

Amelia Craig Cramer '82
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

OLACHEA: My name is Barbara Olachea [pronounced oh-lah-CHAY-uh], Class of 2019. I'm located in Dartmouth's Rauner Special Collections Library in Hanover, New Hampshire, conducting an interview for SpeakOut. Today is April 5, 2019.

If you can introduce yourself and provide your location?

CRAMER: Yes, my name is Amelia Craig Cramer, Class of 1982, and I'm in Tucson, Arizona, where I live and work.

OLACHEA: Great. So I wanted to start off by asking if you could sort of give me an idea of your childhood and—and your background. Can you talk a little bit about I guess your—your family background and—and where you grew up?

CRAMER: I grew up just outside of Phoenix, Arizona, in Phoenix, in a suburb called Paradise Valley, Arizona. I'm the oldest of three children. I grew up with a mother and a father who were married throughout my childhood but divorced shortly after I graduated from Dartmouth. My other siblings are a sister two years younger and a brother five years younger.

We were upper middle class. My father was a lawyer in private practice. My mother had been a flight attendant, but she was mostly a stay-at-home parent, although during my teen years she became a real estate agent and then broker.

OLACHEA: And before you started college, sort of growing up, you said your father was a lawyer? So did that sort of start piquing your interest in terms of, like, what you were interested in leading up to maybe high school or college?

CRAMER: No. I started at the age of six deciding that I wanted to become a doctor. My father actually never encouraged me to be a lawyer, and when I graduated from college and was applying to law school, he tried to discourage me from being a lawyer. He wasn't particularly thrilled with his profession, but I've always loved it, so it turned out to be good for me.

But I didn't change my mind about my intended career until I was partway through my Dartmouth College career.

OLACHEA: How would you describe your personal development in terms of your identities in middle school or high school?

CRAMER: So what aspect of my identity, all kinds and aspects of my identity or anything in particular?

OLACHEA: Sure. I guess it could speak to the—the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] aspect, or you could just speak broadly about identity development.

CRAMER: Sure. So I first—when I was six years old, I realized I wanted to grow up and marry a girl, woman when I grew up, but I hid that from everyone and kind of tried to repress it as best I could. I had some crushes on girls in middle school and high school but never acted on them, and I think they were all probably heterosexual. At least they lived their lives that way or I thought they were at the time.

In—after—immediately following high school, the summer after my senior year of high school, I met a woman when I was a camp counselor, in another state, at a tennis camp, and that's the first time I fell in love and had a romantic relationship with a woman.

OLACHEA: Would you say—

CRAMER: I had boyfriends all through middle school and high school.

OLACHEA: Okay. Would you say that the environment you grew up in in Arizona or just the particular time period—was it—would you generally say, like, frowned upon or not really talked about?

CRAMER: That would be an understatement. So I would say that, you know, first of all, there was not concept of LGBT identity at the time I was growing up. There was—"homosexuality" was the term, maybe "gay." It was considered to be a horrific sin, terrible crime. You know, it was mostly not talked about, but if there was any discussion, it was considered to be an abomination.

And, you know, when I fell in love for the first time right after high school, I had a lot of I guess self-judgment, and I had a religious crisis because I had grown up in the Episcopal

Church. I had gone to an Episcopal day school from middle school. I went to a public high school but was relatively religious, and I was concerned that, you know, God would reject me, and I was briefly suicidal as a result of that. And I hid my sexual orientation and the relationship with the woman from literally everybody.

OLACHEA: I guess I'll transition a little bit more entering college. Was it—how was that, like, transition for you? Because you said you had your sort of like that initial experience of—of finding someone that you were interested in right before college. So how was that sort of transition, making that jump to college so far away?

CRAMER: So I maintained that relationship with that woman, who was in college in California, so it was a long-distance relationship mostly through letters, very rare phone calls, because there were no cell phones at the time; there were only pay phones, and the expense was extreme to make phone calls.

But at Dartmouth, in college, I hid my sexual orientation. I dated me. I got a crush on another woman, which—who was also heterosexual, never acted on that, didn't reveal that to her and was very conscious of the fact that I'm a lesbian but I was trying to hide it and was hoping I could change. And I started drinking alcohol very heavily, consciously partly to repress my sexual orientation, to be able to be in relationships with men.

OLACHEA: Did that happen for the duration of your time at Dartmouth?

CRAMER: That—that continued throughout the duration of my time at Dartmouth. The relationship with the first woman I got involved with the summer before college continued on and off throughout my college years. She likewise was in a crisis of identity and very self-judgmental and was trying to be heterosexual and ultimately concluded our relationship right before I graduated from college. And I think she's been with men ever since, as far as I know. We've lost touch, but—

I even got engaged to a man my senior year in college, very briefly, and then he was aware that I was lesbian or bisexual, was probably how he would have viewed it, but I identified myself as a lesbian at that point just to him and to a couple of friends. But he was willing to have an open relationship. And after about a month, I realized that I was not willing to

be in that kind of relationship. I wanted a monogamous relationship.

I—I knew that I was a lesbian and that I had to get honest with myself, and I made the decision that I was going to be—live my life as who I am, out of the closet, without regards to the consequences. And my conscious thinking at the time was I was going to stop discriminating against myself, and if somebody else was going to do that to me, then that was their problem, but I was going to stop doing it to myself.

So I broke off the relationship with that man, and we remained friends, and then since that time I've only had relationships with women. And I've been out of the closet since then.

OLACHEA: So I think I want to ask you about more specific Dartmouth-related things, but if you don't mind me asking, you—you said that you almost got engaged senior year. Was that for a specific—

CRAMER: It was senior year, and I *did* get engaged.

OLACHEA: You got engaged. Was it because you felt pressure to sort of like, I guess, making plans according to what people around you thought you should be doing senior year, sort of like greater expectations?

CRAMER: No, I don't think so. It was because I wanted to be straight, and this was a man I loved and love very much. I mean, I think that the way I would define myself today is homosexual, bi-romantic. [Chuckles.] And I really, you know, was very emotionally intimate with this man and—and loved him very much, not sexually attracted to him at all.

And, you know, I've never been sexually attracted to men, so I was following, you know, I think, the desire to be—you know, be in a committed relationship, which is something I've always had, and to start a family, which is something I've always wanted since the age of six. But I—you know, and I wanted it to be with a man. I wanted to be straight. I wanted to live a straight life.

