

**When will my turn come? :**  
**The Civil Service Purges and the Construction of a Gay Security Risk**  
**in the Cold War United States, 1945-1955.**

by

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## ABSTRACT

In the 1940s and 1950s, the United States was gripped by an intense anxiety about its national security. While primarily triggered by the external threat of the Soviet Union, this anxiety was especially centred on internal threats, real and imagined. Most previous studies have focused on the so-called “Red Scare,” the hunt for Communists and other political undesirables. This was accompanied by a parallel “Lavender Scare,” an assault on homosexuality in American culture, especially public service. Homosexuality had been grounds for dismissal from the Civil Service since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but Cold War anxiety about gays in government became so great that some in the press began referring to it as a “Panic on the Potomac.” Fear of sexual subversion became so integrated into the larger national security obsession that, by 1955, fully 1 in every 5 American workers was subject to a combination of loyalty and security restrictions, related to both political and “moral” categories of unsuitability. Yet this episode has remained a largely forgotten footnote in American Cold War experience.

The homophobia that characterized the early Cold War was new, more intense, and unique to that moment in history. Full-scale investigations and purges of suspected gays from the Civil Service began in 1950, but possessed deeper roots in the politics and culture of the era. They were stimulated by a combination of Cold War anxiety, post-war conservatism, and a changing conception of the nature of homosexuality. The effects of the purges would include not only widespread dismissals and intensified repression of gays and lesbians, but also the emergence of gay activism and the concept of a distinct gay minority. The evolving nature of gay identity, especially self-identity, is ultimately central to the thesis topic. This thesis is one of a small, but growing number of works that attempt to comprehensively examine the origins, characteristics, and impacts of the Lavender Scare. It draws on a wide range of sources, including the most recent specialized studies and the best available primary sources, including archival materials, first-hand recollections of events, and newly declassified government documents.

## Acknowledgements

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Several people helped my research immensely, in particular David Johnson and Robert Dean, without whose earlier scholarship this thesis may not been possible. For this, and their patient responses to my questions, I pronounce each "il miglior fabro." Thanks to Rodney Ross and the other NARA staff for making my research trip to Washington so productive and enjoyable. I am grateful to the History Department and my family for the funds that made that trip possible. Thanks also to Bradley Usher for insights into his dissertation. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Frank Kameny, not only for the interview he kindly granted me, but for his lifetime of service in the cause of human rights and social justice.

I cannot neglect this opportunity to thank the professors whose guidance and kindness, in and out of the classroom, inspired and nurtured my academic career. These include Michael Swan, Robert Grogin, the late Ivo Lambi, the late David Farmer, Jene Porter, Hans Michelmann, Richard Julien, Man-Kam Leung, Francis Zichy, Peter Hoffenberg, Mark Meyers, the late David DeBrou, and especially my friend Robert McGlone.

Finally, I thank the friends and family who have supported and inestimably enriched my life, before and during Graduate School. These include Rob and Wendy Moss, Lane Foster, Anne Hattori, Jason Zorbas, Darren Friesen, Rob Angove, Tom Everett, and Bonnie Wagner. While it may seem trivial to some, I owe an emotional debt to the dogs who have allowed me to look after them over the years, including Bumper, Peppy, and Cooper. If you think I shouldn't thank dogs, put down my thesis and go away.

## Dedication

This is dedicated to my grandparents, Isaiæ “Oscar” Poupart (1894-1988) and Joyce Hannant Poupart (1904-1987). His love of life and her immense curiosity, to say nothing of their combined labour, are foundations for all I can aspire to be.

I further dedicate this thesis to the three beautiful children born to friends during my M.A. program: Noah Foster (who shares my birthday), Kyra Zorbas, and Benno Friesen.

“From silence to discussion, even without enlightenment, is progress, for enlightenment becomes inevitable through discussion, and impossible without it.”

- Donald Webster Cory, 1953.

“And let us begin by committing ourselves to the truth -- to see it like it is, and tell it like it is -- to find the truth, to speak the truth, and to live the truth -- that's what we will do.”

- Richard Nixon, 1968.

There's something that you won't show  
Waiting where the light goes  
Maybe anyway the wind blows  
It's all worth waiting for

Anyway the wind blows

- Toad the Wet Sprocket, “Windmills,” 1994.

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Introduction: “Short-haired women and long-haired men.”

After the Second World War, most Americans were ready for an era of stability and calm in all areas of life. Instead, they faced the new dangers of the Cold War. The resulting domestic panic over real and imagined subversion, treason and national weakness placed many thousands of perfectly innocent citizens under suspicion. Investigations by both law enforcement officials and politicians caused hundreds to be fired from their jobs in government or to resign under pressure. Over time security measures designed to root out these non-conformists expanded through the entire Federal government to state and local governments and finally into private industry. Diplomats, civil servants, teachers, professors, and even ordinary workers lost their jobs and were effectively blacklisted from their professions. In all, millions of Americans were subjected to security checks and loyalty oaths in the, at times, hysterical drive to purge all “subversives” from positions of influence, responsibility and proximity to authority.

Contemporary American society is still feeling the long-term impacts of this crusade and of the resistance to it. Yet, while the extremes of Cold War security policy have become synonymous with the period, one of the central targets of that policy has, until recently, been largely ignored. The purges of suspected Communists and other political “deviants” are widely remembered, but too often forgotten have been the equivalent numbers of Americans investigated, accused, and in many cases destroyed on the mere suspicion of another kind of deviance: homosexuality.

This thesis examines the Cold War investigations and dismissals of homosexuals (both genuine and suspected) from the United States Civil Service as perceived security risks. Special attention is paid to the process by which the issue of gays in government became important enough to warrant the intensity of attention and counter-measures it ultimately received. Despite ultimately affecting many thousands of people in both the public and private sectors, the Cold War investigations of gays in government have received only limited scholarly attention. In fact, almost no major scholarly effort specifically deals with this topic. Cold War historians have

tended to focus on other matters, while scholars of gay and lesbian history have tended not to focus on the elite political realm. Consequently, this thesis is part of a ground-breaking process by which Cold War history and gay and lesbian history overlap to an extent rarely seen in earlier scholarship. It builds on recent works to link more fully the Cold War security context, the military and medical roots of the ban, repressive domestic policies (both social and political), shifts in cultural norms and gay identity, and the resulting impact on gay community formation and resistance.<sup>1</sup>

While popular memory still conceives of the post-war decade as a period of ease and confidence brought by victory in the Second World War and the remarkable prosperity that followed it, closer scholarly examination has shown that the 1940s and 1950s were an era of intense anxiety and insecurity at all levels and in all areas of American society. The scholarly understanding of this phenomenon is not entirely new. Indeed, it dates at least from the early critical studies of McCarthyism, blacklisting, and the overall growth of internal security concerns and mechanisms. However, the understanding that this anxiety also permeated American social and cultural life is more recent.

Clearly, even though this thesis's chronology focuses on a relatively brief period, roughly 1945 to 1955, there are trends and forces simultaneously at work on different levels within that period. Therefore, the thesis will approach the period and the topic from the point of view of the overlapping of these trends, in order of descending sequence from the larger political and geopolitical forces at play in the emerging Cold War, through the broad social and cultural currents of domestic containment, to the specific place of gays in this context.

To some extent the emergence of the Cold War and the reconceptualizing of gays as a social problem occurred almost simultaneously, as both have roots, at least in part, in the

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<sup>1</sup> Notable new works include Robert Dean, Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) and David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

experience of the Second World War. The war was a seminal period in the evolution of a gay community in the United States, and also in the post-war attitude toward gays in official circles. One of the by-products of the wartime experience of gay discharges from the military was the emergence of the psychiatric conception of gays as ill rather than merely immoral. By the early 1950s both the American Medical Association and American Psychiatric Association considered homosexuality to be a mental illness. When, in 1948, Dr. Alfred Kinsey published his Sexual Behavior in the Human Male<sup>2</sup> (hereafter the “Kinsey Report”), which declared among other things that as many as 10% of adult American males had had some homosexual experience, the effect was like setting off a bombshell. The report itself went through five printings in the first month of its publication and was denounced on the floor of Congress. Put simply, it offered scientific proof that as many as one in every ten men in America had what was then considered a mental illness of a sexual nature. Kinsey’s own rather progressive response to these numbers was not echoed within society at large. Indeed, the more common reaction was similar to that which might today follow a scientific study claiming 10% of men suffered from a clinical condition like schizophrenia. The non-conformist targets of post-war scorn, be they liberals, New Dealers, intellectuals, or homosexuals, were so intertwined that one congressman’s derisive quip about “short-haired women and long-haired men messing into everybody’s personal affairs and lives”<sup>3</sup> could be understood to cover all potential targets of a growing political and cultural backlash .

Meanwhile, the war’s end failed to give Americans any genuine respite from wartime fears for national security and defence. The postwar period soon found America locked in a rivalry with the Soviet Union for nothing less than global pre-eminence, a rivalry made implacable by the universalism of their dueling ideologies, and all the more dangerous by their (eventual) shared access to the atomic bomb. While the American economy exceeded all

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<sup>2</sup> Alfred Kinsey et al, Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co, 1948).

previous levels of growth, the size of the U.S. defence apparatus (and with it its domestic security counterparts) also grew to an unprecedented size.

One can readily understand the overall cultural effect of these unfolding realities. After the upheaval and uncertainty of World War II and the Depression before it, a period of increased conservatism was predictable. Such periods had followed the Great War, the Civil War, and even the Revolution. However, the specific political and cultural anxieties of the Cold War era intensified this conservatism to a degree it might not otherwise have reached. In addition to the unstable international situation, a very real, if often exaggerated and exploited, concern with domestic threats, especially subversion, was also emerging. The spy scares of the 1940s, such as the Hiss case in America, the Fuchs case in Britain, and the Gouzenko affair in Canada, further inflamed fears of enemies within, whether deliberate agents or unwitting dupes.

On the cultural front, one effect of the new conservatism was a dramatic tightening and rigidifying of gender concepts. Not only gender roles in society or the family but the very notions of masculinity and femininity were redrawn along lines that allowed for no ambiguity or deviation. This was the result of a unique confluence of events and trends. Obviously the experience of the Second World War is of central importance. Not only did it elevate the status of a particular type of masculinity, that of the fighting man of action, it also caused, through the temporary creation of a female industrial workforce, an uncomfortable eroding of the line between masculine and feminine gender roles. In addition, as noted in Alan Bérubé's work on the topic, the segregation of military personnel into single-sex populations was a major contributor to the emergence of an early gay community (with the resulting increased visibility of gays). In cultural terms (which affect everything else), the rolling back of gender roles is perhaps the single most significant development of the period. In this context, the Kinsey declarations about incidences of homosexuality could readily combine with broader fears of subversion leading to the weakening of American society to create a "Lavender Scare" to

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Hofstadter, Anti-intellectualism in American life (New York: Knopf, 1962), p. 36.

parallel the larger Red Scare. The process by which this Lavender Scare emerged, and was, in a sense, manufactured, is carefully traced in this thesis. Anxiety about issues of gender and sexuality was so widespread in the early Cold War period that, at times, it becomes difficult to be certain when the Lavender Scare is affecting the larger sexual insecurities of the time, and when the reverse is true. It is likely that the relationship was reciprocal.

Before any discussion of sources and theoretical approach, it is necessary to define terms and dispel possible misconceptions. While to some extent this is a work of Cold War history, the fact remains that it deals with attitudes toward homosexuality that were specific to a particular period. Something of those attitudes must be understood before any adequate understanding of the larger topic can be undertaken. While Cold War attitudes toward homosexuality will be illuminated in the body of the thesis, it is essential to clarify differences in language usage between the narrative voice of this thesis, and the mentalities of the period in focus. First, this thesis uses the term “homosexuality” in the modern sense—that is, the sense of an identity founded on same-sex attraction. In the 1940s and 1950s, the decades examined in this thesis, society had only just begun a shift from an understanding of “homosexual acts” to the concept of “homosexuality” as a state of being. The term “gay” will be used throughout this document for ease of parlance, but it should be remembered that the term itself was much less widely used in the 1940s and 1950s, and never in official statements. This thesis focuses primarily on the male homosexual experience in the Cold War era. This emphasis reflects the frustrating fact that the bulk of available source material also focuses on men rather than women. To the extent it is possible, the effect of Cold War political and social trends on women will be integrated into this thesis as well.

Certain potential preconceptions also must be dispelled, as they have the effect of warping perceptions of the period and the topic. The first is that the dismissal of known or suspected homosexuals from the Civil Service was in any way new or unique to the Cold War era. “Immoral” or “indecent” activity, under which homosexual activity was included without

having to be named, had been an official bar to employment in and sufficient cause for dismissal from the Civil Service as early as the 1880s, when the first professional standards and codes of conduct for the Civil Service had been drawn up. The second misconception, which may stem from this long-standing bar, is that there was nothing unusual or noteworthy about the Cold War dismissals for the precise reason that the bar had always existed. While homosexuals had always been dismissed, the sheer number of investigations and dismissals began to grow exponentially in the late 1940s and by the mid-1950s surpassed any previous numbers. It should be noted that the size of the Federal government had itself grown in size during the New Deal and World War II, employing fully 1, 819, 480 workers of all types by 1950.<sup>4</sup> During the early 1950s the scope of investigation and of the bar on employing gays expanded beyond anything previously seen, to the point where fully 20% of American workers were in some way affected by these growing security measures. Thus, while someone discovered to be gay would have been dismissed as surely in earlier decades, the bottom line is that, prior to about 1950, no concerted effort to find gays had been undertaken. The circumstances of the Cold War era were obviously different. Discovering how homosexuality shifted from a moral issue to a national security concern is a primary goal of this thesis.

In addition to secondary and theoretical works, primary sources were vitally important to this thesis. A number of primary source collections have been published containing material that relates to the Civil Service purges. These include Martin Duberman's About Time: Exploring the Gay Past,<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz's Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.,<sup>6</sup> and John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, no.223, 1951, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Duberman, About Time: Exploring the Gay Past (New York: Sea Horse, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz, Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A., (New York: Meridian, 1992) (Second edition).

in America.<sup>7</sup> In addition, this thesis utilizes published primary material from the Cold War period of relevance to all aspects of the topic, such as library copies of *ONE* and the *Mattachine Review*. Other published primary material includes the Kinsey Reports on male and female sexuality, as well as the text of the 1950 Senate Report “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government.”<sup>8</sup>

Further evidence has been gathered from archival collections. The most extensive of these is the U.S. National Archives in greater Washington, DC, with its unparalleled collection of legislative and civil service primary documents. Its collections of congressional documents were especially invaluable. The author was only the second scholar to examine some of these, notably the recently declassified transcripts of the Hoey Committee. In addition, the author has been in direct contact with other scholars of the period and topic, including John D’Emilio, David Johnson, Robert Corber, Bradley Usher, Robert Dean, and Nancy Unger. Whether by clarifying their own work and sharing opinions or simply by pointing in the right directions, their assistance has been invaluable. By the greatest good fortune, it was possible to make contact with someone with first-hand experience of the Cold War security measures. Physicist Franklin Kameny was dismissed from the Civil Service because of his homosexuality in 1957, subsequently becoming a leading activist. He kindly consented to be interviewed for this project during the author’s research trip to Washington.

The balkanized nature of the source base ultimately serves to make this thesis an original work. To date, no other scholarly work addresses the topic of the anti-gay security measures during the early 1950s as directly with the same scope. Johnson’s book is narrower in geographic scope than this thesis, and does not attempt to trace the direct impact of the purges

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<sup>7</sup> John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government, Senate Doc.241, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p.3 in Government Versus Homosexuals (New York: Arno Press, 1975).

outside of the Federal government. Usher's dissertation has different emphases and focuses less on the origin and motivations behind these measures than on their long-term operation and the rise of resistance to them. Thus, this thesis serves as a linking document that draws on various genres to create a more comprehensive, and certainly more direct, analysis of the topic than has been seen previously. This thesis focuses, perhaps for the first time, the overlapping lenses of political, cultural and gay history onto this single topic in the hope that their combined gaze can provide gay purges with the clarity of scrutiny they have so long lacked. The contribution of this thesis to the topic and field is to create a more complete picture of the anti-gay security purges. This will include not only the mechanisms and details of the purge, but also the historical context in which they occurred, the political and social forces that manufactured the threat gays came to represent, and the legacy of that experience for gay Americans.

