is essential that as an ethnographic researcher I strive to discover and interpret the cultural meanings found within this connected group of lesbians (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). However, this

study is most specifically focused on lesbian leadership rather than on the culture of lesbians in general.

Older research studied the raw and demoralizing effects of exclusive college cultures that only promoted one dominant culture—that of heterosexual. Community college leaders such as author and lesbian college leader Ann Spradlin (1998), felt unfairly thrown into the same cultural pot with heterosexual leaders. Spradlin said she somehow was expected to lead and thrive while employing her secret strategies of Distancing, Dissociating, Dodging Distracting, Denial, and Deceiving (1998). In contrast, this study on Lesbian Leaders in Action: Influencing and Transforming Community College Culture offers a new and transformative approach to leadership that calls for lesbian leaders everywhere to come out and stay out, use the tools and pathways listed in this Chapter, and serve students, staff, faculty, colleagues, and community as transformative, open, lesbian leaders seeking social justice and equity.

To destabilize and expose the exclusiveness of a dominant heterosexual culture in community colleges is to simultaneously expose and define heterosexism and the impact of homonegativity on lesbian leaders working within the ranks of their institutions. Lesbian leaders who take on the challenge of destabilizing their dominant heterosexual college cultures to instead help develop equity through the formation or support of co-cultures can unhinge the closet door and permanently transform the experience of students, staff, faculty, and administrators alike. All too often lesbian leaders continue to make use of their own “passing strategies” at a great cost to those they serve and to themselves professional and personally.

In community college cultures that have more balanced co-cultures lesbian leaders can stop the debilitating affects of adaptive and passive leadership. Instead, lesbian leaders can choose to use the tools and pathways revealed through this study to see and experience the emancipatory affects of being who they are, embrace their lesbian culture, and bring their authentic selves to the role of lesbian leader in community college.

In reflection of my own dissertation storjourn, it is a challenge to describe what I experienced over the past 4 years and what I feel today. I set out to honor the extremely important and groundbreaking work of Dr. Michelle Andreas by adding original research to her study that tells the story of lesbian leaders who reject the old ways of passing and adapting through their emancipative leadership. I set out to find more of us lesbian leaders who use our inimitable culture to influence and transform our respective colleges and still manage to garner the respect of our colleagues, lead with grace, and never back down from being out, being proud, and being a lesbian. I set out to put together a cache of tools and pathways emergent from lesbian leaders' storjourns and the evolutionary themes that came from their own voiced experiences in order to provide new and incumbent lesbian leaders in community college the necessary means to be out and lead cultural change without fear of losing their credibility, losing their jobs, or losing their lives. I set out to transform and be transformed by this amazing experience. With humility and gratitude to so many who helped me do it, I can say that I have done what I set out to do. I will never be the same.

I don't even know...I'm not sure sometimes of what doors my being out has opened. (Savannah, 2007)

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APPENDIX A:

QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS

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QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS

Project Title:	**Lesbian Leaders in Action: Influencing and Transforming Community College Culture.**
Principal Investigator:	**Dr. Larry Roper: School of Education/Student Affairs**
Co-Investigator(s):	**Rebecca J Kenney, OSU Graduate Student, School of Education**

INTERVIEW AND QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS

This interview and question guide is tentative and not finalized. It will be used to maintain the student researcher's focus on the research question while allowing flexibility and adaptability to each participant's unique personality and comfort level during the interview process. Specific interview questions and sequencing will be determined during the course of the interview to evoke responses best suited to each participant's situation.

I. General career background
    a. What is your educational background?
    b. What is a summary of your positions and organizational affiliations?
    c. Do you hold the position of Director, equivalent to Director, or higher ranking administrative position at your community college? For how long have you been a Director or higher ranking position in community college?

II. Professional Experiences of Lesbian Leaders in Community Colleges
    a. Are you fully *out* at work?
    b. How long have you been out as an open lesbian administrator at your community college?
    c. Why did you fully come out to all at your community college?
    d. Do you think that by being out you have more or less power? In what ways?
    e. Have you been discriminated against because you are lesbian?
    f. How did/does that discrimination manifest in your professional life?
        i. What does it *feel* like?
        ii. What impact has this discrimination had on your professional career?
            1. Daily interactions?
            2. Ability to be a leader?
            3. Working environment?

g. What are past and current experiences as a community college leader that you perceive are directly related to being a lesbian?
h. What are past and current risks as a community college leader that you perceive are directly related to being a lesbian?
i. How do you perceive your leadership at your community college?
    i. In what ways are you accepted or encouraged?
    ii. In what ways are you excluded or ignored?
j. Can you bring your whole self to the leadership table? Why or why not?
k. What does it look like/feel like when you can fully be yourself as a lesbian leader?
    i. What does it feel like when you have to modify, hold back, adapt, or *delesbianize* your leadership at your community college?