And then very shortly after getting engaged, I just got honest with myself and realized it wouldn't be fair to me, and it

wouldn't be fair to him, and it wouldn't be fair to children that we might have for me to be living a lie.

OLACHEA: Thanks. Thanks for sharing that.

I want to sort of loop back to freshman year.

CRAMER: Okay.

OLACHEA: Could you sort of, like, sum up for me just any general recollections of what that transition was like to college? Any initial impressions of—just your sense of—of belonging and what the general campus climate was like.

CRAMER: So it was a time when there was a quota—cap on the number of women who could be admitted to any class. It was in the transition of coeducation. And so my class was capped at twenty-five percent women. So was the class ahead of me. There were women in the senior year, when I was a freshman, who had been there when the college, you know, went coeducational.

So there was a lot of overly expressed sentiment by some male students and alumni that women did not belong at Dartmouth, so that was the biggest issue that I faced in terms of climate from a negative standpoint.

I was terrified about anybody figuring out that I was a lesbian, and there was, in my view, almost nobody who was out of the closet that I was aware of that year. So going into my sophomore year, I became aware of a handful of people who were out of the closet, some of whom were friends of mine.

And there was—*The—The Dartmouth Review*, conservative magazine, had just been launched, and members of *The Dartmouth Review* actually broke into the office of what was the gay student group at the time and broke into the physical file cabinet and published the identity of some of the students who were members of that group. I was not. I was terrified to be identified, so I wouldn't join a group like that at that time, but—

And my recollection is that one of those students lost his parents' financial support and had to leave college as a result. So it was a very uncomfortable time on campus for

anybody who was LGBT. And, frankly, there were—there was a fair amount of, you know, misogyny among some folks on the campus. And I was, you know, really aware of being in an environment where there were thirty-some fraternities and no sororities. There were sororities just starting at that time. I think there were three or four by the time I graduated. And there was one co-ed fraternity, Foley House.

OLACHEA: Can you go a little bit more into detail, I guess, of the sort of like social spaces at the time? Because you mentioned that by the time that you had graduated, there were only sort of, I guess, being developed? In my research and interviewing alums, it seemed that some of these coeds or sorority spaces be arguably be some sort of safe space for the LGBT community?

CRAMER: So I wasn't aware of that. I was not aware of that. I mean, Foley House I think was a safe space, although I wasn't even out to the people generally in Foley House. I—I came out to I think two people before I graduated, who were members of Foley House, and I was not a member, but I hung out with them.

There was no space identified as LGBT-safe space. And, again, the word would have just been "gay" at the time; there was nobody using even, you know, gay and lesbian, much less LGBT. There was the gay student group I was aware of that had an office. I never went there. I never overtly identified with any of the people who were members, that I knew were members. It was sort of a secret society.

I knew of no faculty, no staff, no administration, nobody devoted to supporting LGBT people. I found out decades later about some professors who had been closeted, whose classes I had taken and whom I had known at the time. And many years later, they got involved with the Dartmouth GALA [DGALA] group that I was on the board of.

But at the time I was at Dartmouth, I was unaware of any safe spaces for LGBT people, and I was unaware of any individuals or organizations other than the gay student group that related in any way to LGBT status.

OLACHEA: Can you talk about—I guess you've already mentioned briefly sort of like the consequences of the—the break-in into

the—the files of the organization, but was there any sort of recognition from the administration about this?

CRAMER: I don't know. I remember that the—the daily newspaper, student newspaper published something about it. I don't recollect anything from the administration about it. It drove, you know, some of us who were closeted further into the closet, so that was kind of my reaction to it, was just to be petrified.

OLACHEA: Mm-hm.

Can you talk about your—I have sort of like a general idea of your involvements. You were involved in a student life committee? And it seems that you were interested in sort of like helping to cultivate sort of like what was going on in terms of programming on campus? And there was this conference, I believe, that you attended, and it was sort of like made up of, like, subcommittees of different, like, groups of campus? So would you say that you were sort of interested in, like, creating, like, spaces on campus for programming?

CRAMER: So I don't know what you're referring to. When I was, you know, well into my career as a lawyer and working in LGBT civil rights and was the executive director of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders [now GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders] in Boston, I remember going to campus and being involved in an activity like that.

The only thing I recall being involved in during my undergraduate years was a student council-related type of student life committee, nothing to do with LGBT issues whatsoever.

OLACHEA: Yeah.

CRAMER: That was not on my radar screen.

OLACHEA: Yeah. No, I don't—it—it definitely wasn't, like, explicitly LGBT. I think the student life committee—

CRAMER: I had nothing to do with LGBT stuff.

OLACHEA: —at the time. At the time, it was associated with—there was, like, discussion going on about, like, fraternities and their

impact on—on college communities and sort of like larger issues—

CRAMER: Right. Yes, but—

OLACHEA: But, yeah, I was sort of like interested in—I guess, even though you—you weren't explicitly partaking in LGBT or into sort of like programming, did you, like,—I guess you were—were you just interested in, like, the school climate in general and being active—

CRAMER: Yes.

OLACHEA: —and sort of like—yeah.

CRAMER: Yeah. So I—I wasn't aware of an LGBT programming, if there was any. I still don't know that it existed, so that would be something new to me. I was really focused on issues relating to more of the—the misogyny, the, you know, bias, discrimination, harassment, assault of women on campus; the disparities, you know, in the available places to socialize for men and women. The fraternity culture was very much of a kind of a good-ol'-frat-boy, you know, get drunk and, you know, prey on women culture. So that was my focus. It had nothing to do with LGBT issues. I was too frightened to even consciously think about addressing LGBT issues through anything when I was an undergraduate.

OLACHEA: I guess it does sort of like relate in some way. [Chuckles.] Like, even, like, today, that's still very much prevalent.

But can you talk about your involvement on—you were also involved on the tennis team?

CRAMER: Yes.

OLACHEA: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

CRAMER: So I was on junior varsity tennis. I had played tennis throughout my childhood and was a competitive tournament player through Arizona and in the southwestern United States. And when I first got to Dartmouth, I joined the tennis team. I was definitely on it my freshman year. I had an injury from—that I got on my Freshman Trip [the Dartmouth Outing Club First-Year Trip], my Achilles tendons.