Few periods in American history have stimulated the level of scholarly interest as has the Cold War. Given that the age was defined by rivalry between the superpowers, it is not surprising that the bulk of the resulting scholarly production has been in areas of political and diplomatic history.<sup>9</sup> This is followed closely by a large number of studies relating to McCarthyism and the internal security measures which so characterized the "home front" battles of the Cold War. Several of these works have informed this thesis, including Athan Theoharis's Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism, Richard Freeland's The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics and

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(Hereafter cited as "Hoey Report") The Report is reproduced exactly as first published without omission or amendment.

<sup>9</sup> Exemplary works in this category include: John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, reprinted 2000); Melvyn P. Leffler, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Gabriel Kolko and Joyce Kolko, The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (London: Penguin, 1980); George Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950 (New York: Bantam, 1969); Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: from Stalin to Khrushchev (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996);

Internal Security, 1946-48, Arthur Herman's Joseph McCarthy: Re-examining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator, and David Caute's The Great Fear: The anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower.<sup>10</sup>

Early Cold War scholarship shared a tendency to focus primarily on the effect of the international context on U.S. politics and security concerns, and in so doing generally excluded domestic social factors that also fed Cold War anxiety and conservatism. Also, their treatment of subversion and deviance tended to be exclusively focused on political non-conformity, to the exclusion not only of homosexuality, but also feminism and youth culture. These initial oversights have increasingly been addressed by more recent studies of Cold War culture. In particular, Elaine Tyler May's Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era<sup>11</sup> altered the way historians see the 1950s. May redefined the previously understood relationship between the 1950s and its historical context—namely, that the decade was characterized by a new repression rather than an old traditionalism. The intense insecurity of the age effectively drove Americans to embrace and exalt a narrow, rigid definition of normality. May's primary metaphoric device, the eerie juxtaposition of the suburban home and the bomb shelter, gained special aptness when these trends were viewed within the context of Cold War anxiety. May argued that the popular view of (especially) the 1950s as the golden twilight of traditional American values, gender roles, and family life was incorrect. Her book showed that the trends of the 1950s ran counter to those of previous decades in fundamental ways, which included the average age of marriage and the number of women in the work force. The 1950s were thus a

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and Martin McCauley, The Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1949 (London: Pearson Longman, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Athan Theoharis, Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism (Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1971); Richard Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics and Internal Security, 1946-48 (New York: Knopf, 1971); Arthur Herman, Joseph McCarthy: Re-examining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator (New York: The Free Press, 2000); David Caute, The Great Fear: The anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978).

decade less of tradition than of retrenchment and reaction. May coined the term “domestic containment” (a play on U.S. Cold War strategy) to describe this phenomenon.

The features of domestic containment are of direct relevance to this thesis, for they encompass many aspects of the new social conservatism of the age, which were, in turn, directed, not only toward gays, but toward non-conformists and deviants of all stripes. May illustrated that anyone who did not conform to the prevailing view of normalcy was automatically suspect. These included bachelors and working women, for example, regardless of sexual orientation or other pastimes. Along with many other trends of the period, the new concern with homosexuality as a “problem” stemmed from the atmosphere of domestic containment that permeated the society of the times. Domestic containment can only be understood within its own Cold War and atomic age context, as both containment and the circumstances that created it were unique.

May has subsequently been criticized for overemphasizing conformity at the expense of the subtle resistance to it that occurred in the same period. Some of the most notable of these criticisms are found in Joanne Meyerowitz’s (et al) Not June Cleaver: women and gender in post-war America, 1945-1960,<sup>12</sup> which particularly argues that the activism of the early Cold War is unaddressed by May. One example of this early activism was the self-organization of ordinary women, especially mothers, to protest atomic testing and civil defense measures in the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, most works of gay and lesbian history that deal with the 1950s and Cold War repression have shared a tendency to focus on the rise of resistance in the form of early gay rights or “homophile” organizations like the Mattachine Society, ONE, and the Daughters of

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<sup>11</sup> Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz et al, Not June Cleaver: women and gender in post-war America, 1945-1960 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> See Harriet Hyman Alonso, “Mayhem and Moderation: Women Peace Activists during the McCarthy Era;” Deborah A. Gerson, ““Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?”: Familialism Against McCarthyism;” and Dee Garrison, ““Our Skirts Gave Them Courage”: The Civil Defense Protest Movement in New York City, 1955-1961” in Meyerowitz.

Bilitis. While such resistance was real and such criticism valid, it is impossible to understand the period without understanding the degree to which repression was dominant, and the resulting need to fully examine that conservative atmosphere.

One of the many strengths of May's work is its success in revealing the connection between the anxiety of the political and diplomatic sphere with the apparent (and deceptive) comfort and calm of the domestic sphere. May explicitly traces the effect of Cold War realities on social and cultural trends to great effect. However, her work does not address the reverse of that connection, the effect of social trends on the realms of politics and public service. In fact, this equation has been almost totally ignored by Cold War scholars of all genres. A recent and welcome exception to this oversight is Robert Dean's Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy.<sup>14</sup> Dean traces the effect that the well-known postwar change in the concepts of masculinity and gender identity had in the corridors of power, as the cultural backlash caused older elites, previously esteemed as refined and cultivated, to be considered effete, weak, and even sexually ambiguous. The frequent period references to Foreign Service officers as "Lavender lads" perhaps best summarizes the shift in attitude. To date, no other study appears to have so fully explored the effect of Cold War social trends (linked with conservative politics) on the internal workings of government and policy. That Dean specifically addresses the role of the new homophobia in this development makes his book even more useful to this thesis.

David Johnson's newly published The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government<sup>15</sup> has already set a new standard for the topic. Direct correspondence with Dr. Johnson has greatly complemented the reading of his book. Like Dean, he has primarily examined the State Department in this context, leaving the bulk of the

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Dean, Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Civil Service and the larger national impact of the purges, open ground for further study. Johnson is the only other scholar to have accessed the recently declassified Senate transcripts. Portions of these are in fact examined in even greater detail in this thesis, which also places a greater focus on the nation-wide impact of the purges. In addition, both the wartime roots of Cold War attitudes toward homosexuality and the post-war cultural shift toward social conservatism are more fully examined herein. The only other work known to examine the Civil Service as a whole is Bradley Usher's "Federal Civil Service Employment Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians, 1950-1975: A Policy and Movement History."<sup>16</sup> Usher deals with the broader topic of anti-gay employment discrimination and resistance to it, with only a partial focus on the origins of the policies and practices in question. This thesis places a much greater emphasis on the national security context as a primary contributing factor.

Not surprisingly, it has largely been left to gay and lesbian history to examine the gay and lesbian Cold War experience directly. Though relatively new, this is an expanding and exciting field. Several works have studied the history of gays and the evolving gay community in the 1940s and 1950s. One of the most outstanding is Alan Bérubé's Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two.<sup>17</sup> This book is especially strong on the development of the psychiatric approach to dealing with homosexuality, which this thesis argues was a major factor in later Cold War policies toward gays. Bérubé also includes a look at Cold War security crackdowns on gays that relates the topic back to the wartime gay exclusions to a degree that has not been equaled. An even more comprehensive look at the development of

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<sup>16</sup> Bradley Usher, "Federal Civil Service Employment Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians, 1950-1975: A Policy and Movement History" (PhD dissertation) (New York: New School for Social Research, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Alan Bérubé, Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two (New York: The Free Press, 1990).

modern psychiatric views, and their relation to fear of subversion, is found in Jennifer Terry's *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society*.<sup>18</sup>

Other works have more directly examined the history of gays and lesbians in Cold War society, though often from widely differing perspectives. Robert Corber's *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity*<sup>19</sup> is very useful in revealing the degree to which homosexuality was considered even more than usually deviant and dangerous within the context of 1950s values. Corber examines the period's obsessive, even neurotic, concern with issues of gender and masculinity, an obsession that lent itself readily to Cold War anxiety. However, his focus is on cultural products and he essentially ignores the political sphere. One of the best examinations of the Civil Service purges in a published work is found in John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*.<sup>20</sup> While its focus is broader, the book includes a full section on the rise of the gay-related security concerns and the resulting purges.

This thesis also draws upon the theoretical scholarship related to issues of gender and sexuality. Foremost among the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis is the concept that categories of sexuality, gender, morality, and normality are manufactured, and in a sense even artificial. Within the context of gay and lesbian history, this reflects a divide between two broad schools of thought concerning the nature of gay (and, indeed, straight) identity formation. "Essentialists" (put very simply) hold to the notion that homosexuality and heterosexuality are essentially constants across time and place, with a dividing line between them that is equally immutable and basically rigid.<sup>21</sup> "Social Constructionists" assert that gender and sexual identity

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<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Robert Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) (Second edition).

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Plume, 1996, second edition), pp. 6-8.

are largely products of social and environmental factors (including different historical periods). That is, while there has always been same-sex activity, the labels, restrictions, or status borne by such persons are imposed by the community and, therefore, vary from one community to another. At the same time, constructionists do not accept that the division between heterosexuality and homosexuality is automatic or unchanging, but rather that it reflects other considerations, such as the gender role played by an individual.<sup>22</sup> This thesis has been greatly aided by the work of Jonathan Ned Katz on the topic of the construction of gender and sexuality, while acknowledging that much of the conceptual framework of that idea of manufactured normality is arguably Foucaultian in origin.<sup>23</sup>

This thesis shares the social constructionist viewpoint. The evidence, as presented in the thesis, indicates that both the definition of homosexuality (especially in terms of moral connotations) has fluctuated considerably over time, as has the specific application of the term to various forms of sexual behaviour. That is, while homosexual activity is a constant, *who* is considered to be homosexual (or self-identifies as such) is not.<sup>24</sup> This thesis makes clear that prevailing political and cultural forces in the early Cold War era resulted not only in the definition of homosexuality as a national security threat, but also in the redefinition and rigidifying of “normal” heterosexual and “abnormal” homosexual categories to fit the perceptions and priorities of that specific era. This, in turn, affected the precise nature of gay identity and community formation.

The seminal works The Invention of Heterosexuality by Jonathan Ned Katz and Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey<sup>25</sup> have been especially helpful in clarifying the broad theoretical framework

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 181-2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 171-2.

<sup>24</sup> David Halperin, How to Do the History of Homosexuality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 102.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: New American Library, 1989).

within which this thesis must operate. In the latter text, Chauncey's thoughts are particularly lucid in revealing vital points. Most notable among these is the assertion that a clear distinction must be understood to exist between sexual *activity*, which is essentially biological and immutable, and sexual *identity*, especially where that identity plays an almost "ethnic" role in a person's self-image (such as in community formation). *Identity* is specific to period, place, and culture, and therefore changes along with those environmental forces. Chauncey argues that the defining boundaries of "homosexuality" (and thus "heterosexuality") are and have been continually redefined and renegotiated in different ages and communities, and he bluntly states that the demarcation between sexual and non-sexual behaviour is culturally determined to a very great extent.<sup>26</sup>

There is disagreement as to the authorship of these constructed categories, and whether they are imposed by hegemonic structures or evolve from a more "democratic" consensus. This thesis operates from the assumption that cultural mores, especially in a modern society, are formed from the interaction of "high and low" forces, rather than from any single source. The fundamental point is that, just as the term "gay" has not always had the same meaning, concepts such as masculinity and femininity, and especially any conceptions of "normal," are not static. They reflect their social and historical context as surely as do fashions and vernacular terms. It will be argued, in agreement with all sources, that the occurrence, ferocity, and scope of the anti-gay hysteria reflected, not only Cold War anxiety, but also a dramatic narrowing of gender and sexuality definitions that occurred in the same period. It will thus be shown that these purges reflected not only a concern with national security, but an ongoing battle over the definition of normal in Cold War America. This is supported by the work of Gary Kinsman, who has noted, in the Canadian context, that the period plainly saw "an intensified policing of the boundaries of heterosexuality" that was defined in a manner clearly linking "normal" heterosexuality with

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 315-7.

national security.<sup>27</sup> The findings of Kinsman and May are supported by those of Mary Louise Adams, who has closely studied Canada's Cold War culture.<sup>28</sup>

The approach of this thesis is both topical and chronological. The first chapter illustrates historical context, exploring the wartime experience, especially the concurrent rise of psychiatric concepts of homosexuality, to reveal the extent to which they laid the groundwork for subsequent events. The second chapter, covering roughly 1945 to 1950, traces the emergence of the Cold War and its resulting security concerns, as well as the evolution of "domestic containment" as the period's social reality. This chapter explores the transformation of homosexuality from a moral concern to a political one, with reference to the publication of the Kinsey Report, the "gendering" of public policy, and the growing interest of government and politicians in the "problem" posed by gay employees. Chapter Three traces the pivotal events of 1950 resulting in the construction of a full-scale gay security threat for the first time. This chapter is central to the thesis as a whole, in that it illustrates in new detail the specific process by which the American government developed an anti-gay security obsession and turned that obsession into action. Chapter Four, ending circa 1955, pays special attention to the investigations and countermeasures that characterized the purges, as well as the spread of anti-gay security anxiety throughout American society at large. While the long struggle of gay rights and civil liberties groups to overturn these measures is not the primary subject of this thesis, for the sake of clarity and closure, the final chapter describes the origins of gay resistance in the face of this repression, with particular emphasis on the degree to which anti-gay Cold War repression directly contributed to the ongoing struggle for gay and lesbian equality in the United States.

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<sup>27</sup> Gary Kinsman, "Constructing Gay Men and Lesbians as National Security Risks, 1950-70" in Gary Kinsman, Dieter Buse, and Mercedes Steedman (ed.) Whose National Security? Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2000), p. 148.

<sup>28</sup> Mary Louise Adams, The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 38.

## Chapter 1 War and Sexual Deviance.

The Cold War security purges of real and suspected gays can only be understood against the period in which they occurred. The simple reason for this is that the purges themselves could only have been carried out, in the way they were, within the unique political and cultural climate of the Cold War era. This is evidenced by the fact that, while “immoral conduct” had been grounds for dismissal at least since the Theodore Roosevelt administration,<sup>1</sup> no significant investigation of “immorality” in the Civil Service took place until the late 1940s. When the employment of gays became a public and political concern, the investigation and removal of suspects exploded in both scope and apparent urgency seemingly overnight. While this new attention can, to some extent, be explained by official Washington’s sudden “discovery” that homosexuals existed, the level of alarm that followed that discovery was a direct product of larger developments in the postwar United States.

This chapter will examine the process by which the unique postwar context evolved, with particular emphasis on the attitudes towards gays and deviance that were in turn produced by that era. As with any period, several factors contributed to the atmosphere of the postwar decade and its values, the most important of which were the experience and legacy of the Second World War.

Even before the war, gays and lesbians had been subjected to new degrees of regulation and marginalizing. By destroying the ability of many men to be providers for their families, the Depression also threatened male gender identity, with the added result of increasing animosity toward those who transgressed gender boundaries. For the first time, not only homosexual acts, but now also homosexual solicitation became an explicit crime, contributing to intensified secrecy and discretion in gay social life. In the media, gays were increasingly cast as sinister,

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<sup>1</sup> David Johnson, ““Homosexual Citizens”: Washington’s Gay Community Confronts the Civil Service.” In *Washington History*, Fall/Winter 1994-95, p. 48.

predatory degenerates.<sup>2</sup> This foreshadowed postwar anxiety, as, in George Chauncey's words, "the specter of the invisible homosexual, like that of the invisible communist, haunted Cold War America."<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to overestimate the long-term impact of the Second World War in American history. The experience of national mobilization and total war associated with the war effort surpassed anything in previous American experience. The war had a direct and lasting impact both on the way in which gays were perceived and dealt with by society and on the formation of postwar attitudes and lifestyles in general.