III. Social Setting and Situation
    a. Who are the people you work with each day?
        i. What are their position titles?
    b. What actions or activities do you involve yourself with each day?
    c. What pamphlets, technology, documents (meeting notes), or other similar objects or tools do you use on a regular basis that is integral to your work?
    d. What kinds of actions or acts do you carry out each day or through the course of your leadership duties monthly, quarterly, annually?
    e. What events or related activities are you a participant in that occur regularly (graduation, administrative or staff meetings, All College Day, Learning Day, etc.)?
        i. Do you believe that you are deliberately excluded from any of these events because you are lesbian? If so, why do you believe that is?
    f. What is the impact of *time* in your position?
        i. Do you have enough time?
        ii. Too much time?
        iii. Is your time seen as valuable? If not, why not?
        iv. What do you spend most of your time doing as a lesbian leader at a community college?
    g. What do you hope to achieve as a lesbian leader in a community college?
        i. What are your short term goals?
        ii. What are your goals after 5 years? 10 years?
    h. What do you *feel* in the work setting?
        i. At meetings
        ii. In your office alone
        iii. In your office with one person
        iv. In your immediate supervisor's presence
        v. In your president or chancellor's presence?
        vi. At home alone?

vii. At home with your loved ones?
viii. In the car?
ix. At social settings with other lesbians outside of work?
x. At social settings with those who identify as other than lesbian (that you know of)?

i. What would you say is the dominant culture or cultures that reside within your community college system?
    i. Have you ever felt oppressed by this (these) dominant cultures? How so?
    ii. Have you ever kept from contributing either verbally or by action to a college situation or decision because of the influence or the underlying message provided you from this/these dominant cultures? Why so?
    iii. How has your silence, self-imposed or imposed by others, impacted your ability to lead or be a leader at your college?
j. Who has power at your community college?
    i. How do they demonstrate their power?
    ii. How do you demonstrate or not demonstrate your power?
    iii. Do heterosexually identified colleagues have more power than you?
        1. Why do you believe this so or not so?
    iv. Does your community college president or chancellor have the ultimate say in all things? If so, why? Do you, or do you believe, that you can influence your President's decision making? Why or why not?
    v. Are your ideas, suggestions, comments, or directives listened to, taken seriously, and acted upon? Is there a difference between how you are responded to in this regard as opposed to your non-lesbian colleagues?
k. What is the social climate like at your college?
    i. What are the different modes of social interaction at your college?
    ii. How conducive is your college facilities to encouraging and engaging social interaction?
        1. How is this done?
        2. What does this look like?
    iii. How does the college handle issues of social class?
    iv. Do you perceive you are categorized or pigeon-holed by others?
        1. Does this impact your power? How so?
    v. How are you seen as different in comparison to other leaders at your community college?
        1. Why do you believe this is so, or not so?
        2. Does this impact your power? If yes, in what ways?
l. What is the political climate at your college?

i. What is the history and environment surrounding power and decision making at your college and within your college system?
ii. How does the political climate within your college affect collaboration or the development of collaboration?
iii. Are there mutually exclusive political groups within your college?
    1. How do they influence decision making?
    2. Would you consider yourself a member of an exclusive political group? If so, describe it. If not, why not?
    3. Do others consider you a member of an exclusive political group? If yes, why do you believe this is this so?
iv. Is being lesbian a political choice? Why so? Why not so?
v. Are relationships between men and women essentially political? Why so? Why not so?

IV. Transforming and Influencing Dominant Community College Culture
    a. How would you describe the culture at your community college?
    b. Do you perceive there is a dominant, heterosexual, community college culture? How would you describe it?
    c. Do you perceive that you have a unique set of skills and abilities?
        i. Do you perceive that set of skills and attributes to be uniquely lesbian? Is this a kind of *lesbian sensibility*?
        ii. What is that *sensibility*? How would you describe it?
    d. In what ways do you as a lesbian leader of a community college *influence* the dominant (white, Christian, male, heterosexual) community college culture to be more inclusive of you as a lesbian leader and of others who are marginalized or not allowed to bring their whole selves to the leadership role?
    e. In what ways do you as a lesbian leader of a community college *transform* the dominant heterosexual community college culture to be more inclusive of you as a lesbian leader and of others who are marginalized or not allowed to bring their whole selves to the leadership role?
    f. In what ways do you influence or transform your community culture to be more inclusive of others who do not fit into the dominant culture
    g. How does your leadership in action influence and transform to improve the community college mission?

V. Outcomes of Influence and Transformational Lesbian Leadership in Community Colleges
    a. Has your influence or transformative actions through leadership changed community college policies? How?
    b. As an out lesbian leader in community college, have you reached out to other lesbian leaders or potential leaders to mentor them? In what ways?

What are specific steps you have taken to support other lesbian leaders in community colleges?

c. Has your influence or transformative actions through leadership changed how people communicate at your place of work? How so?
d. How has the social climate in which you work daily been influenced or changed by your leadership as a lesbian in community college?
e. How has the political climate in which you work daily been influenced or changed by your leadership as a lesbian in community college?
f. How have you helped to influence or transform power and decision making for lesbian leaders (or your own self) at your institution?
g. If you could make any change tomorrow that would directly impact lesbian leaders in community colleges across the United States, what would it be?