I also did horseback riding, actually during the winter quarter. It was kind of a PE [physical education] thing. And then I ultimately dropped out of the tennis team because it conflicted with a [William] Shakespeare class that I wanted to take, with a particular professor, and there was no way to reconcile the schedule, so I think it was my sophomore year that I dropped off the tennis team so that I could, you know, take some courses that I wanted to take for my major.

OLACHEA: And you were—you majored in English literature and creative writing, correct?

CRAMER: Yeah, so it was a double major, yes.

OLACHEA: Can you tell me a little bit about your, like, academic interests?

CRAMER: So I went in, as I said, thinking I was going to be pre-med and started out taking pre-med courses my freshman year and decided pretty quickly that that really wasn't for me, and I fell in love with my English class. I—I placed out of freshman English, and I was in an English literature seminar and took more English classes and just really loved them, and so I took more and more.

And the other thing I really enjoyed with Spanish language and literature and culture and history classes, so I contemplated, you know, doing a double major with Latin American studies but ended up not doing that because I just kept wanting to take more and more English classes and creative writing classes.

I did study abroad in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. I did a quarter at UC Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley] during one summer, where I took an intensive French workshop, and then I spent two quarters in London [England] on a study abroad program there for English.

OLACHEA: I guess circling back to just different social climates at the time, how did the social climate on campus differ from being in Mexico and in London and Berkeley? I guess you could just speak to whatever you can recall about any of them.

CRAMER: Yeah. So, you know, my social life at Dartmouth started with my Freshman Trip. I got to be very close with one woman and three men who—whom I met on the trip and the

[Moosilauke Ravine] Lodge at the end of the trip. And we remained close friends throughout my freshman year in particular and then throughout, you know, most of my career at Dartmouth. You know, and I made other individual friends in my dorm.

I was kind of not that close to my roommates, for the most part, and I think part of that was wanting to hide who I was, although they ultimately figured it out.

I had—I drank heavily. I'm a recovering alcoholic, and I was drinking alcoholically starting at Dartmouth. And so that was part of what happened, you know, for me socially. I would go to fraternities and get drunk or keg parties and get drunk or be in my dorm or friend's dorm room and get drunk. That was a lot of my social life.

And I would—you know, I did some secret dating with women and then, you know, had periodically boyfriends or hung out with guys at Dartmouth. So that was kind of the social life for me on campus.

And then when I was in Mexico, it was me and another woman and then twenty-three men, who were assigned to go on that trip, and a bunch of the men were from the football team because it was winter quarter and that was when they could go. And so the other woman got culture shock within the first week or two, and she went back to the States, so I was the only woman in the group other than one of the TAs [teaching assistants], which was fine by me. I have always had friends that were guys, and I made some close friends there and dated a guy while I was there.

And I would—basically, I hung out at the home stay with this family where I was living mostly during the week, but we had classes four days, and we had a three-day weekend, and every weekend I would go away with one or more of the guys to different parts of Mexico, on buses. A lot of beaches but also some other cultural and historical places, and we would go on these three-day weekends and stay in a hostel together. There was a fair amount of drinking, but there was also a lot of sightseeing and that kind of thing. So that was kind of my social life there.

Berkeley. I was there with the woman that I first met the summer before college. We arranged to be there at the

same time, at the same summer, and we lived in an apartment with a man, and we secretly shared one of the bedrooms, but we had the other bedroom look like we were—you know, there were three bedrooms, and the man had one bedroom, and we each had another one, and we would sneak into each other's room at night so he didn't know we were in a relationship. And that was pretty much my social life there.

And then when I was in London, which was my senior year fall and winter, I was—basically had the boyfriend when I was there and had a bunch of friends, and we'd go out to restaurants and pubs and different people's dorms where we were living, and that was pretty much my social life. Some interaction with British students, not a ton. And a little bit of interaction with, again, one of the TAs, who was there from Dartmouth with our group. So that was pretty much my social life when I was there.

And I had—it was—the woman that I had gotten involved with the summer before college had planned a trip to come to London to visit me, and she—so in the first part of the fall—she had planned to come over Thanksgiving. And she didn't show up on the plane. She was supposed to fly into Heathrow Airport. I went to meet her, and she didn't show up, and I was worried something had happened to her. And it took about twelve hours before I finally got ahold of her. She had decided not to come. She decided she wanted to live a straight life, and she was breaking off our relationship.

And so I kind of went into a tailspin, and then it was shortly after that that I got together with the guy who was my boyfriend for more of—a little bit more of the senior year, and then I finally broke it off with him. And that kind of was the breaking point where I realized I needed to be honest with myself about who I am and I wasn't going to discriminate against myself anymore, and I read probably thirty books on homosexuality when I was in London.

So I spent a lot of time in my room just kind of getting comfortable with who I am and knowing my truth and being willing to stop living a lie and just be who I am and have the confidence to try to have the kind of life I wanted, which included wanting to find a permanent woman as a partner and then have at least one child together.

So that was where I shifted from being closeted and repressed and not liking myself and trying to change to accepting myself and deciding what kind of life I wanted to have.

OLACHEA: So you mentioned that there was this sort of just general lack of recognition and terminology, completely, in terms of the LGBT community, but you found sort of these resources in—in—in literature?

CRAMER: Yeah, books—literature and also nonfiction.

OLACHEA: So how would you—I guess I'm just sort of interested in, like, the type of, like, terminology that would have been used in those books. Was it sort of—

CRAMER: Yeah, so—well, the first book I read was when I was on my way to winter quarter, sophomore year in Mexico. And I stopped at the California home of the woman that I had this relationship with since the summer before college, and I read *The Well of Loneliness*, which is a horrible book. Very depressing. But that was the first book I found about lesbianism, homosexuality. Literally, that's the first thing I ever read, and it was super depressing.

And then, after coming back from Mexico, I, you know, continued to look for books, and I—the next thing I remember vividly was when I was in London my senior year, finding a book about lesbians having children and how they did that legally and logistically, and read a lot of Jane [V.] Rule novels about lesbians.

And so the terminology at the time was “homosexual,” “gay” and “lesbian.” That was it. Read some scientific studies about sexual orientation, which I think at the time was called sexual preference. So those kinds of things were what I was reading.