As with the Civil Service and society as a whole, the United States military had contained homosexuals long before their presence became a significant issue. However, the tremendous mobilization of manpower and expansion of the armed forces that followed the American entry into the war also dramatically increased the numbers of gays in uniform. In relatively short order the forces found themselves in the position of having to deal with large numbers of homosexuals, who were legally barred from military service, for the first time. This became an issue of practical logistics as well as policy and morality, given the thousands of servicemen who were identified as gay over the course of the war. The armed forces found that they had no procedures or mechanisms in place adequate to the task of dealing with such swollen numbers of a group considered wholly and inherently "undesirable." Therefore, fresh policies and methods had to be formulated to address the newly important issue of gays in the military.

World War II was not of course the first encounter between homosexuals and the American military. At the end of the World War I era, there was a notable scandal involving the large naval station at Newport, Rhode Island. In 1919, the local Navy authorities, with the knowledge of both Secretary Josephus Daniels and Assistant Secretary Franklin Roosevelt, embarked on a program to entrap and prosecute homosexuals who consorted with servicemen.

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<sup>2</sup> George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pp. 353-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

While entrapment itself had been standard practice for decades, in this case the sailor volunteers were encouraged, not only to interact with homosexuals, but to “allow certain immoral acts to be performed for the purpose of securing evidence.”<sup>4</sup> While this policy eventually led to considerable scandal, this was based on public distaste that servicemen would be used in such duty. At no point were the investigating sailors considered to be homosexuals themselves, and they were exempted from prosecution. Indeed, the attitude of a later Senate investigation was entirely sympathetic toward these men, while highly critical of their superiors.<sup>5</sup> That same year, 1919, also marked the first time that sodomy was included as a specific offense under the Articles of War.<sup>6</sup>

Within the community of men who engaged in homosexual sex, most did not consider themselves to be “homosexual” at all (in the sense of “queer” as it was then understood), nor were they so considered by their peers or sex partners. These men defined the gay-straight demarcation according to gender roles (how “manly” or “womanly” one behaved) rather than sexual activity. In this context, only men who were effeminate and/or played the passive role in sex between males were considered “queer.”<sup>7</sup> This lends credence to the constructionist view of homosexual identity. Historian George Chauncey has suggested a need for scholars to distinguish clearly between “homosexual behaviour,” which simply exists and “homosexual identity,” (in the sense of conscious self-image or “ethnic” identification), which is specific to place and period. He further points out that, to a large extent, the boundaries established between

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Senate, 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, Committee on Naval Affairs, Alleged Immoral Conditions At Newport (R.I.) Naval Training Station Report... Washington, 1921, pp. 4-5, in Government versus Homosexuals (New York: Arno Press, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Randy Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming: Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> George Chauncey, *Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era* in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr, Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: New American Library, 1989), p. 297.

sexual and non-sexual relations are culturally determined.<sup>8</sup> One need only consider the many contextual variations on the kiss to see the validity of that position. Chauncey's argument appears to be legitimized by the wartime and Cold War developments addressed by this thesis, as shifts in public perception and government policy (addressed in later chapters) clearly affected not only the definition of and attitude to homosexuality, but also the sense among gay people of themselves as "homosexuals" rather than people who engaged in homosexuality. The defining boundaries of "homosexuality," especially as a "perversion," have thus been subject to ongoing dispute, negotiation, definition, and redefinition over time.

Prior to the American entry into the war in 1941, the standard penalty handed down to homosexuals discovered in the ranks (a rarer event in the much smaller prewar military) was a period of imprisonment in military prisons or federal penitentiaries, where they would serve alongside hardened criminals. Sentences could range as long as five years for Army personnel, and ten to twelve years for naval personnel, and frequently included hard labor. Once the war effort had begun in earnest, this method became increasingly impractical given the exponential growth in the military population and the corresponding increase in the portion of that number found to be homosexual or, more accurately, to have engaged in homosexual activity. The added burden on the military prison system resulting from this overall growth became problematic, and so some in the armed forces and its civilian administration began to search for alternative methods of removing homosexuals from the active military population. In time a growing number of officials and military psychiatrists came to see the option of complete discharge from the forces as the most easily managed method for the removal of homosexuals and similar deviants. Even before psychiatrists and their allies began lobbying for new policies, many commanders had largely abandoned the prosecution of homosexual soldiers in favour of general

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 315-7.

discharges for reasons of bad character.<sup>9</sup> Despite initial War Department reaffirmations of the penal approach in 1941, general officers were among the earliest proponents of reform, as administrative discharge proceedings were faster and more efficient at dealing with the growing numbers of cases involving homosexuality. Criticism of the penal approach grew in the early months of full mobilization.<sup>10</sup>

While in most respects more humane than imprisonment, dishonorable discharges carried their own stigma and, more importantly, excluded their recipients from most veterans' benefits and many kinds of employment, especially in the public sector. In this respect they acted much like a criminal record. This was seen in some quarters as an unnecessarily harsh long-term penalty, most notably among the military's medical and new psychiatric practitioners. In an example of somewhat propitious timing, the military had to deal with its homosexual problem in the same period when the field of psychiatry was becoming increasingly mainstream and influential, and when many in that field were changing the definition of homosexuality from a merely immoral activity to a certified mental condition, to be treated as such.<sup>11</sup> Army and Navy psychiatrists, among the first in their profession to examine large numbers of homosexual case files, were thus to have a sweeping influence on how homosexuality was understood and addressed, not only in the military, but also in the society at large.

Among the many results of this conjunction of events was the start of a push throughout 1942 toward alternatives to the dishonorable discharge for gays. Medical officers, especially psychiatrists, throughout the armed forces lobbied hard for homosexual cases to be dealt with through medical channels, and by medical means, rather than as matters of military justice. This movement received vital support both from the Surgeon General's Office and from the National Research Council's Committee on Neuropsychiatry, whose chairman, Colonel Winfred

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<sup>9</sup>Allan Bérubé, Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two (New York: The Free Press, 1990), pp. 128-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

Overholser, was both an Army psychiatrist and a vocal proponent of the medical/psychiatric approach to homosexual removal. Gradually, high-ranking officials in the Navy Department began to be won over to this view. Both the Chief of Naval Personnel and the Navy Surgeon General became supporters of a shift toward the psychiatric approach. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the psychiatric consultants in the office of the Army Surgeon General concurred with the assessment of their counterparts in the Navy.<sup>12</sup>

The most immediate effect of this combined lobbying was a shift in the nature of gay-related discharges. Homosexual cases gradually came to be covered under the category of “Undesirable” rather than “Dishonorable” discharge. The Undesirable category had been designed to deal with those classified as psychiatric social misfits. An example of the former is the so-called “Section 8” discharge for those diagnosed with a clinical psychosis. While certainly not ideal from the point of view of a gay soldier (for example it still denied many veterans’ benefits and, significantly, categorized a homosexual as a “sexual psychopath”), this was a vast improvement over inclusion in the same category as habitual criminals or chronic deserters. Some medical officers proposed going still further, advocating that homosexuals receive honorable medical discharges. While this view did not carry the day (even among military psychiatrists), it evidences the breadth of discussion on the issue. By January 1943 both Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox were issuing policy directives related to homosexuality that were generally supportive of the psychiatric approach. The American Medical Association hailed the various changes in military policy as welcome reforms. By 1944 the new, less punitive discharge system was the norm throughout the armed forces.<sup>13</sup>

While on the surface this change may seem primarily administrative, rather than social, in its motivation and purpose, its effect on the nature of homosexuality in the United States was

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4, 136.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40, 143.

fundamental and far-reaching. In the first place, the shift toward the new discharge system was a major reform in the way public institutions dealt with homosexuals and in the way homosexuality was conceptualized in mainstream, heterosexual American society. The idea of homosexuals as a distinct minority within society became one of the legacies of the war.<sup>14</sup> Ironically, another, entirely unintended, legacy of the war was directly linked to this increased sense of gay people as an identifiable social group. Washington, DC, is one of the best examples of this process. The immense proliferation of Federal agencies and jobs during Roosevelt's Depression-era "New Deal" had unintentionally brought huge numbers of gay people into urban centres and government employment. This increased population density had led to a corresponding openness and the creation of a much-expanded gay social sphere. While this was perhaps especially true in Washington, the phenomenon was repeated throughout urban America in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>15</sup> This expansion of the urban gay subculture was dramatically intensified by World War II, as mobilization had brought gays into large-scale contact with each other to a degree far beyond anything previously experienced. Literally hundreds of thousands of people, naturally including a substantial gay and lesbian cohort, passed through the metropolitan areas in the course of wartime duty. Among the many that stayed were large numbers of gays attracted to the new freedom they found in cities like Washington, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. These numbers were further reinforced by an enormous influx of new students, veterans pursuing educational opportunities financed by the G.I. Bill, into urban universities.<sup>16</sup> This concentrated population increase, combined with the idea of a distinct homosexual minority, contributed directly to the emergence and expansion of a single, albeit geographically splintered, gay community within American society. The development of a gay community in turn sowed

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>15</sup> David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-3.

seeds of later activism, solidarity and resistance.<sup>17</sup> This may in fact be the single most important development in the whole history of gays and lesbians in United States.

On balance, the Second World War marks a positive turning point in the history of homosexuality (although its effect in the medium term was far from universally positive or progressive). The military, as a preeminent institution in American life, and the psychiatric profession, as an emerging, expanding force in society, between them established a sort of template for subsequent approaches to homosexual issues by other institutions, such as the government and the medical community. While the immediate effect of the changes in approach to homosexuality can be judged to have been essentially progressive, the seeds of a more negative impact were included within those same changes. Chief among these was the change in definitions of “homosexual” and “homosexuality” from a basis in homosexual acts to one of an inherent condition of *being* homosexual (author’s emphasis). This is not to suggest that this new conception was itself either negative or inaccurate, but rather that the application of that concept by the heterosexual majority and its institutions frequently would be.

While this sense of homosexuality, and indeed of sexuality in general, as a state of being continues to be the standard definition of the concept in today’s society, in the context of the 1940s and after it contained a negative effect in terms of law and attitudes. Since there was no longer any distinction between homosexual acts and homosexual persons, the very state of being homosexual could now be (and soon was) subject to the same punitive judgments and actions as homosexual acts had long been.<sup>18</sup> There can be no doubt that this sense of homosexuality as inextricable from the personality had an impact on the extent to which it subsequently became a security concern.

Much more than the understanding of homosexuality was altered by the wartime experience. It has been convincingly argued by historians such as Robert Dean that the very

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<sup>17</sup> Bérubé, p. 256.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

conception of American manhood, along with its corresponding gender role, was significantly redefined by the war and especially service in it. Describing the nature of postwar political life, Dean specifically notes the increased importance being placed on the “public” performance of “respectable” masculinity<sup>19</sup> in this period. One consequence of this “gender shift” was that homosexuality and other forms of sexual non-conformity came to be seen as signs of unsuitability, not only for military service, but for membership in the larger American community itself. Identifying and removing sexual deviants became exponentially more important to the maintenance of a healthy society as it was then understood. This “purifying” impulse was, if anything, assigned even greater importance in the context of a healthy political order. The war had largely ingrained in the American mentality the view that a particular kind of masculinity: strong, bold, and “two-fisted,” was essential to the strength of American character and leadership, and by extension, to the continued survival of the United States as a great society. Masculinity and “republican virtue” were largely viewed as synonymous. Homosexuality was not merely deviant in this framework, it was a dangerous force with the potential to weaken, soften, and sap the most important elements of society: manhood, family, and heroic leadership.<sup>20</sup> While homosexuality had long been considered a sign of weakness, especially in men, at the individual level, it must be argued that the intensified sense of it as a cause of weakness within the culture at large was a direct consequence of the increased importance placed on a wartime standard of masculinity.

Dean argues that many Cold War national security personnel, especially during the Kennedy and Johnson years, looked back on their World War II military service not only as a source of understandable pride, but, more fundamentally, as proof of their own civic virtue. Military service, as a recognized badge of manhood, thus helped legitimize their subsequent claim to political power. Future Johnson-era Assistant Secretary of State Roger Hilsman, for

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Dean, Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-8.

example, expressed the belief that battlefield courage was a central defining feature for both manhood and adulthood. One can readily extrapolate this attitude across the World War II generation as a whole. Returning veterans, confident in their masculine credentials and established commitment to the national interest, would carry that belief into civilian life and public service. In the Cold War era, with its central priority on defence and national security, men of proven masculinity would be highly prized in security and leadership roles, whether they had been Supreme Commanders, torpedo boat captains, or tail gunners. When, in 1961, Roger Hilsman was nominated to head the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, he found his confirmation surprisingly swift, due in large part to the respect and confidence engendered by his record as a decorated and wounded O.S.S (Office of Strategic Services) guerilla. Even long-time "Red hunter" Republican Senator Karl Mundt, no friend to Democratic administrations, endorsed Hilsman enthusiastically.<sup>21</sup>

One can see the roots of later national security concerns in the findings of military psychiatrists and investigators during the war, or, perhaps more accurately, in the ways in which those findings were interpreted. For example, Army and Navy psychiatrists identified what they characterized as three broad defining "traits" among their homosexual patients, traits which they then projected onto the homosexual population as a whole. These supposed common traits were effeminacy, a sense of superiority, and fear.<sup>22</sup> Stereotyped views of homosexuals caught gay soldiers in a Catch-22 when dealing with investigators, psychiatrists, or other officials. Those who reacted aggressively or assertively to pressure were judged to be flighty and impulsive. Those who were acquiescent were considered simply weak. The tendency of gays to socialize primarily with each other was interpreted as a sort of "barricade" strategy of cliquishness on their part that was seen as suspicious.<sup>23</sup> These perceptions played directly into the gender norms of the period by emphasizing those elements of the gay image that were "unmanly," such as

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 38, 56, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Bérubé, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 157-8.

flightiness or effeminacy of any kind, as well as those that simply deviated from established social (especially family) norms, such as the tendency of gays to congregate to an “unhealthy” extent. These contributed to the increasingly negative perception of gays in the postwar period, when adherence to social norms became even more intensely promoted, especially in areas relating to sex, gender, and the family. This foreshadows later security concerns, as deviance of any kind gradually becomes associated with active malice toward and sedition within the community.

There was much more to the war years than the military experience alone. Other developments were to have equally profound consequences for the subsequent construction of a gay national security threat. Elaine Tyler May has pointed out that popular culture during the war gave steadily greater primacy to “healthy” sexuality as a central feature of both male and female identities.<sup>24</sup> In the case of women, “healthy” was defined in the context of domesticity and subordination. Male sexuality was likewise being domesticated, with an emphasis in that case on authority within home and family and on the role of material provider.<sup>25</sup> The increasingly rigid and unambiguous gender roles emerging from the war, coupled with an explosion in the rate of marriage and births, placed a significantly greater than ordinary social emphasis on the heterosexual norm.<sup>26</sup> The expectations associated with this norm, such as starting a family, were becoming ever more difficult to avoid, while the stigma attached to such avoidance was itself growing.<sup>27</sup>

Not surprisingly, external events were also to have lasting significance. By far the most important of these were the widening cracks in the wartime “Grand Alliance,” in which the United States and the Soviet Union were obviously key members. Relations between these two powers, soon to be co-dominant in world affairs, had never been fully comfortable or devoid of

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<sup>24</sup> Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

animosity. Their alliance existed solely out of a shared self-interest in destroying their common fascist enemies, and it would not long survive the end of the war.<sup>28</sup> Obviously the near bellicosity that followed the demise of the Soviet-American alliance was the central factor in postwar anxiety about national security. It is doubtful that any sustained effort to purge homosexuals (or even Communists) from government employment would have occurred in the absence of Cold War tension.

Amid the much more dramatic developments on the battlefields, and in the cabinet rooms and urban demimonde of World War II, occurred a seemingly small event that, like an undersea earthquake, went largely unnoticed at the time, but was to have significant postwar aftershocks. In 1943, the Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, resigned from the government and retired from public life. Welles was one of the most experienced and powerful men in the American foreign policy establishment, and a personal friend since his childhood of both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Though never a formal member of the Cabinet, Welles effectively ran the State Department, much to the chagrin of Secretary of State Cordell Hull, whose own appointment had been made purely for partisan political reasons. The official reason given for the departure of Welles was partly true, that he had lost an internal power struggle with Hull. But the cause of this defeat was kept quiet, and had been kept quiet, not least through the influence of President Roosevelt, for the three years prior to Welles's resignation. The real reason for his sudden departure was a homosexual scandal. In 1940, while returning to Washington from the funeral of Speaker of the House William Bankhead, the twice-married Welles had drunkenly propositioned several railway porters on the train carrying the official delegation. The incident had been discreetly covered up by the White House, with help from obscure Missouri Senator Harry S. Truman, but Secretary Hull and Ambassador William Bullitt, both old Welles enemies, were eventually able to leverage the risk of scandal to convince both

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<sup>28</sup> Martin McCauley, The Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1949 (second edition). (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 6-7.

Welles and Roosevelt that the Undersecretary should leave to avoid damaging the Administration. Years later, when the hunt for gay Federal employees was heating up, the real reason for Welles's resignation was dramatically revealed and used as ammunition against the "effeteness" of the Eastern establishment, and a supposed freemasonry of homosexual public servants.<sup>29</sup> Later chapters will expand on the political resonance of this revelation.

During the war itself, attitudes toward gays did not in most cases become more positive as a result of the military discharge reforms. For example, the Army Chief of Chaplains, Major General William Arnold, referred to homosexuals as "a vicious influence" within the armed forces, foreshadowing a very similar description by Senator Kenneth Wherry in 1950.<sup>30</sup> In short, while the conception of homosexuals had changed during and as a result of the wartime experience, the perception of homosexuals did not change in any positive way. Thus, the shift toward a medical/psychiatric approach to homosexuality took place within a cultural framework that was and remained essentially anti-gay, and so the most that can be said of the immediate effect of the wartime changes on American culture was that it became anti-gay in a new and more modern way.

Another direct legacy of the war for gays was the postwar expansion of the exclusionary military attitude toward them into other areas of official life and policy. In the view of this author, the significance of this development with regard to the later Civil Service attitude, while not ignored by scholars, has been underemphasized. Military indoctrination against homosexuality helped instill modern homophobia in recruits that paralleled emerging Cold War anxiety about homosexuality as a potential "menace." Military Intelligence officers, who had long been among the most stridently hostile on the issue, found postwar allies in anti-gay politicians. In Coming Out Under Fire, Allan Bérubé notes, somewhat offhandedly, that the military expansion of anti-homosexual policies during and after the war became a model for

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<sup>29</sup>Johnson, pp. 66-7.

<sup>30</sup>Bérubé, p. 162.

members of Congress who in the 1950s “launched the most aggressive attack on homosexual employees that had ever taken place in the federal government.”<sup>31</sup> While the connection between the military policies and procedures toward gays developed during the war and the subsequent actions of the larger government apparatus during the Cold War is in no way a shocking revelation, it certainly warrants greater emphasis than it has received to date.

The military experience of dealing with homosexual personnel during the Second World War has generally been treated separately (almost in isolation) from the Cold War national security push to remove gays from government service. It is a central contention of this thesis that the connection between the two is much more direct and significant than has been previously been asserted. Subsequent chapters will further illustrate that the Second World War provided much of the foundations for modern gay history as a whole. The shift in gender expectations, increased national security concerns, and the new definition of homosexuality as a mental condition would coalesce in the postwar period and have sweeping consequences for gays in American society, especially those in government service.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 264-5.

## Chapter 2 Peace, Prosperity, and Panic.

The events of World War II may at first glance seem worlds away from the postwar environment of the Civil Service. However, both the military and medical developments of the war years directly affected the postwar climate of gay life in the United States. The policy changes regarding gay dismissals and the new conception of homosexuality as a permanent personality feature, while critical, were not the most fundamental shifts. That distinction was reserved for the character of the peace. The end of hostilities in 1945 brought a new kind of global rivalry, as the United States and the Soviet Union formed the centres of emerging, competing power blocs. The new superpowers and their alliance systems came into growing opposition throughout the 1940s as each positioned itself to surpass the other in power and world influence. Suspicion had been a feature of American-Soviet relations even during the wartime alliance. Disputes over the disposition of liberated Eastern Europe at the 1945 Yalta Conference<sup>1</sup> revealed fault lines that widened in the years afterward, as the superpowers competed to install friendly regimes in nations such as Greece, Italy, Germany, and China. In short order, this emerging “Cold War” became the defining reality of world affairs, with an accompanying (largely permanent) spike in international tension.

In turn, this global tension resulted in a growing preoccupation with internal security, one verging on obsession. Deviance of any kind gradually became associated with active malice toward and sedition within the community. This intensified suspicion of non-conformity was a hallmark of the postwar American atmosphere. As the end of the 1940s approached, being an undesirable outsider in the United States was becoming ever more dangerous. Already outsiders, gay Americans, in and out of the Civil Service, were soon to become targets as well. This chapter will examine the postwar period to 1950 to illustrate the conjunction between the political, social, and scientific developments that shaped Cold War perceptions of homosexuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin, 1990), pp. 62-3.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the evolving medical-scientific conception of homosexuality and the intensifying social conservatism and conformity that paralleled Cold War anxieties.

The psychiatric view of homosexuality was itself largely in tune with these cultural mores, as evidenced in the clinical definition of a homosexual as a “sexual psychopath,”<sup>2</sup> a term which suggests, among other things, a distinctly compulsive quality to same-sex attraction, with all the unhealthy and distasteful implications of “compulsion.” Indeed, the immediate postwar decade saw the professional medical and psychological discourse about homosexuality dominated by anti-gay elements. One result of this trend was the official declaration of homosexuality as a “sociopathic personality disorder” in 1952, a view sanctioned by both the American Medical Association and American Psychiatric Association until the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> In the same period, between 1947 and 1950, the rate of military discharges on grounds of homosexuality more than tripled the wartime rate.<sup>4</sup> One is reminded of a passage in Christopher Isherwood’s 1964 novel A Single Man, in which a gay widower describes his homophobic neighbour as having exchanged the “Book and Candle” of medieval superstition for the more modern superstitions within her medical reference book. She holds the same attitude with a different excuse.<sup>5</sup>

The postwar period saw the expansion of anti-gay military attitudes into civilian society, as modern homophobia latched onto older prejudices. Previously, the military had deliberately avoided any discussion of homosexuality, believing such discussion would undermine morale. Postwar lectures to male recruits reversed this policy by actively encouraging “revulsion” of homosexuality and reinforcing the image of the homosexual as a criminal sexual psychopath. One Navy lecture explicitly linked homosexuality with horrific sex crimes, including the murder

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<sup>2</sup> Bérubé, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Isherwood, A Single Man (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1964), pp. 27-8.

and mutilation of children. Such indoctrination reinforced several central themes of Cold War homophobia and anti-gay security concerns. These included the belief that hidden sex perverts were active throughout the population and that these perverts were criminal psychopaths no different from any dangerous predator. Furthermore, the government had a duty to root out homosexuals and other perverts wherever they might be, and citizens had a duty to act as monitors and informants.<sup>6</sup>

The uniquely conservative cultural atmosphere of the postwar era was central to the unfolding of events related to gays and security concerns about them. Indeed, its significance cannot be overestimated. This thesis concurs with the argument that the gay purges could only have occurred in the unique context of the postwar decade. The set of values and lifestyles that Elaine Tyler May termed “domestic containment” was the product of several great forces that encompassed the political, economic, and social realms. In chronological terms the war was actually the second of these, as the deepest roots of containment were to be found in the 1930s, and in the tremendous hardship, privation, and dislocation of the Depression. In addition to the obvious economic difficulties, the Depression caused disruptions in home life and traditionally understood gender roles by forcing couples to delay marriage, men to leave their families to find work, and women to enter the workforce in greatly increased numbers.<sup>7</sup> This situation was further exacerbated by the outbreak of the war, the resulting military and industrial mobilization of which expanded the numbers of men separated both from families and civilian roles and the number of women seeking employment, famously in traditionally male professions.<sup>8</sup> With the end of the war and the gradual economic recovery that followed it, eventually attaining unprecedented levels of prosperity, it is unsurprising that the trend in American society would be strongly toward lifestyles whose watchwords would be comfort, safety, and certainty, the exact

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<sup>6</sup> Bérubé, pp. 263-4.

<sup>7</sup> Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

opposite of the unpredictability and constant jeopardy of the Depression and the war. The push to re-establish “traditional” family life became a central feature of the transition to postwar life.<sup>9</sup> It is perhaps more difficult for later generations to grasp the level of sheer intensity with which postwar American society pursued and defended that lifestyle. Put bluntly, conformity in all areas of life came to be considered essential to the common good, while dissidence and deviance of all kinds were increasingly subjected to attacks,<sup>10</sup> and became associated with threats to national security.<sup>11</sup>

Historian Lillian Faderman has described this period of social conservatism as “an age of authority, [constructed] in the hope that authority would set the country back in balance.”<sup>12</sup> While the memory of the travails of the 1930s and 1940s was the basic foundation upon which domestic containment was built, the postwar decade was not the same as those periods of social conservatism which had typically followed earlier wars and economic crises. This conservative era was given its singular urgency and intensity by the fact that the end of World War II had been accompanied, not by a true peace, but the new dangers of the Cold War.

Thus, it was not merely the memory of past anxiety and danger that drove Americans to shelter themselves, but a present anxiety of potential war, imagined subversion, and the new threat of nuclear destruction.<sup>13</sup> In May’s model, domestic containment can be seen as an attempt by Americans to create a bunker or bomb shelter lifestyle, an overarching psychological and cultural fortress against the real anxiety permeating the age. The family ideal was the foundation on which that fortress was built.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Estelle Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960,” in *Journal of American History*, Vol. 74, no.1, June 1987, pp. 96-7.

<sup>10</sup> Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 139-40.

<sup>11</sup> Freedman, pp. 96-7.

<sup>12</sup> Faderman, p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> May, p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

While domestic containment had many features and can be said to have informed most areas of American life and, to varying degrees, all corners of society, its chief defining characteristic was its emphasis on the preeminent value of the nuclear family and the value system that family represented. In fact, the benefits of the stable family to society were highly endorsed by postwar experts, including psychologists.<sup>15</sup> At the core of this family ideal, as with any definition of family, were the set of gender roles and sexual mores peculiar to it. The Depression and World War II had disrupted gender roles as they had been traditionally understood in the United States by rendering the male absent from the home and moving the female into the workforce to a degree that had been foreign to the American experience, surpassing even World War I in scope. One of the first steps in the construction of domestic containment was the reassertion of the older conception of gender roles.<sup>16</sup> This was not confined to the dynamic of “male breadwinner, female homemaker,” but included a concerted effort to assert male domestic authority along classically patriarchal lines. Tied in with this shift toward traditional gender roles in the home, family, and community was a dramatic narrowing and solidifying of the definitions and standards of masculinity and femininity.<sup>17</sup> In the containment culture, men and women would be judged by the extent to which they conformed to standards of social acceptability in all areas. Far from being an exception, gender roles were perhaps first in the hierarchy. Americans actively sought to meet the standards of appropriate behaviour. People who in any way did not meet these standards would commonly be stigmatized and disadvantaged.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth noting that heterosexuals were by no means exempt from potential stigma. Generation of Vipers, for example, a widely read 1940s polemic by novelist Philip Wylie, indulged in a long misogynistic rant assailing the damage wives and mothers did to American

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

men, referring to them as “spiritual saboteurs” and coining the term “Momism” to describe their impact on society. In one memorable passage, he accused the women of America of having morally raped the men by draining them of daring, imagination, and other manly virtues, and reducing them to “soulless drudgery” in order to pay for female material obsessions.<sup>19</sup>

In a more civilized vein, noted child psychologist Dr. Benjamin Spock warned that boys needed to be close to their fathers if they were going to develop manly interests and activities. If uncomfortable with or distant from his father, a boy would likely withdraw from male society and come to emulate his mother instead.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere Spock warned that an overprotective mother could produce a severely dependent child.<sup>21</sup>

It is vital to note the intensity and scope of these trends of retrenchment in order to grasp their sweeping effects. For a period of social conservatism to follow one of crisis and upheaval, such as a war or depression, is not unique to 1950s America. But this retrenchment was different. It was not merely a retreat into the peaceful domesticated life of marriage, parenthood, and home-ownership. It was like a nationwide group therapy session, embarked upon in much the same way and for many of the same reasons as psychiatric counselling would be. In the postwar/containment period technocratic professional experts, such as psychiatrists and family counsellors, reached new peaks of status and influence. These experts offered solutions and strategies, often scientific or psychological in character, which seemed tailor-made for the new worries and social problems of the Cold War era. May refers to these collectively as the “therapeutic approach,” a series of coping strategies designed and intended to help people accept and adapt to their situations.<sup>22</sup>

In this age of experts, individuals were encouraged to develop “private and personal solutions to social problems.” Family and home were emphasized as key to the entire process of

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Wylie, Generation of Vipers (New York: Pocket Books, 1962) (revised edition), p. 192.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Spock M.D., The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1957), (orig.pub. 1946), pp. 314-5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

building or rebuilding a healthy life. There was a distinct lack of emphasis on changing society or its situations instead.<sup>23</sup> Both the anxiety of the age and the new standing accorded experts are aptly reflected in the enormous increase in the amount of long-term therapy sought in the 1950s. It is also worth noting that while psychiatrists and other professionals encouraged personal “improvement” over social activism or engagement, they drew no distinction whatsoever between public and private dangers.<sup>24</sup> When reread with an eye toward gay-related issues, that sentence takes on even greater significance. Private problems can infect the public welfare. Public dangers affect private well-being. An individual, with help and willpower, can overcome personal problems. This is vital not only to him but also to his community. Therefore, the community has a stake in his improvement. “If presumably subversive individuals,” summarizes May, “could be contained and prevented from spreading their poisonous influence through the body politic, then the society could feel secure.”<sup>25</sup> The logic follows to predictable conclusions.

Because it was rooted in the family and domestic environment to a much greater extent than the political or even economic, domestic containment at its deepest core was primarily concerned with the containment of sexuality. Containment values were not anti-sex per se, but were concerned with channeling sexuality in ways considered healthy and moral in the context of the times and especially in the context of the heterosexual nuclear family.<sup>26</sup> Promiscuity, premarital sex, homosexuality, and indeed virtually all forms of sexual experimentation and non-conformity (to say nothing of “deviance”) fell well outside appropriate channels. It is in this area that the culture of domestic containment directly affects homosexuality. Sanctions against homosexual activity were not themselves a primary feature of postwar values, the real priority was the careful management of heterosexual activity, especially confining it to the marital unit. As illustrated throughout Elaine Tyler May’s Homeward Bound, sexual containment was not

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<sup>22</sup> May, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

only a feature of postwar social mores, but also actively supported by the voices of authority, including family planners, medical and mental health professionals, and much of the media and government. Failure to marry was itself a sign of immaturity and weakness; homosexuality represented this weakness at its irredeemable extreme.<sup>27</sup> Once again the personal quickly became political. The perceived negative effects of non-marital sexual activity in general and homosexuality in particular were not isolated to private life, but extrapolated across society and the political order. Just as during World War II the existence of deviant sexuality was seen as poisonous to the larger unit, so now such deviance was widely considered by government, media, health professionals and the general public to be a damaging infection within the national unit.