OLACHEA: Can you talk—

CRAMER: Read some James [A.] Baldwin and some other stuff that was good.

OLACHEA: Okay, yeah. I was just curious because I wasn't sure, like, back then there would have been anything remotely empowering, and also interesting—

CRAMER: So at Dartmouth—so Professor [Donald E.] Pease assigned some English literature books that were by gay authors, so obviously *Moby-Dick* [by Herman Melville], but then, you know, James Baldwin and some other folks, so I ended up reading literature that was by gay authors, although there was never a discussion in class about their homosexuality—you know, the authors being gay or—or really much about that topic at all. But—but I did read the books, and some of them were assigned, which was really kind of nice.

OLACHEA: What was the name of the professor?

CRAMER: Pease. P-e-a-s-e. And another one of my professors I later learned was gay was Peter [C.] Saccio. He was my Shakespeare professor, and we got to be friends, you know, decades after I graduated, when we were both on the—on a board together of a foundation to try to give funds to LGBT students.

OLACHEA: So you mentioned that your sophomore year, you gradually, like, met, like, maybe a handful of people, some of them your friends, that were out. What—what would you—were they, like, white? Were they students of color?

CRAMER: Well, I had one friend who's African-American male, who identified as bisexual. He's now married to an African-American woman, who was one of my roommates, actually, and they're—they're both still acquaintances of mine, and I really li- —I love them.

But everybody else was white. I'm thinking there was one woman who identified as bisexual, another one who identified as a lesbian, who was a math grad student, and then the rest of them were men. Probably I knew four or five, not terribly well. Yeah, white—white males.

OLACHEA: So you've—you mentioned a couple of times sort of the use of alcohol just to self-medicate.

CRAMER: Right.

OLACHEA: Was that just—I'm assuming that was, like, the general culture at the time? Would you say that was what people generally did? It was just, like, social drinking?

CRAMER: So—well, I wouldn't call it social drinking. I think it was—you know, [*National Lampoon's*] *Animal House* frat house drinking was the prevalent culture on the campus, in general. And then I was self-medicating, I think, looking back,—you know, I tended to hang out with people who were drinking heavily and smoking a lot of marijuana.

There was a brief period where I smoked marijuana for—during one or two quarters, but it wasn't a big thing for me, but it was for some of my friends, in addition to alcohol.

OLACHEA: Was there anyone—I was going to ask if there was anyone that was, like, an influential figure for you during your time at Dartmouth? I could also loop back to that question, because I was actually going to ask about—sort of like bigger movements that were occurring during time at the college. Was there anti-apartheid—

CRAMER: Yeah, I protested. Sophomore year, I recall protesting in favor of blind—sex-blinded admissions for men and women at the college, which was successful, and that's when they stopped having the quota of women.

And then also protested the investment in South Africa and, you know, was involved with anti-apartheid protests.

And I also recall protesting against some fraternities that were doing racist things and harassing some African-American students in the African-American fraternity.

OLACHEA: I was sort of reading up on just the general climate, based on articles in *The [Dartmouth] D*. There was a blackface incident—

CRAMER: Right.

OLACHEA: —in 1980. Sort of other—the big *Dartmouth Review* scandal, which we talked about. Sort of—I think this was in 1978. There was this event for the Trustees [of Dartmouth College] sort of pushing for—it was the investments, affirmative action, and then also there was this—these two op-eds, for and against expanding the black studies department, which I thought was interesting.

CRAMER: Right.

OLACHEA: So the sort of all these, like, simultaneous, I guess, reforms trying to be pushed at the same time. And then I also read up on—I guess during that time it was, like, an increasing popularity of libertarianism?

CRAMER: Yeah.

OLACHEA: Which I thought was interesting in terms of, like, regulating what people could and couldn't do, just in terms of, like, the body, I guess. So it's kind of interesting to think of, like, how, I guess, the—like, in terms of, like, the legalization of, like, prostitution or, like, the use of drugs—so, like, all these things that are sort of like taboos starting to emerge, but there was no real conversation happening around, like, sexual identity.

CRAMER: Right. So, like, I remember having a very lengthy series of conversations with an African-American friend of mine, who was on the study abroad in Mexico with me, about affirmative action. And he persuaded me to be in favor of it when my kind of initial, first reaction was to oppose it as reverse discrimination, and I came to believe that it was a necessary remedy for people being, you know, three steps back at the starting point from historical slavery and Jim Crow [laws] and discrimination. And that was a long discussion for me, and I really changed my attitude on a permanent basis. I've never changed back.

Another big issue was I remember Peter [G.] Fitzgerald [Class of 1982], who was in my class, later became a U.S. senator, a very conservative Republican, a kind of libertarian-leaning guy, but he and I had a series of debates about inheritance rights, and he was very much in favor of being able to pass wealth generation to generation, and if, you know, a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, you know, father had made good financially, that he should be able, untaxed, to transfer all of his wealth to his son, to—to Peter. And that was his perspective.

And mine had shifted to—I thought that people started out on unequal footing and there needed to be some societal recognition of that and some form of reparation for prior wrongs, or at least some equalization of opportunity for people so that everybody would have somewhat more of an equivalent opportunity to succeed.

So those were, you know, really—series of conversations that I remember having one on one. And then at large, one of my professors was Jeffrey [P.] Hart, who was one of the sponsors of *The Dartmouth Review*. And he was amazingly sexist and kind of gave me the creeps, I have to say. And I a couple of times had conversations with him about literature, the subject of the class I was taking with him. But he made me really uncomfortable in the way he would put his arm around me or, you know, try to put his hand around my waist if we were crossing the street together, or just very touchy in a way that seemed inappropriate and invading my space, at least. And so that—and he was very sexist and ultra conservative.

So that was kind of—my exposure to those issues was just individual conversations and interactions, for the most part.

OLACHEA: So I guess sort of related to that, you've mentioned before that you weren't advocating for the LGBT community, but you were—there's a sort of, I guess, push, sort of like with the, like, toxic, like, masculinity, sort of like that culture—

CRAMER: Right.

OLACHEA: —on campus. Was there any conversations occurring about these sort of like incidents with professors?

CRAMER: No. I don't recall any. I didn't tell anybody. I also had a student attempt to sexually assault me, and I fought him off, and I didn't report it at the time. And that was pretty, you know, much what I would anticipate must have happened with, you know, other women on the campus, because I don't recall hearing about anything being investigated or anything being done.

And there was this generalized, you know, publication in *The D* and other places about—they wouldn't use the word—I don't know if they use the word "toxic masculinity," but the kind of the frat boy culture and how that was affecting women. But that's all I recall hearing about at the time.

OLACHEA: So there was no language at all from the administration about reporting sexual assault?

CRAMER: I don't recall that, but what I—I recall the administration being worried about the use of condoms and preventing

pregnancy. And I recall the involvement of the administration in the fraternity culture and kind of exclusion of women and the need to have equivalent social outlets for women. It was more couched in that type of thing.

Concern about alcohol consumption and, you know, people harming themselves or others under the influence, so whether it was, you know, hazing of fraternity recruits, whether it was, you know, binge drinking and people getting sick, whether it was just generalized assaults by people under the influence, that was what I recall from the administration.

OLACHEA: And—and then you mentioned before—I found an article in *The D* from '79, and it was sort of a—a proposal to include, like, explicit anti-discrimination language against sexual preference on bid cards for new members. Do you remember anything about that?

CRAMER: No.

OLACHEA: So I guess even at that time, there was just sort of like the beginnings of, like, some sort of like institutionalization against discrimination? Although I don't know if in frats it would have been necessarily the most welcoming environment to begin with. But I've had sort of like in conversation with other alums just sort of like those interesting cultures that started to develop in frats that were, like, already beginning to have LGBT members but—

CRAMER: Right. I remember hearing rumors of which frats had gay guys who were members or, you know, knowing a guy who was closeted who was in a frat, so knowing that, you know, there were guys in frats that were gay, but it was—from my experience—my knowledge of it was super, you know, closeted subculture, you know, on the down low, that kind of thing.

OLACHEA: Can you talk, I guess,—I—I—I sort of want to ask you about the difference between being an undergrad and later, during your time in grad school. But before we get to that point, I guess we talked about your senior year and sort of ending that engagement, that relationship, but—sort of what was—like, what kind of head space were you in, I guess, like, thinking about towards the end of your time at Dartmouth and what you were interested in pursuing?

CRAMER: So I remember really distinctly having a conversation with my adviser in the English department about whether I wanted to go on to pursue a Ph.D. in English literature or whether I wanted to go to law school. And one was sort of, you know, passion from the heart, and one was, *Hey, it would be really interesting, and I would have—make a living.*

And so—and I—and part of it was I'd always been involved—interested in politics and involved in student council and that kind of thing and continued to have an interest in politics. And I think that's what kind of pushed me into going into applying to law school.

I had—during—I spent one quarter off in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], working for the *Philadelphia Bulletin* newspaper, which is now defunct. And I really liked being a journalist, and I—and I remember thinking, *I'm gonna go to law school, but that will probably be a really good preparation for me for journalism if I decide to go into that, or for politics.*

And so I applied to a bunch of law schools, and then my senior spring I was hearing back from law schools, and I got rejects, wait lists, and my first choice was Stanford [Law School], and I got kind of an interesting response from them, which was I could either be wait listed or deferred for a year. And I chose to defer for a year.

So by the time I graduated, I knew I was going to be going to law school, but I was taking a year off before I went, which was ideal, because that's right when my parents announced they were getting a divorce, and I was in a very bad head space about being ready finally to come out of the closet about being a lesbian, you know, breaking off the engagement with this guy. Wasn't any more in a relationship with the woman who had been my first love, so I didn't have a relationship, but I had a confidence about being who I was. And then my parents divorced, and then—so I was really happy to have a year off to kind of try to get my head together before I was going to start law school.

OLACHEA: I just want to do a quick time check. We're at 3:45. Would you be fine with continuing for about twenty to thirty more minutes? Probably twenty minutes.

CRAMER: Yes.

OLACHEA: Okay, perfect. So, yeah, I wanted to talk a little bit more about sort of your experience at Stanford and then your career after that. So you were president of the Gay and Lesbian Law Students' Association at Stanford?

CRAMER: Yes.

OLACHEA: Can you—can you tell me about—because it's—it's, like, a pretty big jump from undergrad to grad—

CRAMER: Right.

OLACHEA: —of, like, —yeah. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

CRAMER: Okay. So—so I—like I said,—so I was in study abroad in London when this thing happened where I broke off the engagement and decided I was going to be who I was. Then I came back for my final quarter on campus at Dartmouth. And I had a couple of flings with women while I was there, and I was out to some friends, so I wasn't, like, out there out there in a public way, but I was no longer hiding it from the people that I associated with on a regular basis.

I had also come out—I lied. I said I was bisexual, because I didn't really want to admit I was a lesbian, and I came out to my parents and my—my brother and my sister. And so my final quarter at Dartmouth was kind of a transition for me from being repressed and hating myself to being some—more—more self-accepting and being—knowing that I was coming out of the closet and that was going to be my future.

And then when I took the year off, I went Boston, and I worked for a private law firm, a small private law firm. I—I applied for a job, even as a volunteer, at a lesbian publication. I'm blanking on the name of it now, but it mostly published poetry, a little bit of short prose. And they rejected me because I was too bourgeois. I showed up in a business suit for the interview, and, you know, I had come from this WASP-y, you know, upper-middle-class, white, background, in, you know, Scottsdale, Phoenix, Arizona, and so, you know, my idea of how you interview for anything was—was what would have appealed to conservative Republicans. And so that kind of turned them off, but my heart was with them.

And so that was a huge rejection for me, but I—at the same time, I made friends with a couple of people who were openly lesbian and openly gay when I was in Boston, working for this firm for the year.

And then I ended up deciding to head out early to California, before law school started. And what—I should back up a little bit. The summer after I graduated, I went to a family workshop thing with my parents, who were still in the process of getting divorced. And it was for family members of alcoholics, and my mother had gotten sober. She's been in recovery ever since. And I went there and learned a lot about alcoholism.