Even beyond this, many believed that there was a direct and natural link between “sexual depravity” and political subversion in the form of communism. The use of terms like “degeneracy” or “perversion” to describe communism or the Soviet Union, for example, would not be mere coincidence. Rather, this would reflect the widespread view that national and masculine strength were synonymous. This is an old and well-known idea. A political order in decline is often described as “decadent,” and its leaders “effete.” These gendered, sexualized terms are used to describe political realities, just as terms like “virile” or “robust” might describe a healthy order.<sup>28</sup> “Normal” male heterosexuality was explicitly associated with strength, maturity, and responsibility. By contrast, “deviant” sexuality (in all forms) was equated with immaturity, weakness, and irresponsibility. “Perverted” sexuality, as gay sexuality was considered to be, took that weakness to its extreme. A pervert had, by definition, no spine, moral

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> The role and ubiquity of such gendered characterizations in Cold War diplomatic relations (between both rivals and allies) is well encapsulated in Frank Costigliola, “The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance” in *Diplomatic History*, vol.21, Spring 1997, pp. 163-183.

strength, or healthy masculinity to steady and guide him. He was ripe for seduction, corruption, or blackmail.<sup>29</sup>

This morally and emotionally rudderless homosexual was at best an orphan on the storm to be pitied, and at worse a leper to be feared. In either guise he (or indeed she) was a potential public menace carrying a degenerative disease through the streets of American communities, or worse still, through the corridors of power. Historian John D’Emilio has noted that the Cold War convergence of political weakness and sexual deviance was almost automatic. Hawks, conservatives, and anti-Communists decried the early setbacks of the Cold War, such as the loss of China and Eastern Europe to Communism, as the fault of “effete” leaders, the mannered intellectual elite who were no longer “real men” able to take a hard line. D’Emilio compares this to the view of “weak-willed” homosexual “half-men” who “feminized” (in D’Emilio’s words) all they touched and “sapped masculine vigor.”<sup>30</sup>

Elaine Tyler May has noted that homosexuality, under the broader category of “perversion,” was a concern in postwar culture from the very start. It is worth noting that this issue was framed, not in terms of homosexuality per se, but in terms of healthy versus unhealthy heterosexuality. When World War II ended, there was a widespread worry, especially among psychiatrists, that returning veterans would not be able to readjust to civilian life or resume their “natural” roles in the family and community. The great fear was that many would become displaced or disconnected from normal civilian life and this would in turn lead to a “crisis of masculinity” whose symptoms would be crime, perversion, and homosexuality as men’s aggression and sexuality, unable to find healthy modes of expression, would sink to abnormal, unhealthy outlets.<sup>31</sup> That this anxiety was expressed almost exclusively in reference to male sexuality reveals much about the extent to which female sexuality was either ignored or

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<sup>29</sup> May, pp. 94-5.

<sup>30</sup> John D’Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

conceptualized as a complement to male sexuality in the early Cold War period. The surprising absence of subsequent scholarly reference to the place of female sexuality in the anti-gay security concerns is a frustrating legacy of that exclusion.

It is crucial to note here that homosexuality was seen as a sign of immaturity and instability not only by “elites,” such as medical professionals, but also within much of society at large. That the same view would prevail in government circles becomes less surprising.<sup>32</sup>

Jonathan Ned Katz, a social constructionist historian, has pointed out that the post-war period was defined in part by the successful reemphasis on heterosexuality and procreation by “sex-conservatives,” especially those in mental health professions.<sup>33</sup>

Linking procreation, which is “normal” and “natural” by any definition, with heterosexuality (as opposed to the single, biologically required heterosexual act leading to procreation), further marginalized homosexuality by casting it as the unnatural “Other” to “natural” heterosexuality. It drew a stark new demarcation between “gay” and “straight” identities in America. Americans who chose to live unconventional personal lives (any that did not include marriage and parenthood) were objects of suspicion, distaste, and exclusion within their communities.<sup>34</sup> The equivalent attitude within the public sector thus became part of a larger national trend. In this context, there was no fundamental difference between personal and national weakness, or between community standards and national security.

Generally then, a culture of homophobia already existed within the American cultural mainstream even before specific questions of national security began to be raised. In the public mind, homosexuality, a perversion, was directly linked to other forms of dangerous social deviance such as “drug addiction, burglary, sadism, and even murder.”<sup>35</sup> As frequently,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz, The Invention of Heterosexuality (New York: Plume, 1995), p. 96.

<sup>34</sup> D’Emilio, p. 96.

<sup>35</sup> Faderman, p. 145.

homosexuals were portrayed as essentially predatory,<sup>36</sup> with an image in the media of the “corruptor.”<sup>37</sup> In short order, homophobia gave way to a broader and more intense sexual paranoia, of which homosexuality was but one target (albeit a principle one). In Sex-Crime Panic, Neil Miller, echoing earlier work by Estelle Freedman, points out that the late 1940s and early 1950s were characterized by an especially intense period of public and official alarm over a perceived (but largely non-existent) increase in sex-related crimes across the United States. Miller explicitly links this atmosphere of sexual panic to the simultaneous wave of Cold War paranoia and anxiety. The concept of an “enemy within” already preoccupied much public attention. The precise nature of that enemy could be molded in fevered imaginations to fit any anxiety, whether political, sexual, or otherwise.<sup>38</sup>

A revealing example of what might be called the “common man” view of homosexuals in the period is found in the 1951 book Washington Confidential by muckraking journalists Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer. While undeniably a tabloid piece, Washington Confidential offered genuine insight into the demimonde of post-war Washington. In a chapter titled “The Garden of Pansies,” the authors showed a surprisingly well-informed knowledge of gay life and affairs within the capital. They referred to the 1950 Peurifoy revelations (discussed in Chapter 3) that “more than 90 twisted twerps in trousers had been swished out of the State Department,” and speculated that “at least 6,000” more were employed in the Civil Service.<sup>39</sup> In a relatively rare period reference to gay women, Lait and Mortimer patronizingly referred to the shortage of single men in Washington as a factor in the city’s “large incidence of Lesbianism.”<sup>40</sup> Reflecting the growing Cold War consensus on the matter, they noted that while “Fairies are no more disloyal than the normal,” they could be blackmailed and were more readily influenced by sex

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>37</sup> Bérubé, pp. 258-9.

<sup>38</sup> Neil Miller, Sex-Crime Panic: A Journey To The Paranoid Heart Of The 1950s (New York: Alyson, 2002), p. 78.

<sup>39</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, Washington Confidential (New York: Dell, 1951), p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

than others. Quoting Nebraska Congressman A.L. Miller M.D., they claimed that the Soviets made active use of homosexuals in espionage, using trained infiltrators for entrapment. Though not naming the now deceased Sumner Welles, they referred to the specific details of his downfall as well.<sup>41</sup>

In the late 1940s gays were increasingly linked to and interchangeable with sex criminals in the popular imagination and the tabloid press, an “Invisible Enemy.”<sup>42</sup> This term was also used to describe Communists. The line between “deviance” and “subversion” had already begun to blur. The association with crime was more than just a stereotype. Between 1945 and 1955, 21 states and the District of Columbia, supported by many in the psychiatric community, passed sex psychopath laws. Arrests of gays increased significantly, as charges could stem from acts as varied as consensual sex, soliciting sex, or being present in a gay bar. Some of those who were convicted went to prison, others to mental hospitals. All were required to register as sex offenders.<sup>43</sup> An entire new class of criminal was created nearly overnight. In a strange irony, while open discussion of homosexuality remained uncommon, public and official anxiety about it was steadily growing as part of the more general fear of deviant or unrestrained sexuality.

In the same period in which sex psychopath laws were being enacted, a range of new national security measures was also being established in response to escalating Cold War tension. Among the most notable of these measures were the passage of the 1947 National Security Act (which established procedures and policies for the gathering of intelligence and maintenance of official secrets)<sup>44</sup> and the beginning of the unification of the armed forces under a single Joint Chiefs of Staff (completed in 1949). In 1947 the National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), and Department of Defense (following the merger of the old War and Navy

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-4.

<sup>42</sup> Bérubé, p. 258.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 258-9.

Departments) were created. While it would be years before these reached the eventual apogee of their power, the roots of the so-called “National Security State” were already in place even as the sex-crime panic further transformed homosexuality into a national security issue.

From the start, some critical observers feared that the 1947 loyalty measures, which seemed to emphasize circumstantial over proven guilt, might result in an accused person becoming unemployable.<sup>45</sup> The basic Loyalty program within the Civil Service was established by President Truman’s 1947 Executive Order 9835.<sup>46</sup> The order focused on active disloyalty, rather than security risks, concerning the new system mainly with seditious acts or associations (such as communist or fascist groups).<sup>47</sup> A Loyalty Review Board was set up within the Civil Service Commission to oversee and implement these new protocols.<sup>48</sup> These various security measures were followed, not by alleviation of anxiety over national security, but by its worsening due to a series of crises in 1948. One of the most notable was the accusation of espionage and treason against Alger Hiss, a highly respected former State Department official.<sup>49</sup> Though never formally indicted on the spy charge, Hiss was subsequently convicted of perjury.

The Hiss case not only intensified fear of internal security threats, but also cast general suspicion on the entire eastern patrician class and the foreign policy establishment of which Hiss had been an almost archetypal member.<sup>50</sup> This suspicion, it is critical to note, was based on not only the supposed ideological unreliability of the elites, but on their imagined effete-ness, exotic

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Dean, Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> Eleanor Bontecou, The Federal-Loyalty Security Program (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953), p. 31.

<sup>46</sup> President Harry S. Truman, *Executive Order 9835, March 21, 1947*, reproduced in Ellen Schrecker, The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Association of the Bar of the City of New York, Report of the Special Committee on the Federal Loyalty-Security Program (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co, 1956), pp. 236-7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>49</sup> Whittaker Chambers, *Testimony before HUAC*, Aug. 7, 1948 in Ellen Schrecker, The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents. (second edition) (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 143.

<sup>50</sup> Dean, p. 165.

sexual proclivities, and a pronounced failure to fit into new stereotypes of normal masculine behaviour. The anti-communist Right, especially with regard to the State Department, conflated this image of emasculated elites with what it saw as failures of strength and diplomacy in opposing Communist expansion at Yalta and elsewhere to manufacture a class of officials whose inherent weakness was a clear threat to the survival of American power.<sup>51</sup> The intense dichotomy between conformity and deviance in the postwar United States was steadily building, and resulted, in part, in a significant increase in pressure on the already marginalized gay population. Intense scapegoating accompanied the idealization of the heterosexual family and its associated gender roles.<sup>52</sup>

As the United States approached the end of the decade and the Cold War intensified, anxiety about homosexuals and their place in society, far from subsiding, was about to begin in earnest. By the end of 1948, the United States and the Soviet Union would come dangerously close to war following the Soviet blockade of Berlin (then jointly occupied by the Allied Powers).<sup>53</sup> With stakes so high, for any person or group to be perceived to be weak, or worse still as contributing to weakness, was now very dangerous.

In the midst of this charged atmosphere, Indiana University zoologist Alfred Kinsey published Sexual Behavior in the Human Male in 1948, and permanently shifted the boundaries of sexual discussion in American society. As reading material, the Kinsey Report, as this study came to more commonly called, is as dust-dry a text as one could hope to find. But its contents were earth-shattering in what they revealed about sex and sexuality. No subject was beyond Kinsey's range, whether premarital sex, adultery, masturbation, bestiality, sexual techniques, or homosexuality.<sup>54</sup> The book became an instant runaway bestseller, going through five full printings in its first month of publication alone. Among other reactions, whether shock,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. pp. 72-3.

<sup>52</sup> Bérubé, pp. 257-8.

<sup>53</sup> Yergin, p. 378.

fascination, titillation or outrage, the Kinsey Report and its author were accused of aiding Communism, presumably by encouraging sexual degeneracy in some way.<sup>55</sup>

Kinsey's chapter "Homosexual Outlet" was wedged neatly between "Intercourse With Prostitutes" and "Animal Contacts" and gained immediate and lasting attention. Apart from its frank discussion of a taboo subject, the chapter shocked readers with its assertion, based on empirical scientific research, that homosexual activity was so common as to be commonplace in the male population. According to Kinsey's data, "at least 37 percent" of American men had had some post-pubescent homosexual experience to the point of orgasm. For men who remained unmarried until age 35 or older, this figure approached 50 percent.<sup>56</sup> In his next paragraph, Kinsey stated these estimates were probably understatements, given that social taboos discouraged the admission of such experiences. In fact, wrote Kinsey, "persons with homosexual histories are to be found in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation, in cities and on farms, and in the most remote areas of the country."<sup>57</sup> He further stated that, while 50 percent of men were exclusively heterosexual, at least 4 percent were exclusively homosexual, with fully 46 percent of men falling into intermediate categories.<sup>58</sup> One man in 13 was "exclusively homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55." Twenty-five percent had "more than incidental" homosexual experience during the same period, while 4 percent were entirely homosexual throughout their lives.<sup>59</sup>

As controversial as its content already was, Kinsey concluded the chapter by dropping a final bombshell. His data showed that homosexuality was not a rare deviation from a heterosexual norm, but a "statistically common occurrence."<sup>60</sup> Put baldly, homosexuals existed,

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<sup>54</sup> Alfred Kinsey et al, Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1948), pp. xii-xv.

<sup>55</sup> May, p. 101.

<sup>56</sup> Kinsey, p. 623.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 625-7

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 656.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 650-1.

<sup>60</sup> Bérubé, pp. 259-60.

and existed in large numbers. They persisted in such numbers regardless of any stigma, restriction, or “treatment” that society had imposed. They would reappear in large numbers in every successive generation. Therefore, efforts to eliminate, prevent, or condemn homosexuality were pointless, illogical, and counter-productive. Kinsey’s implications were unmistakable. Homosexuality was a fact of human life so common as to be considered naturally occurring. Society was better served by accepting that idea than by opposing it.<sup>61</sup>

While many experts disputed the specifics of Kinsey’s data,<sup>62</sup> the assertion that homosexuals were more common than previously believed found a ready audience in a public already gripped by anxiety about sexual deviation. Public discussion of homosexuality, which had previously been avoided in most circles, significantly increased.<sup>63</sup> However, Kinsey’s assertion about the prevalence of homosexual activity had the reverse of his intended effect. Most (heterosexual) people were simply alarmed. In an era when no distinctions were drawn between types of sexual deviance, the community at large reacted as they would have at learning that pedophiles were a “statistically common occurrence.” Those who refused to accept the Kinsey findings attacked the author himself, accusing him of subversion and creating a “myth of a new national disease” that America’s enemies could exploit and propagandize.<sup>64</sup> The gradually increasing number of dismissals of gays from government jobs in the late 1940s reflected the extent to which general discomfort with deviant behavior was already widespread. The security issue had not yet been directly attached to gays, but an employee as obscure as a caretaker at the Botanical Gardens was subject to dismissal just the same.<sup>65</sup> This does not mean that the security

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<sup>61</sup> Kinsey, pp. 665-6.

<sup>62</sup> A notable example is found in Sexual Behavior in American Society: An Appraisal of the First Two Kinsey Reports (New York: Norton, 1955), edited by Jerome Himelhoch and Sylvia Fleis Fava. This is a collection of anti-Kinsey articles by members of the Society for the Study of Sexual Problems, an association of legitimate scholars and scientists. The contents deride everything from the methodology of the Kinsey study to its impact on marriage, the family, child development, and society in general.

<sup>63</sup> Bérubé, p. 260.