And I met a woman there who's now my wife. And her family—and so then I went to Boston for this—this job with the law firm. And my now-wife, who was my then, you know, dating partner, was living in western Massachusetts, so my transition year between college and law school included, you know, falling in love and being with—dating this woman kind of long distance. She would visit me in Somerville [Massachusetts], outside of Boston, where I was living with my college roommate and another friend.

And then my college roommate had a boyfriend who visited a lot, and I would visit her in western Massachusetts. And she was very out of the closet about being a lesbian, feminist. Her whole family was comfortable with her. Her workplace—her school was comfortable. Everything.

And so she kind of helped inspire me to continue coming out of the closet. And then we had a conversation. She wasn't ready to be in a permanent, committed relationship. We kind of knew we were the one for each other. So she broke off the relationship before I went to California to start law school

And I had my last drink of alcohol driving across country. So I ended up getting sober and started going to Alcoholics Anonymous, and when I got to Palo Alto [California], where Stanford is, it was probably six months before law school was going to start, and I got a job at the law school library. I was going to AA meetings, Al-Anon [Alcoholics Anonymous] meetings, was out of the closet. Went to gay and lesbian bars in San Francisco [California] and met people and dated and went to gay and lesbian AA meetings.

And by the time I started law school, I was totally out of the closet, and I wasn't necessarily, you know, comfortable, like I am now, being out of the closet, but it was sort of more of a girding my loins and doing it because I knew it was the right thing for me. But it was hard all the time. So that's kind of what happened

And then I met—there were five gay guys and me in my law school class, and we sort of were the activist group that got the Gay and Lesbian Law Students' Association going. We tried to start a gay and lesbian law journal, but we couldn't get a faculty adviser.

We also did protests against the CIA [Central Bureau of Intelligence] and the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and the military JAG [Judge Advocate General's] Corps that were interviewing on campus, because they were discriminating. And what we did was we couldn't get the administration to—to stop allowing them to interview on campus, so we signed up for as many of the interviews as we could and got some straight allies to sign up for the other interviews. And we used the interviews as an opportunity to protest the discriminatory policies, and they were unable to recruit people that were not LGBT, so they didn't successful recruit on campus. And after a year of doing that, we did get the administration to stop allowing them to recruit on campus because they discriminated.

OLACHEA: So when you say “interview,” like, those organizations were, like, seeking, like,—like, recruiting for jobs, or—

CRAMER: Right. So law schools have—and especially the big law schools like Stanford—have private law firms and government firms come on campus to do first-round interviews, and then if they like a candidate, they invite them back to their office for second-round interviews and then maybe offer them a job for either a summer clerkship or a permanent job. And so among the recruiters that came to campus were the FBI and the CIA and the JAG Corps, military.

OLACHEA: And they were discriminating against students?

CRAMER: Yeah. So they had a policy that they would not hire anybody who was gay or lesbian, and the reason was because they felt that we could be blackmailed. And I remember in my

interview with the FBI—which I actually would have been interested in being an FBI agent, but I remember saying to the guy who was the recruiter, “How is somebody going to blackmail me because I’m out of the closet?”

And then the great irony was when I was studying for the bar exam and taking the bar exam, my first one I took was in Maryland. One of the people I was studying with in my bar review class was a closeted lesbian who had been hired by the FBI [chuckles], and so they didn’t hire me—I was out of the closet—because they were worried about this purported blackmail opportunity. And then they had someone who was closeted, who literally *could* be blackmailed, that they did hire. So it was kind of funny.

But anyway,—but it was—all of their policies at the time was they refused to hire anybody who—there was nobody out who was trans at the time, so it was LGB people, because supposedly we’d be subject to blackmail.

OLACHEA: And then sort of talking about—I’m just interested in, I guess, the difference in—in—in the social climate. Obviously, being in rural, you know, Hanover versus being in San Francisco, I’m guessing there were, like, some very big differences. Were you—

CRAMER: Yeah, so—but Palo Alto, not so different. It’s a—it’s a suburb, not a rural area, but very conservative—you know, men in plaid pants and golf sweaters at the time, you know. I mean, it’s—it’s a country club type environment, I would say. And so a lot of, you know, social class—you know, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, you know, supremacy stuff going on. You know, not quite as sexist or misogynistic or, you know, toxic masculinity as Dartmouth, but there certainly was some of that around.

And when I went there, you know, I was—it was very rare that people were out of the closet. I mean, there’s been other members of my class that came out since law school, but only about half of us were out at the time.

I remember one guy a year ahead of me sent out two sets of résumés applying for jobs, one where he was out of the closet about his gay student activities and publications and that kind of thing and another one where he was closeted, where he didn’t list any of that stuff. And he got call-backs

from almost every firm where he was closeted. He got no call-backs for interviews from anyplace on the résumé where he was out.

OLACHEA: Mm-hm.

CRAMER: And the social climate—you know, I was dating mostly off campus with people I met through AA and through friends and attending, you know, a lot of meetings.

OLACHEA: Would you say that, like,—like, when you went, you can, like, recall, like, going to these AA meetings or, like, were there, like, a substantial amount or any significant presence of others who identified as—as you?

CRAMER: So I went to some—so I went to some meetings that were gay and lesbian specific, and, of course, those people were all gay and lesbian. And then I went to straight—you know, mainstream meetings, and I was pretty much the only person there who was out of the closet.

And one of the nicest things that happened for me was, you know, these very conservative, straight, white men and, you know, everybody else was extremely supportive. There's a thing on AA medallions—I don't know if you know much about AA, but it says, "To thine own self be true." And there was one guy—you know, late middle aged, white, straight guy, who came up to me after a meeting where I had been talking about—you know, just openly about being a lesbian, and he said, you know, "Just pray to"—I was really uncomfortable about it, and I had disclosed that. And he said, "Just pray to God to be true to yourself." Which I did. And I think the guy figured I would become straight, but what it did was it really helped me become comfortable with who I am.

And so that was going on kind of in the straight world. And then the gay and lesbian meetings were a really nice social support, a social network. We'd go out dancing with people. We'd go sometimes up to San Francisco to go dancing in gay and lesbian bars and that kind of stuff. So that was the social scene.

I wasn't really aware of other types of organizations other than, you know, the student group and then bars that were LGBT identified.

OLACHEA: Did you get to—was there any interaction between undergrad and grad students on that campus?