<sup>64</sup> Faderman, p. 140.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 141.

issue had no impact. The numbers of dismissals averaged 5 per month prior to 1950, when security concerns about gays were first raised in earnest, at which point they reached 60 per month.<sup>66</sup>

Even before the critical developments of 1950, the link between sexual deviance and social/political subversion was already considered a natural one. Elaine Tyler May has noted that the link was often made between subversion and other deviations, like homosexuality, which could be traced backward to environmental factors such as errors in parenting. It was believed, for example, that a neglectful or overindulgent mother could plant seeds of abnormality in a child that might “out” later in deviant adult behavior. In this period, the term “Momism” was coined (by novelist Philip Wylie) to describe a perceived social problem stemming from smothering, emasculating mothers.<sup>67</sup>

While the Kinsey Report did not spark the intense sexual paranoia that May and others have associated with the postwar period, it unquestionably fueled that paranoia. The social context into which the Kinsey data was published was already ripe with alarm and suspicion about uncontained or deviant sexuality. May has described the postwar public concern about so-called “sexual psychopaths” as a hysteria. It reached the point that any adult who did not follow the “natural” and expected pattern of marriage and parenthood was “risking being perceived as perverted, immoral, unpatriotic, pathological.”<sup>68</sup> The passage of sex psychopath laws in dozens of states in the postwar decade was symptomatic of this frightened atmosphere. Historian Estelle Freedman has described all of these developments collectively as a new nationwide wave of “sex-crime panic.” This panic had no concrete basis in the actual numbers of sex crimes committed during the period, or in any significant increase in those numbers.<sup>69</sup> The roots of this hysteria were clearly in the underlying public insecurity rather than in any verifiable threat. Thus,

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<sup>66</sup> Bérubé, p.269.

<sup>67</sup> May, p. 96.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-6.

<sup>69</sup> Freedman, p. 84.

homosexuality became a topic of intensified visibility and discussion at the precise moment when it was most likely to become a target of genuine fear and loathing.

These developments cannot be separated from the Cold War that was emerging in the same years. It was within this Cold War context that government became a particular target of “gay-baiting”, and in which the idea of the homosexual as security risk began to blossom for the first time. It has already been noted that political and masculine weaknesses were already conflated in the minds of many. Cold War setbacks were automatically associated with weakness (or overt treason), a weakness that could be localized in an “enfeebled” leader class. One reason why the State Department was always a favourite target of countersubversive accusation and attack was that its officials conformed to stereotypes of effiteness and the worst kind of cosmopolitan (i.e., licentious) morality, as well as being supposedly receptive to unorthodox political ideas. These stereotypes were also associated with homosexuality. Thus, the attacks on the State Department were intended to reassert normalcy and purity, not only in ideological terms, but also sexual ones.<sup>70</sup>

These biases were greatly exacerbated by parallel developments. The creation of a national security system in 1947, rather than reassuring people that new Cold War dangers were being met, instead intensified fears of real and imagined internal threats to the political and social order. While Communist spies and dupes were the most obvious targets of these fears, suspicion automatically included any potential subversive. Homosexuals were high on that list, since it was assumed that they were easily pressured, even before Kinsey’s estimates of their numbers and ubiquity were published, at which point anxiety intensified. Perceived homosexual or otherwise “unmanly” behaviour, even more so than Communism, was frequently attached to elite groups in public service and society as evidence of the constitutional unfitness of those elites to safeguard the national interest. Like homosexuality, Communism was frequently characterized as a disease, one that sought and exploited weakness to infect and destroy the

whole body of society. While any “weakling” was judged to be potentially dangerous, homosexuals were considered particularly vulnerable for, aside from lacking strength, they were also a type of addict, unable to deny their appetites no matter what the cost might be. This sense of homosexual unfitness was aggravated by the ability of a homosexual to go unnoticed within the population.

The Kinsey Report had established the idea that homosexuals made up a substantial number of people in the United States, while the main body of medical, psychiatric, and social science opinion advanced the notion that all these homosexuals were potentially dangerous sexual predators. This view was further reinforced by much of the news media (especially the tabloid press), which actively played up the widespread hysteria about sex criminals (into which category gays were casually bundled).<sup>71</sup> It followed that a homosexual was considered by security experts, journalists, politicians, medical professionals, and many, if not most, ordinary people to be a natural and pre-existing infiltrator.<sup>72</sup> This was the situation before any scandalous revelation, without any concrete evidence or even direct accusation of subversion, treason, or espionage by any homosexual anywhere in the American government. It was a situation founded on suspicion and paranoia. It required only a spark to trigger a full-scale “pink” terror.

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<sup>70</sup> Dean, pp. 65-6.

<sup>71</sup> David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004), pp.56-8.

<sup>72</sup> Dean, pp.67-8.

### Chapter 3 1950: “Corrosive Influence.”

The growing anxiety about gays in American society, whether in or out of government, required only a catalyzing event to expand into full-scale alarm. The year 1950 was punctuated by an unfolding sequence of such events, and marked a turning point in the creation of an anti-gay security panic. In less than eleven months, the issue of homosexuals in government would garner national attention as a scandal threatening the credibility of the Truman White House and the whole federal government, become the subject of three separate Congressional investigations, result in an explosion of the number of suspected gay employees discharged, and give birth to an enhanced security system that would spread into every federal agency (and beyond). This chapter will trace the steady growth of anti-homosexual security anxiety as it intensified throughout 1950, the most significant year in the progression toward the purges, and crystallized in the formalization of enhanced security protocols affecting the entire Federal government.

Given his later reputation, it is perhaps unsurprising that Senator Joe McCarthy was the first to publicly raise the spectre of a homosexual menace threatening national security. The Wisconsin Republican’s swift rise from obscurity began with his now famous Lincoln Day speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 12, 1950. This speech centred on a supposed list of 57 (a number that would vary widely in later retellings) State Department employees who had retained their jobs despite being known Communists, and made no mention of homosexuality apart from the usual snide insinuations about the Eastern mannerisms of Secretary Dean Acheson.<sup>1</sup> However, only days later, when McCarthy repeated his accusations on the Senate floor, February 20, he became the first public figure to openly conflate the issues of homosexuality and disloyalty. Under pressure to back up his assertions (and ever changing numbers) about known security risks in the State Department, the Senator expanded on his initial accusations by going through 81 specific case records of loyalty or security risks. Particular

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<sup>1</sup> Senator Joseph McCarthy, *Speech at Wheeling, West Virginia*, Feb. 9, 1950 in Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*. (second edition) (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 240.

attention was given to the only two cases with a homosexual angle. Case no. 14 involved a “flagrantly” gay translator who had been dismissed from State when discovered, only to be subsequently reinstated, supposedly through the intervention of a senior official. McCarthy explicitly claimed that this translator had other “unusual” (i.e., deviant) friends with ties to subversive groups like the Young Communist League. Case no. 62 involved a group of homosexual State employees.<sup>2</sup>

McCarthy’s choice to highlight these two cases, with 79 others at his fingertips, is clearly significant, as are his emphases in their presentation. All the elements of subversion and conspiracy are present, including the overlap between homosexual and communist associations, the presence of clusters of deviants in government offices, and the intervention of highly placed allies. To make the gay-subversive link even more explicit, McCarthy repeated a conversation with an unnamed intelligence expert who had stated that, in his experience, “practically every active Communist is twisted mentally or physically in some way.”<sup>3</sup> McCarthy’s statement helped solidify an emerging model of a homosexual security threat. A homosexual, according to this model, was a mentally flawed pervert and, by “logical” extension, inherently susceptible to perverse Communist ideas.

In strictly Cold War terms, McCarthy’s timing could not have been more propitious. Confidence in both international and domestic security had received a series of body blows over the previous months, such as the victory of Mao’s Communists in China and the successful test detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb in 1949. The first weeks of 1950 offered no cause for optimism. On February 3, atomic scientist Klaus Fuchs confessed in London to having spied for the Soviets while working on the Manhattan Project, providing Moscow with secret technical details that unquestionably accelerated its nuclear program.<sup>4</sup> Thus, at the time of McCarthy’s

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<sup>2</sup> David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 15-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Klaus Fuchs, *Confession to William Skardon*, Jan.27, 1950 in Schrecker, p. 158.

speeches in Wheeling and in the Senate, his audience was still coming to terms with the fact that roughly one-third of the earth's surface was now in enemy hands, and America's nuclear monopoly had been broken. Predictably, the immediate result was a huge upsurge in national security anxiety. Thus, the issue of gays in government was coming to increased public and official attention just as Cold War alarm was reaching a new high. Both trends would continue throughout 1950.

As of McCarthy's Senate speech, the homosexual issue was still subsumed by the Communist issue. It would take flight as a distinct national concern on February 28, in an otherwise routine Senate hearing on departmental appropriations. Concerned senators, notably New Hampshire Republican Styles Bridges, pressed Secretary of State Acheson to answer McCarthy's assertion that known security risks were still in government employ. Asked to define a "security risk," Acheson listed the standard categories, such as employees who spied or leaked information, as well those with "any defect" that might lead to such acts. Under further questioning Acheson agreed with Bridges that homosexuals fell under this "shady" category. Bridges then asked how many of that type had been removed under the 1947 "McCarran rider" (to Appropriations bills) that allowed fast-track dismissals at the Secretary's discretion when national security was a factor. The answer was one. In an effort to take the pressure off Acheson and reassure the committee, Undersecretary of State John Peurifoy noted that 91 others had simply resigned when confronted. Bridges and Nevada Democrat Pat McCarran (author of said rider) pressed for clarification as to the composition of this "shady category" (Peurifoy's words) and the Undersecretary confirmed that most were homosexuals. Peurifoy had actually given much the same testimony in closed session before a House committee a month earlier, but Bridges, a McCarthy ally, raised the issue in a successful Republican effort to "out" the gay

issue and embarrass the Truman administration by giving apparent credence to McCarthy's claims that known security risks had been covered up.<sup>5</sup>

The Peurifoy revelation made "pervert" headlines across the country almost at once. The April 19, 1950 edition of the New York Times ran the headline "Perverts Called Government Peril."<sup>6</sup> The attached article referred to Republican National Chairman Guy Gabrielson's letter to party workers stating that "perhaps as dangerous as the actual Communists are the sexual perverts who have infiltrated our Government in recent years."<sup>7</sup> Jokes spread about "Lavender lads" at the State Department. The impact on public attention could be seen in McCarthy's post-Wheeling office mail, of which fully 75% referred to homosexuals, and only 25% to Communists, in government employ.<sup>8</sup> Anti-subversive Republican politicians leapt on the issues raised by McCarthy and Bridges as a wedge against the Democrats. The May 5 edition of the New York Times quoted Governor Thomas Dewey, the 1948 GOP presidential nominee, as accusing the Truman Democrats of "tolerating spies, traitors, and sex offenders" in government.<sup>9</sup> "Our party is finally on the attack and should stay there," said Wisconsin GOP fundraiser Thomas Coleman to fellow party workers, "And best of all, we may get rid of many Communist sympathizers and queers *who now control policy*" (emphasis added).<sup>10</sup> Styles Bridges publicly asked "who" had put the 91 homosexuals (and presumably others) in the State Department in the first place, implying a deliberate action. Referring to the "foul enemies of our Republic" (specifically Alger Hiss and the list of 91), he declared that "They did not get there by accident. They got there because Russia wanted them there." Who was "the master spy, the servant of Russia" responsible for these people?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson, pp. 16-8.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz, Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the USA: A Documentary History (revised) (New York: Meridian, 1992), p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 18-9.

<sup>9</sup> Katz, Gay, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

Thus, within days of the initial revelation, the presence of homosexuals in government had not only been explicitly linked to Communism, but also raised to the level of conspiracy. Bridges suggested that answers might be found by examining President Franklin Roosevelt's 1933 opening of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. In so doing, he made the entire staff of the original 1933 Moscow embassy suspects. That staff included men who were, by 1950, among the leading lights of the Foreign Service, such as Charles Bohlen and Charles Thayer.<sup>12</sup> Bridges did not mention a name that, though not connected to the Moscow embassy, was already being fitted for the part of master spy, but he knew full well who Sumner Welles was and why he had resigned in 1943. Years earlier Welles's enemies, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Ambassador William Bullitt, had in fact approached Bridges to open congressional hearings into the 1943 resignation in order to "out" Welles. Though he was dead by 1950, Sumner Welles's liberal views and elite background and manner, combined with the circumstances of his departure, made him the perfectly emblematic "rotten apple." From the moment the scandal of "The 91" broke, many in Washington looked back on Welles as the potential author of the homosexual problem, the man with the power and motive to "crowd the lists" with his own kind. Directing these suspicions against Sumner Welles had another important benefit. It allowed the ghost of his mentor, Franklin Roosevelt, to be implicated, and the entire legacy of the New Deal along with him.

Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Westbrook Pegler, long anti-New Deal, made a special effort to satirically attack the State Department and Federal Government, suggesting, for example, that the entire Foreign Service replace handshakes with curtsies.<sup>13</sup> The idea of homosexual "cliques" forming an invisible network of deviants in society and government became a subject of widespread discussion among journalists and politicians.<sup>14</sup> Some openly alleged that homosexuals controlled foreign policy to the detriment of American interests. John

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

O'Donnell of the New York *Daily News* made the fantastic claim that a “supersecret inner circle” of “sexual misfits” had dominated the State Department since before World War II.<sup>15</sup>

In an effort to address the security issue proactively, the Democratic majority in the Senate authorized an investigation by the Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Maryland Senator Millard Tydings, himself a prototypical “wealthy Eastern liberal.” The committee was to investigate “disloyalty” within the State Department. However, homosexuals were a security issue, rather than a loyalty issue. A “loyalty” risk was a person disposed by belief or corruption to commit acts of treason or espionage, while a “security” risk might be a loyal citizen who was nonetheless vulnerable to pressure or possessed some personality defect (such as tendency to accumulate debt) that could lead him or her to break secrecy out of desperation or indiscretion.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the homosexual issue was outside the committee’s purview and Tydings refused to expand the scope of the hearings to include it. Consequently, the final positive report of the committee was attacked as a partisan whitewash.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, just as the Tydings Committee was winding down, the FBI announced espionage charges against Julius Rosenberg, who was later convicted of passing atomic secrets to the Soviets.<sup>18</sup> Senator Tydings would lose a re-election bid in 1950 in part (the actual impact was later exaggerated) due to the criticism of his anti-subversive credentials.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the Tydings Committee’s favourable report, State Department officials embarked on new security protocols designed to root out gays and repair the damaged reputation of the Foreign Service. From now on, every job applicant was to be checked against a master list of alleged homosexuals. This list of over 3000 names included every person known to the Department to have ever been implicated in any homosexual investigation. All male applicants

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-7.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Herman, Joseph McCarthy: Re-examining the Life and Legacy of America’s Most Hated Senator (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p. 135.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

would be personally interviewed by specialized security and anyone who set off alarm bells would be subjected to a lie detector. Two officers from the State Department security division were assigned to be full-time homosexual investigators. All associates of any person uncovered as a homosexual would themselves be investigated in an effort to uncover still more. The department used pre-existing “morale” and “morality” provisions of Civil Service regulations as the official rationale for dismissals, as no specific security-based rationale yet existed. All missions abroad were sent memos on the perceived homosexual problem. Embassy and consular security were given special training sessions. The homosexual issue was arguably given more overall attention than the presumably greater threat of Communist infiltration. It was treated separately and distinctly from the existing loyalty/security system.<sup>20</sup>

This new anti-homosexual emphasis by the State Department was soon emulated by other Federal agencies. As early as February 1950, Congressman John J. Rooney of New York, Democratic Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, chided Commerce Department officials for having uncovered no homosexuals (in a 46,000 member workforce) in comparison to the 91 already removed from State, eliciting a commitment to do more. Within weeks of the Peurifoy testimony, a departmental security system specifically geared toward both Communists and homosexuals was rapidly becoming a model for the entire Federal government.<sup>21</sup>

Neither the Tydings report nor new departmental practices were enough for determined anti-subversives in Congress. Two Senate Appropriations Committee members, Alabama Democrat Lister Hill (chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee responsible for the District of Columbia) and Nebraska Republican Kenneth Wherry investigated further. Wherry was unquestionably the most enthusiastic Congressional investigator into the homosexual issue, and had been well ahead of the curve, quietly advocating systematic investigation and dismissals as

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<sup>20</sup> Johnson, pp. 73-5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 81-3.

early as 1947.<sup>22</sup> He considered himself the leading Senate expert on the subject (for no obvious reason) and conducted most of the investigation directly and filed his own report.<sup>23</sup> It was largely due to his pressure in the period 1947-50 that the original 91 employees had been dismissed from State.<sup>24</sup> Wherry's 1950 investigations began even as the Tydings investigation was still underway. As early as March, he was already subpoenaing witnesses, primarily from District of Columbia law enforcement agencies. Officers from the Vice Squad and the Special Investigations Squad ("Spy Squad") of the District of Columbia Police Department helped Wherry add fuel to the fire. Sgt. James Hunter of Special Investigations testified that observing meetings of "communist-front" organizations had convinced him that homosexuals were highly susceptible to the messages of such groups.<sup>25</sup> Lt. Roy Blick, head of the Vice Squad, estimated via questionable calculations that there were approximately 5,000 homosexuals in the District of Columbia and that 75% of those were in government employ. Blick's numbers were arrived at by multiplying every homosexual arrest by an average number of friends (5) and adding to that every associate named during interrogations. The result was a figure actually much smaller than a perusal of the Kinsey figures would have provided.<sup>26</sup>

Medical professionals quickly and sharply criticized Blick's unscientific figures and the entire tone of the Wherry investigation. Dr. Benjamin Karpman, chief of psychotherapy at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, termed the entire investigation a "witch-hunt," and Alfred Kinsey stated that "Hysteria thrives best when only a small segment of the picture is understood."<sup>27</sup> Former Attorney-General Francis Biddle, head of Americans for Democratic Action, quipped that

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<sup>22</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Report of the Investigations of the Junior Senator from Nebraska, A Member of the Subcommittee Appointed by the Subcommittee on Appropriations for the District of Columbia, on the Infiltration of Subversives and Moral Perverts into the Executive Branch of the United States Government 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p. 1. (Hereafter cited as "Wherry.")