CRAMER: Yeah, a little bit. I didn't tend to socialize much *on* the campus, but I met some undergrads, had a little bit of socializing with them. I had friends who socialized with either undergrads or students in other professional or graduate schools.

Like, my best friend was a guy who—Geoff Kors who is now a city council member in Palm Springs [California], and he was dating a guy from the med school, a student from the med school, and I had other friends that were, you know, dating people in other places. But I didn't tend to—I had friends on campus, but I mostly socialized evenings and weekends with my AA friends or people I met in bars when I went out dancing.

OLACHEA: So I want to—

CRAMER: But I was out on campus.

OLACHEA: Okay.

CRAMER: Well, one thing about Stanford: The weather is perfect, so we would all sit outside. There was a café outside the law school, where most of the students would have lunch every day, and I would sit with different groups of students at different times, and I was totally out, and so were some of my gay male friends.

OLACHEA: You would say—like, I—I guess it wouldn't be as frat-y as Dartmouth for the undergrads there, but it was still, like, very conservative over all?

CRAMER: Yeah, very conservative. Less—you know, less alcoholic, I would say, but otherwise the environment was very similar.

OLACHEA: Okay.

I sort of want to go more into your work experiences. You worked—you did pro bono work for people with HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] and AIDS [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome]?

CRAMER: Yeah.

OLACHEA: And then you sort of starting taking up these, like, leadership roles within other organizations. I guess I'm just interested in, like,—like, I guess—because, like, there's also, like, these issues, of course, of, like, intersectionality when it comes to these populations.

CRAMER: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: I've talked to [Gregorio A.] "Greg" Millet—I'm not sure if you're familiar with him.

CRAMER: No.

OLACHEA: But he, like, identifies as, like, a black gay man. He was—I forgot what year. I think he was a '90. And he ended up doing work for HIV under the [President Barack H.] Obama administration.

CRAMER: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: So I guess I'm just interested in, like, how your understanding grew, like, working, like, with these, like, populations. Then you also worked with, like, the Lambda Legal Defense [and] Education Fund?

CRAMER: Mm-hm. Yeah.

OLACHEA: I have a note here. Is that for LGBT people within the military?

CRAMER: So—well, first of all, I—I worked for two years at a firm in Washington, D.C., a private firm, Baker and Hostetler [sic; BakerHostetler], and I—I didn't really do much pro bono work. I got involved in one association for children of alcoholics, but that's it.

And then I moved to San Francisco because I was uncomfortable in that law firm. It was the law firm for the Republican National Committee, and it wasn't—I was out of the closet, but it wasn't particularly a comfortable social environment for me. So I actually transferred to a firm in San Francisco to be in a much more comfortable social environment and it's the firm where my best friend from law

school, the guy I just talked about, was working. And we ended up, you know, really loving it there.

But anyway, I started doing pro bono work, and I did pro bono work for people with HIV and AIDS, for Salvadoran refugees. I did some landlord-tenant work. So I did a whole variety of types of work for people suffering either socioeconomic or medical or, you know, ethnic discrimination.

And I also got involved in the Gay and Lesbian Bar Association [sic; National LGBT Bar Association], and I, through that, got involved in volunteering on the board of directors of a gay and lesbian referral service that would refer people that needed legal services to lawyers that could help them.

And so I started getting really actively involved in trying to, you know, in my volunteer work, to things that would help people who were LGBT or suffering from HIV/AIDS. And my firm was pretty supportive of that. They were a pretty progressive firm.

And I also was on a diversity committee for the firm, and I was one of the people they had recruit applicants to the firm, and that's actually how I got back together with my now wife, is that I was on a recruiting trip to Boston and called her, and we ended up getting together for a meal, and we've been together ever since.

But anyway, so that—that was kind of happening, you know, in my legal work. And then after a few years there, I decided to go work full time for LGBT and HIV/AIDS civil rights, so I became a staff attorney and then managing attorney for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. And so it's a national organization that is headquartered in New York, and I was in the L.A. [Los Angeles, California] office.

And so first I was staff attorney, and then I was the manager of that office. And we did LGBT civil rights work and civil rights work for people with HIV and AIDS throughout the whole western United States. So I traveled a lot and was in court a lot in different places around the western part of the country for two years.

And then I wanted to be near my now-wife, so I took a job in Boston, to be the executive director of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, which does the same kind of work as Lambda Legal, but they do it in the New England states, so the six New England states, and I went and headed that organization for a couple of years.

OLACHEA: So you worked on a Vermont same-sex marriage case? Is that correct?

CRAMER: Yeah, I helped—so I worked with Evan Wolfson, who founded Freedom to Marry, the Freedom to Marry coalition. He and I actually kind of did that together when we were both at Lambda. And we did a lot of polling about terminology that would be successful, and that's where the name Freedom to Marry came from. Before that, we were talking about the Right to Marry, and we were talking about gay marriage instead of same-sex marriage, and things like that.

And so when I went to GLAD, I formed Freedom to Marry task forces in all six New England states, and we were doing a lot of education and preparation work for same-sex marriage cases. And Vermont was a state that strategically was beneficial because it was easy to get around the state. They had an equal rights amendment in their constitution to treat, you know, people the same without regard to gender. They already had domestic partnership recognition, co-parent adoption for—for same-sex parents—of children, and some things that we thought made Vermont a likely place where we might succeed in the state supreme court in winning a lawsuit that was a test case.

And so I worked—I was the executive director of GLAD, and then our civil rights legal director, Mary [L.] Bonauto, and I met with some folks from a private law firm, Langrock Sperry & Wool—Beth Robinson [Class of 1986] and another partner there. And we prepared the—the Vermont marriage case and filed it.

And then right around that time, my father had a series of strokes, and so my now-wife and I decided to move to Arizona to be close to my parents, so that's when I left GLAD and came to Arizona.

OLACHEA: It seems like sort of like an interesting—I guess, like, you going back to sort of like the Vermont area and sort of seeing some sort of like trajectory, maybe, of, like, social and, like, legal acceptance of the LGBT community?

CRAMER: Yeah. I mean, like, I looked at Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Connecticut and Rhode Island and traveled a lot around all of those states. New Hampshire was not particularly welcoming to LGBT, you know, issues at the time, and the culture wasn't one where that would have been a good state to bring a test case.