<sup>23</sup> Robert Dean, Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), pp. 76-7.

<sup>24</sup> Wherry, p. 1, Johnson, pp. 84-5.

<sup>25</sup> Wherry, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, pp. 86-7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

properly examining the Kinsey figures would reveal that “there are no more abnormal people in Government than anywhere else- no more than in Congress itself, for that matter.”<sup>28</sup> These liberal voices were ignored. Wherry dismissed the Kinsey numbers out of hand<sup>29</sup> Political reaction to the Kinsey Report was revealingly inconsistent. Kinsey’s finding of “fluid” sexual behaviour throughout a lifetime was used by anti-homosexuals as proof that “normal” people could be corrupted into homosexual acts, even as those same anti-homosexuals were assailing Kinsey for undermining American morals by publishing his findings.<sup>30</sup> Both Wherry and Hill recommended fuller investigation by the Senate in their reports,<sup>31</sup> and testified to that effect before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments (which had the most direct oversight over the Civil Service). That committee, in turn, authorized by a Resolution of the full Senate, formed an investigating subcommittee to undertake the comprehensive exploration of the homosexual issue that Senator Tydings had refused to do.<sup>32</sup>

The subcommittee was chaired, with some reluctance, by Senator Clyde Hoey of North Carolina. As “Old Guard” (and “Old South”) as Wherry was “New Right,” Hoey had long-standing “clean government” credentials in a public career dating from 1898. He personally felt that homosexuality was a distasteful subject beneath the dignity of Senatorial investigation. “God damn I don’t want to investigate that stuff,” he complained to committee counsel Francis Flanagan, “It’s baloney, I don’t want to get involved in it.”<sup>33</sup> It would in fact be Chief Counsel Flanagan, an ex-FBI agent and Joe McCarthy confidant, who handled most of the operations of the committee. Though a member of the full Executive Expenditures Committee, McCarthy recused himself from the Hoey subcommittee for obscure reasons. While it would be easy to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>30</sup> Robert J. Corber, In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.), p. 63.

<sup>31</sup> Wherry, pp. 14-5.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Employment of Moral Perverts by Government Agencies, S. Doc. 1746, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, p. 101.

speculate about these, the most likely explanation for McCarthy's absence was the insistence by Hoey, supported by the Truman White House, that the hearings be closed. Many of the subcommittee's records remain sealed until the 1990s. Apart from Hoey's nineteenth century view that homosexuality was unsuitable for public discussion, he also found McCarthy's methods reckless and he disliked grandstanding. At the urging of the White House, expert medical and scientific testimony was included in the agenda. However, Counsel Flanagan insured that security issues involving homosexuality would overshadow scientific data, and flatly dismissed arguments that homosexuality was ultimately benign.<sup>34</sup>

While the subcommittee prepared to undertake its discreet investigations, the Korean War broke out on June 25.<sup>35</sup> Six months earlier, Secretary of State Acheson had given a major speech on Asia policy that omitted to list South Korea as part of the American sphere of influence in the region, which may have convinced Communist North Korea and its allies in Moscow and Beijing that a forced unification of the peninsula would be essentially unopposed.<sup>36</sup> The impact of the Korean War, both immediately and throughout the early Cold War period, was dramatic. This was not only due to the bloodiness of the conflict, but also to the perceived lack of American military and diplomatic preparedness, which was blamed on the Truman White House and the State Department. The battlefield stalemate that set in added credibility to emerging anti-subversive politicians like Joe McCarthy, stimulated much of the subsequent Cold War arms race, and intensified the search for internal scapegoats.<sup>37</sup>

The closed subcommittee hearings opened on July 14 with the testimony of the CIA Director, Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter. The Central Intelligence Agency was so new in 1950 (created by Section 102 of the National Security Act of 1947) that Hillenkoetter felt obliged to

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-4, 106-7.

<sup>35</sup> Yergin, p. 407.

<sup>36</sup> Herman, p. 148.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Schulzinger, U.S. Diplomacy Since 1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) (5th edition), pp. 224-8.

explain what it was to the Senators.<sup>38</sup> The Director had been summoned to provide expert testimony as to whether homosexuals, in his view, were intelligence or security risks. “The answer...is a very firm ‘Yes’,” he replied.<sup>39</sup> In support of this assertion, Hillenkoetter offered what was in fact the only known case of homosexual blackmail leading to espionage, that of Colonel Alfred Redl. In eight full pages of testimony, Hillenkoetter described (incorrectly) the circumstances by which, prior to World War I, the Austrian Chief of Counter-Intelligence was forced by Russian Intelligence to pass on secret information or face the exposure of his homosexuality. The testimony is, in fact, riddled with factual errors. Redl is referred to throughout as a Captain, and his homosexual entrapment by a Russian agent is described in detail despite never having occurred.<sup>40</sup> The significance of the fact that no gay American had ever (or indeed has ever) been blackmailed into treason was lost on all present.

Hillenkoetter went on to lay out a thirteen point “General Theory” for the unsuitability of homosexuals in sensitive service. The established homosexual relationship, he stated, involved a tighter emotional bond than heterosexual love. The passive homosexual had a “known psychological susceptibility” to “domination by aggressive personalities” (and could therefore be turned easily).<sup>41</sup> All homosexuals were “vulnerable to interrogation by a skilled questioner,” said Hillenkoetter, adding that homosexuality was “frequently accompanied by other exploitable weaknesses, such as psychopathic tendencies..., physical cowardice, susceptibility to pressure, and general instability.”<sup>42</sup> They were anxious to conceal their homosexuality from non-homosexuals, despite all being promiscuous to some degree. That particular combination of characteristics made them predisposed toward clandestine relationships. Hillenkoetter’s sixth point made the unit cohesion argument that gay men and

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<sup>38</sup> Prepared Statement of Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) to Investigations Subcommittee, Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., July 14, 1950 (declassified) p. 1. (Hereafter cited as “DCI.”)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-7.

women who exhibited mannerisms inconsistent with their gender made the workplace uncomfortable for heterosexuals. In the same vein, indiscretion was, in the Director's view, a commonplace homosexual characteristic. Efforts to suppress one's homosexual behaviour usually failed and such individuals would relapse, added Hillenkoetter. A homosexual was "extremely vulnerable to seduction" and in some cases exhibited a "defiant" attitude that could be projected against laws or public institutions. He further stated that homosexuals tended to be gullible and were usually under "considerable tension" due to the constant need for concealment. Finally, Hillenkoetter repeated the widespread belief that homosexuals tended to "recruit and advance" each other in the workplace out of a powerful need to congregate.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, while Hillenkoetter did not provide any examples of homosexuals coerced into spying for the Soviet Union, he did state, in a section of his testimony not recorded into the transcript, that the CIA had itself used homosexual informers to obtain intelligence valuable to American interests.<sup>44</sup> While still off the record, the Director repeated one of the perennial legends of homosexual espionage, the story of the "Black Book." Entirely apocryphal, the "Black Book" myth dates back at least as far as World War I era rumours of a German master list of homosexuals in Allied nations, some highly placed, to be targeted for espionage purposes.<sup>45</sup> Hillenkoetter also recounted a series of wartime anecdotes of espionage in which homosexuality was a factor, but not in any way heterosexual indiscretions might as easily have been, e.g., sex with a stranger leading to theft. Finally, Hillenkoetter pointed out that coercion of gays would be most successful in countries where homosexuality is "universally condemned and actively attacked" (such as the United States). During questions, Hillenkoetter and Counsel Flanagan agreed that tougher laws would actually *increase* the threat of homosexual blackmail,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-9, 22-4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-5.

<sup>45</sup> In the Cold War context, the Kaiser's list became Hitler's, and had supposedly been captured by the Red Army in 1945 (see page 32 of DCI statement). One of the core elements of anti-gay paranoia has always been the potential for homosexual invisibility. The Black Book legend adds to this fear the nagging worry that "the enemy" knows who these hidden gays are.

yet simultaneously agreed that this proved the utility of tougher laws designed to flush out gays.<sup>46</sup> In conclusion, Hillenkoetter reiterated the official CIA view that “the moral pervert is a security risk of so serious a nature that he must be weeded out of government wherever he is found.”<sup>47</sup>

The CIA testimony was supported, without examples, by representatives of other intelligence and security bodies. Colonel Hamilton Howze of G-2 (Army Intelligence) suggested that homosexuals were only security risks when in sensitive positions, adding that they were especially risky to place in such positions.<sup>48</sup> Captain E.P. Hyland of Naval Intelligence cited the Navy’s long-standing homosexual exclusion policy and referred confidently to the 7,859 persons removed from naval service or employment since 1941.<sup>49</sup> As vague as much of the Intelligence testimony was, it ultimately carried the most weight in the Committee’s findings and recommendations due to its security emphasis and lack of ambiguity.

Hearings resumed on July 19 with testimony from law enforcement officials and representatives of existing Federal departmental security apparatus. Lieutenant Edgar Scott of the DC Police Robbery Squad described an unsuccessful attempt to blackmail a State Department employee in 1949 that ended when the apparently heterosexual employee cooperated with police to entrap the blackmailer. Lt. Roy Blick of Vice claimed, erroneously, that he had a comprehensive file of homosexual arrests, and stated that foreign embassy workers had been arrested on homosexual charges in the past. He added that, given the closed circles of gay interaction, it was possible for gay Federal employees to cross paths with such foreigners.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Investigations Subcommittee, Hearings Pursuant to S. Res. 280, Executive Session, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., July 14- September 8, 1950, p. 2123, RG 46, NARA (hereafter cited as “Hoey Hearings”).

<sup>47</sup> DCI, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> Hoey Hearings, p. 2125.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 2146.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 2165-9, 2171.

Acting Deputy Undersecretary of State Carlisle Humelsine and Chairman Seth Richardson of the Loyalty Review Board testified on behalf of the administration and Federal agencies. Humelsine described in detail the ongoing and intensifying efforts of the State Department to exclude gays, such as the creation of a Special Investigator position. He added that most people simply resigned when confronted with accusations and their names were forwarded to the Civil Service Commission in an effort to prevent their rehire by another agency.<sup>51</sup> Humelsine pointed out that security measures only applied to State employees and that United Nations employees were often outside the system as the UN did not always cooperate with State in background checks.<sup>52</sup>

Chairman Richardson pointed out that the Loyalty Review Board (established by an Executive Order by President Truman) had a mandate to investigate only those areas of questionable security rooted in loyalty risks. Consequently, homosexuality was an issue outside the scope of the Board's activity. Changing this situation, Richardson stated, would require a specific amendment of the security order. He favoured a slight broadening of Board jurisdiction that would permit a loyalty case to be red flagged as a potential security risk when applicable, even if the case had been cleared of the loyalty question.<sup>53</sup>

Medical and scientific experts would finally be heard from on July 26. While Chief Counsel Flanagan had been largely successful in framing a security-centred agenda for the Committee, the doctors and psychiatrist who testified did inject a note of moderation, even tolerance, into the discussion (though to little lasting impact). Surgeon-General Leonard Scheele noted that the human body's natural chemical make-up was essentially a balancing act between competing male and female characteristics. While he agreed with Senator Margaret Chase Smith, a liberal Maine Republican, that homosexuality was a compulsion rather like kleptomania, his

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 2203.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 2208.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 2227, 2231.

overall message was quite progressive.<sup>54</sup> “I feel that there is a danger of hurting some people who deserve to be helped rather than hurt,” he warned.<sup>55</sup>

Dr. Robert Felix, Director of the National Institutes of Mental Health, offered psychiatric testimony more supportive of security crackdowns, warning especially of seemingly normal “latent” homosexuals who might be triggered into relapse or severe mental trauma by some environmental stimulation that activated homosexual urges.<sup>56</sup> He also argued, in keeping with prevailing postwar psychiatric opinion, that a homosexual was an example of arrested mental and emotional development.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the most remarkable testimony was that of Captain George Raines USN, former Chief of Psychiatry at Bethesda Naval Hospital, who admitted rather nonchalantly that he had had lifelong exposure to gay people, from his Southern boyhood to his military service and medical practice. Raines agreed with the Kinsey findings on homosexual occurrence and flatly denied the assertion that homosexuality led automatically toward immorality or questionable behaviour.<sup>58</sup> He was, he said, “uneasy about where any general attacks on the homosexuals in Government may lead.” Recommending the so-called “Kinsey Scale” of male sexuality to the Committee to study,<sup>59</sup> Raines warned them that homosexuals might be turned against American society, not through blackmail, but by being reduced to bitter social outcasts.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, the Committee was less concerned with understanding homosexuality than with finding ways of erasing it from the public sector, and the medical experts were basically ignored.

The hearings wound down in September 1950 with little new material being presented. On September 8, former Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, a member of the Civil Service Commission, testified, in answer to a question from Senator Smith, that there were no known

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 2244, 2252.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 2254.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 2259.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 2264-5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 2282-3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 2285, 2289.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 2295.

cases of proven homosexual disloyalty in the history of the Civil Service<sup>61</sup> (a number that remained unchanged as of 1985).<sup>62</sup> This made no impact, but her earlier stated reminder that the original 1887 Act establishing a merit-based professional Civil Service had contained a “morality” provision was more significant. This provision meant that every Federal agency already had the authority and rationale to dismiss any known homosexual without the need for new procedures. Any ambiguity concerning the inclusion of gays had been removed years earlier when homosexuality was specifically mentioned in the updated 1945 Civil Service Manual.<sup>63</sup>

The work of the Hoey Committee had not been confined to hearings. Chief Counsel Flanagan and his staff had undertaken a remarkably comprehensive series of interviews and written inquiries to gather further expert opinion and information about existing countermeasures. Flanagan himself had written to medical experts as far away as the Mayo Clinic and the Menninger Foundation. Assistant Counsel Jerome Adelman interviewed Dr. Leo Alexander, formerly of Army Medical Intelligence, as to whether the Germans had been able to exploit homosexual links for political ends before or during World War II. Alexander could offer no examples, but personally believed they had. Adelman also met with Colonel Inwood, Chief of Neuropsychology at Walter Reed Army Hospital, about possibilities for curing homosexuality. Inwood was pessimistic.<sup>64</sup>

Francis Flanagan had sent the same set of written questions to a huge range of Federal agencies and branches, including the Departments of Defense, Labor, Commerce, Justice, Treasury, Agriculture, and Interior, the Federal Reserve, Veteran’s Administration, and Civil Service Commission. Responses, like the questions, were largely identical. The Federal Reserve written reply is typical. Yes, our agency considers a homosexual or sex pervert to be a bad security risk. No, we have no specific policy to remove them. No, we do not employ any known

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 2752.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, p. 115.