But Vermont was. Massachusetts was. That's why the next case came in Massachusetts after Vermont. That was part of the strategy. And it was a national strategy coordinated among Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Lambda Legal, the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], LGBT Civil Rights Project, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

So we all worked together. We had conferences together. We collaborated. We came up with the Freedom to Marry coalition idea. We worked with National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [now National LGBTQ Task Force] and other organizations, HRC [Human Rights Campaign].

And Chai [R.] Feldblum, who was then a professor at Georgetown [University], who helped write the Americans with Disabilities Act—she and I actually were pushing, pushing, pushing for including gender identity and expression and trans people. And that was the big thing that was happening at the same time the same-sex movement was going forward, was the inclusion of trans people.

OLACHEA: And then, with your move to Arizona, you were on a task force in Tucson?

CRAMER: Yeah. So—oh boy! So when Matthew [W.] Shepard was murdered in Wyoming, a bunch of us got together. There was a vigil in Tucson, and we decided we wanted to do something. And we looked at historically what had happened in terms of LGBT civil rights in Tucson and what we could do and what the local laws were. And what we discovered was there had been a gay and lesbian task force many years before, and they had adopted a nondiscrimination ordinance that used the word “sexual preference” and, you know, just sort of—it was antiquated, and it was not inclusive enough.

And so we worked to—we got—the mayor—we asked the mayor to establish a task force, and he agreed to do that, and he appointed me as one of his representatives. And then the city council members all appointed their representatives, and we brought back—we had three subcommittees, and we brought back a number of ideas that we thought could improve the climate for LGBT people in Tucson.

And one of the things was to create a domestic partner registry, which happened. One was to create a permanent commission on LGBT issues, which happened. And I was involved in the legal stuff of updating the human rights ordinance, human relations ordinance and making—putting some teeth in it.

So it's a kind of local law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, now sexual orientation and gender identity. So we were adding, you know, the term "sexual orientation" rather than "preference," and we were adding "gender identity."

But we also noticed that there were no teeth in the ordinance. It didn't have any ability for the city human relations committee to take discovery or to really impose good sanctions if somebody violated it, so we modified it to include discovery and sanctions. And, of course, that applied to all the different classifications if there was discrimination.

So that was pretty much my work on that task force.

OLACHEA: And you were the first openly gay, I guess, leader of the organization in terms of, later, your work with the State Bar of Arizona?

CRAMER: Yeah, I'm the first openly gay or lesbian president of the State Bar. I was also the first public lawyer, because now I'm a government lawyer, and I was the first government lawyer president, at least in recorded history.

OLACHEA: For Arizona?

CRAMER: Yes.

OLACHEA: How did you—I guess I’m just curious about how—because you’ve sort of jumped around from the Northeast to California to the Southwest. Like, how—of course, we’re talking about different time periods, but it sounds like—and I would imagine—I’m from Arizona [chuckles].

CRAMER: Okay.

OLACHEA: Like, a pretty conservative, I guess,—I guess, approach in terms of, like, just rights for the LGBT community, and you sort of—

CRAMER: Exactly.

OLACHEA: —helping with some of these initiatives?

CRAMER: So when I got to Arizona—you know, I came from Boston, where I had been the executive director of GLAD, and I felt like I had gone back a decade in time. That’s what it felt like. That’s how I was articulating it at the time I got here in 1997, was I’ve stepped back a decade in time in terms of LGBT civil rights.

And Tucson is a fairly progressive oasis within the very red, conservative—you know, not LGBT welcoming state of Arizona. And I remember shortly after I got here, I think it was, or it was somewhere around that time, went to my twenty-fifth high school reunion in Scottsdale [Arizona], and, you know, introduced my wife to a friend there, who looked at me, turned her back and walked off, and never spoke to me again. I mean, it was—the shunning for being openly lesbian was readily apparent in Scottsdale.

Tucson, I have to say, has been totally welcoming. And ironically, my wife and I and our daughter have only had two overt experiences of discrimination since 1997, when we got here. The first one was the year my wife and I arrived. We were buying a car, and we wanted to put it in both of our names, and we had had a religious marriage ceremony in Boston before we left, but there was no legal marriage yet anywhere.

And we had become domestic partners in Cambridge [Massachusetts] and changed our names to have the same surname. Anyway, the guy at the car dealership here was flaming. I mean, he was clearly gay, but he was obviously

closeted, and he refused to put both of our names on the title to the vehicle. We had to ask for his supervisor. So he was kind of angry that we wanted both of our names on there.

And then one other time, when our daughter was in I think it was kindergarten or first grade, she heard another child say mean things to her because she had two mommies. And we actually called that child's parents. And ironically, the father—the father had lesbian moms, and he was mortified that his daughter—but she was obviously—you know, she was a young kid, and she was obviously focused on the issue, probably because of her grandmothers.

That's it. Other than that, in Tucson there's been no other overt discrimination whatsoever, and that's been really a welcoming town. But the rest of Arizona has been quite a struggle.

So I was the co-president of the Arizona Human Rights Fund, which is now Equality Arizona, and involved in other LGBT civil rights, you know, nonprofit agencies the first few years I was here. And it was quite—it's been an uphill struggle in Arizona.

OLACHEA: Yeah. Sorry if it seems like we're going off on a tangent. I was just interested in hearing your perspective.

I guess one last question to wrap this up: Why were you interested in doing SpeakOut?

CRAMER: I guess I loved Dartmouth despite the challenges that I faced, you know, when I was there as a woman and as a lesbian. In fact, last night I was at a cocktail reception for the new admittees, with a group of us that periodically interview for applicants and, you know, trying to welcome them and encourage them to think seriously about attending Dartmouth. And I just—I love Dartmouth. I love doing anything that can maybe help Dartmouth.

And also I've always been committed, since I came out, to, you know, telling my story and trying to move forward with respect to, you know, equality and justice for LGBT people, so if there's something I can do that might further that, I'm always willing to do it if I've got the time and—and the ability.

OLACHEA: Well, that ends the questions on my part. Thank you again so much for sharing all of this with me. And you will be updated on when this is uploaded online.

CRAMER: Okay. Well, it's a pleasure meeting you on the phone, and thank you for doing the project. I think it's wonderful that you're doing it.

OLACHEA: Thank you.

[End of interview.]