<sup>63</sup> Hoey Hearings, p. 2728.

<sup>64</sup> Jerome Adelman, “Memorandum to Francis J. Flanagan,” July 21, 1950 in RG 46, NARA, Center for Legislative Records.

homosexuals. All employees in sensitive positions receive background checks. All suspected homosexuals are investigated. Persons found to have engaged in homosexual activity once are permitted to resign. Persons found to be repeat offenders are subjected to the removal process. Yes, we could coordinate better with other agencies (both to insure consistent procedures and former employees from moving on to other agencies).<sup>65</sup>

Flanagan carried out a similar correspondence, with an emphasis on gay-related law enforcement, with numerous state and local governments. These included California, Massachusetts, New York, and Illinois. Typical examples of official replies include a letter to Flanagan dated August 23, 1950 from Chief William Parker of the Los Angeles Police Department referring Flanagan to the relevant sections of the California Penal Code dealing with sex crimes, deviance, and the state's sex psychopath registry.<sup>66</sup>

Some patriotic Americans volunteered information on co-workers and fellow citizens to the Committee. Dr. Martin Leatherman, a civilian chemist employed by the Army, wrote to Senator Hoey in December with the suspicion that his superior, E.H. Schwanke, was homosexual.<sup>67</sup> A handwritten note on Hoey's copy of the Jan. 1951 reply to Leatherman states that, "The allegations are entirely to [sic] flimsy to even make inquiries into the possibility that Schwanke is a homo."<sup>68</sup> This is a typical example of the official replies received by Flanagan. Over a period of months, the committee also received a whole series of letters, riddled with grammatical errors, from an 89-year old "doctor" named E.E. Dudding, one of which contained

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<sup>65</sup> S.R Carpenter, Secretary to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, to Chief Counsel Francis Flanagan, letter dated July 28, 1950, RG 46 NARA, Center for Legislative Records .

<sup>66</sup> William Parker, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, to Chief Counsel Francis Flanagan, letter dated August 23, 1950, RG 46 NARA, Center for Legislative Records.

<sup>67</sup> Dr. Martin Leatherman to Senator Clyde Hoey, letter dated Dec. 22, 1950, RG 46 NARA, Center for Legislative Records.

<sup>68</sup> Senator Clyde Hoey to Dr. Martin Leatherman, letter dated Jan. 4, 1951, RG 46 NARA, Center for Legislative Records.

a solemn declaration that the consumption of ice cream and soda water contributes heavily to the development of children into “sex-misfits.”<sup>69</sup>

Having completed its hearings and other enquiries, the Hoey Committee issued the definitive report Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government on December 15, 1950. The Report stated emphatically that “homosexuals and other sex perverts are not proper persons to be employed in Government” because they “are generally unsuitable” and “constitute security risks.”<sup>70</sup> “Sex perverts” were defined as “those who engage in unnatural acts,” and “homosexuals” as “persons of either sex who as adults engage in sexual activity with persons of the same sex.”<sup>71</sup> This definition is highly significant. A pattern of homosexual acts or sense of homosexual identity was not required for the “homosexual” label to apply. A single same-sex encounter in adulthood was sufficient. This was a sea-change. It reflected a rigidity of boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality that had not previously existed. While the Hoey Report did not create this shift, it did give it the stamp of officialdom. The report entirely ignored the dissenting arguments of experts like Raines and fully endorsed treating homosexuals as security risks. It actually went further than most of its own Intelligence witnesses in declaring that the Soviet Union was *known* to be actively seeking to infiltrate the government by exploiting the morals of Civil Service employees. The argument for “general unsuitability” was based on the assertion that homosexuals were susceptible to blackmail, lacked emotional stability and moral fibre, and had a marked tendency to attempt the corruption and recruitment of non-homosexual associates, especially the young and vulnerable. The Report bluntly declared that a sex pervert has a “corrosive influence upon his fellow employees” and, in

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<sup>69</sup> E.E. Dudding to Senator Clyde Hoey, letter dated June 17, 1950, RG 46 NARA, Center for Legislative Records.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government, Senate Doc.241, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1950, p. 3 in Government Versus Homosexuals (New York: Arno Press, 1975). (Hereafter cited as “Hoey Report”) The Report is reproduced exactly as first published without omission or amendment.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

its most famous line, that “One homosexual can pollute a Government office.” To this, the Committee added a homosexual “tendency” to congregate in the workplace by actively hiring each other in an effort to be surrounded by their “own kind.” The argument for “security risks” was nearly identical, again citing emotional instability and fear of blackmail, and adding the 1912 Redl Affair as evidence.<sup>72</sup>

The Report admitted that it was impossible to be certain exactly how many homosexuals were in the Government, but concluded that the figure must be very high given that 4,954 had been discovered by either the Civil Service or armed forces since January 1, 1947. Noting a substantial increase in the number of gay-related investigations, resignations, and dismissals since April 1950, the Committee chided Federal agencies for not aggressively pursuing these cases sooner.<sup>73</sup> In order to facilitate better future results, the Report recommended that the existing security checks and regulations simply be applied consistently and proactively rather than via periodic inspections as had been the case earlier. Further, it recommended that names of persons who resigned or were dismissed be automatically forwarded to the Civil Service Commission in order permit a de facto ban on the rehiring of those persons. In fairness, the Committee stated that individuals charged with violating this section of the regulations be given departmental due process and recommended an independent review board to hear appeals.<sup>74</sup>

It is both fascinating and illuminating to contrast the presumptions and conclusions of the Hoey Report and its supporters with those surrounding the 1919 Newport events discussed in the “Introduction.” George Chauncey’s argument concerning the social construction of homosexuality seems undeniably supported by the events of 1950. Where in 1919 it was a widely held belief that a person could engage in homosexual activity, even habitually, without necessarily being considered a homosexual per se, the Hoey Report reflected a significant shift in attitude by considering even a single instance of homosexual activity in adulthood to be

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. pp. 7-8.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-1, 13-4.

sufficient to warrant one's being defined as homosexual (a shift that now had the stamp of approval from the federal government). In less than a single calendar year, homosexuality in government had evolved from a barely mentionable subject of gossip and an obscure personnel issue to a major political scandal and the target of a concerted national effort aimed at its eradication. All of this occurred in the absence of a single case of treason, espionage, or even unauthorized leak related to any homosexual employee.

In February, 1950, the number 91, that of State Department personnel removed since 1947, was considered shockingly high. By November, a further 382 employees had been removed from the Civil Service as a whole.<sup>75</sup> Within months, that number too would be dwarfed. The United States Government had not discovered, but created, a "corrosive influence" within itself, and was now determined to stamp it out. The purge of gays and lesbians was only beginning. Even more significantly, the definition of a homosexual had itself been broadened to include people who would not previously have been considered gay. The year 1950 marked a turning point, not only in terms of Cold War policy toward gays, but in the very conception of gay identity. A homosexual was no longer just a man or woman who engaged in same-sex acts, but was now increasingly considered an inherently gay person; not a person equal to heterosexual persons, but nonetheless a gay person.

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<sup>75</sup> Johnson, p. 117.

#### Chapter 4 “No Picnic:” Effects of the Lavender Hunt.

By the end of 1950, the image of gay people as national security threats was not only well-established in the minds of journalists, experts, and observers, but also now formally endorsed by the federal government. To be gay or believed to be gay in the United States had always been difficult. Now it would become genuinely dangerous. The image of the homosexual security risk could not have emerged at a worse time. In the 1950s, this image combined and catalyzed with the simultaneous increase in Cold War tension, postwar social conservatism, and especially the national wave of sex-crime anxiety and paranoia already in full swing. By the middle of the decade, a quiet reign of terror would exist within the Civil Service, the new security measures first adopted by the State Department would be imposed on fully one in every five American workers, and gay people would be hunted as predators in average communities far from Washington’s centres of power. This chapter will examine the impact of the “Lavender Scare” and its disastrous convergence with American cultural anxieties at various levels and in various sectors of American government and society.

The previous chapter noted the substantial increase in the numbers of employees who resigned or were dismissed as a result of homosexual security investigations, as well as the gradual spread of such investigations outward, from sensitive departments like State through the bulk of federal agencies, as each department felt new pressures to show evidence that it was taking security seriously and getting results. This was the case throughout 1951 and 1952, as the existing loyalty-security apparatus simply expanded its brief to actively look for evidence of homosexuality.

As before, the State Department remained a favourite target of both Red- and now Lavender-hunters in Congress and the conservative press. While anyone who fit the Sumner Welles profile of elite background and liberal policy was a potential target, no one figure was more consistently and mercilessly attacked than Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Acheson’s effete anglophile manners were lampooned by his right-wing critics at least as frequently as was

his foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> He returned the favour with aristocratic contempt. On one occasion, he famously referred to the Red Scare, Lavender Scare, witch-hunts, and McCarthyism collectively as “a revolt of the primitives against intelligence.”<sup>2</sup> At best, these critics implied that Acheson lacked the masculine strength to adequately defend American interests. At worst, they spread innuendo that he was deviant both politically and sexually. These attacks were perfectly captured by cartoonist Cal Alley in the February 1, 1951 edition of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, tellingly a provincial newspaper in a conservative state. Bearing the caption “Attack!” the cartoon depicted a limp-wristed, morning-coat and striped pants-wearing Acheson futilely hurling cream puffs at a menacing Stalin.<sup>3</sup>

With unwavering support from President Truman, Acheson survived every assault until retirement in January 1953. Others were less fortunate, including most of the leading China experts in the Foreign Service, who, while they resigned due to allegations of Communism, were the subjects of homosexual insinuations as well.<sup>4</sup> As early as mid-1950, Senators Joe McCarthy, Styles Bridges, and others began receiving detailed, anonymous letters accusing numerous State Department notables of Communist sympathies, homosexuality or both. The details were such that the letters must have come from within the department. McCarthy, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, and others began to actively investigate these accusations, forming innuendo-filled dossiers on several ranking officials. Digging by various hunters tracked down Carmel Offie, a former private secretary to Ambassador William Bullitt now working as a CIA consultant. Offie had been arrested for cruising in 1943 but had survived to resign from State quietly in 1948. Offie was now “outed” by McCarthy and forced to leave the CIA. Other victims of this early

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Dean, Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-1. See Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-3.

digging were Colonel Ira Porter of the State Department and Robert Ross and Nicolas Nabokov of the Voice of America.<sup>5</sup>

McCarthy and Hoover were unsuccessful in their attempt to remove the former head of the Voice of America, Charles Thayer. Thayer had been accused of homosexuality, Communism, and financial corruption (and his superiors of a cover-up) by an anonymous informer, but the resulting security investigation was personally halted by Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett. There was actually ample testimonial evidence that Thayer was both a dedicated anti-communist and heterosexual. Unable to touch Thayer while Truman was in office, his enemies held on to the dossier and waited for an opportunity.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the standard investigations and dismissals continued. This situation would be intensified by the character and result of the 1952 elections.

In the 1952 presidential race the opposition Republican nominee was the former wartime commander, Dwight Eisenhower, who campaigned on the slogan “Let’s Clean House.” The targets of this slogan were numerous, but unquestionably included subversive and undesirable elements of all types. Eisenhower’s decisive victory was the result of many factors, including his immense personal popularity and the ongoing stalemate in the Korean War. However, issues of gender and sexuality played a small, but still unusually prominent, role as well. While Eisenhower exuded a soldier’s easy masculinity and a plainspoken Midwestern aura of practicality and common sense, his Democratic opponent struck just the wrong notes with some on the right. Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson (ironically as much a Midwesterner as Eisenhower) was a liberal, Ivy League-educated former State Department official whose grandfather had been Vice-President and who exhibited genteel manners very similar to those for which Dean Acheson was frequently attacked. But beyond this, Stevenson was further hounded by persistent and widely circulated rumours that he was a homosexual. The origins of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 97-8, 104-6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-9,102,108-9.

this rumour are disputed, but may have been started by the divorced Governor's bitter ex-wife and actively spread by J. Edgar Hoover. Though the gay rumour was entirely baseless and never mentioned by Eisenhower, the mark of effeminacy, unmanliness, and weakness stuck to Stevenson in 1952, resurfaced in 1956 (when he again faced off against Eisenhower), and dogged him throughout most of his later career. The 1952 race between Eisenhower and Stevenson was a contest between two distinct styles of manhood as well as party and policy, with Stevenson on the losing end.<sup>7</sup>

The Eisenhower administration wasted no time in pursuing its goal of “cleaning house” after the election. Within the first months of 1953, President Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, which along with the Hoey Report was arguably the most significant document relevant to the gay purges. EO 10450 acted on long-standing GOP criticism of Truman era loyalty-security policy by updating regulations and restrictions on Civil Service employment and broadening the mandate of security investigators. Basically, criteria of “character” and “suitability” were now formally added to political loyalty.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, Section 8 (the disqualification section), subsection (a)(1)(iii), was amended to read “Any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, [and] sexual perversion.”<sup>9</sup> This is the first explicit mention of homosexuality (for which “sexual perversion” was the most common synonym) as cause for security-related employment disqualification in the history of the Civil Service, and it carried the force of law. As noted previously, homosexuality was already covered under disqualifications under “criminal” or “immoral” activities. The explicit addition of “perversion” indicates the new seriousness the Eisenhower administration attached to the issue. In a televised statement, Attorney-General Herbert Brownell explained the need to bar loyal citizens whose “personal

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<sup>7</sup> David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 119, 121-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> Executive Order 10450.

<[http://www.archives.gov/federal\\_register/codification/executive\\_order/10450.html](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/codification/executive_order/10450.html).

habits” might lead to blackmail. While, in theory, blackmail could stem from any number of indiscretions, in practice such language referred only to homosexuality.<sup>10</sup>

Along with this new tougher policy came tougher enforcement. Once more the State Department was the template for increased security. Partly motivated by a simple desire to silence anti-gay/anti-communist partisans in Congress, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles appointed a tough new departmental security chief, Scott McLeod.<sup>11</sup> McLeod was a protégé of Senator Styles Bridges and, like Hoey counsel Flanagan, an ex-FBI agent and McCarthy confidant (he kept a signed photo of the Wisconsin senator on his desk.). He specifically promised an anti-gay crackdown and began a highly aggressive series of investigations, to the point where “McLeodism” became synonymous with “McCarthyism” within State. Twenty-one employees were removed in McLeod’s first ten days on the job. Informing and eavesdropping among employees intensified, rumours of opened mail abounded, and accusations of a “Gestapo” mentality among security staff circulated. The new policy on homosexuality was now formally one of zero tolerance. Any homosexual activity in an employee’s adult history, no matter how distant or insignificant, was grounds for automatic dismissal. This included any type of same-sex eroticism, such as kissing or embracing (which were strictly speaking not “sodomy” and thus not illegal).<sup>12</sup>

McLeod set up the “Miscellaneous M Unit” to exclusively handle morals cases, the vast majority of which were homosexual. Ninety-nine employees were separated by the M Unit in 1953 (an average of one every two or three days), and 27 more (all but one homosexual) in the first three months of 1954. The Unit employed two full-time and several part-time investigators, who interviewed all male employment applicants in order to search for tell-tale signs of speech or manner. Those suspected were offered a “voluntary” polygraph. In practice, no one who hoped to attain or keep their job could refuse a polygraph. One who initially refused was “C.L.,”

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> Dean, p. 114.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, pp. 125-8, 130.

an administrative liaison between State and the CIA. Interrogated in June 1954, he was ultimately pressured by the CIA into submitting to the test, which he failed. C.L. quietly resigned rather than name names. Publicity surrounding this crackdown led to a huge upsurge in informing on employees by employees. Anonymous letters flowed in. The zero tolerance policy meant that every rumour, innuendo, or accusation, however flimsy, received at least some investigation. The M Unit was staffed by professional investigators who knew how to get results. In 1953, Fred Traband, agent in charge of homosexual investigations, stated that 80% of homosexual interrogations resulted in confessions. This figure included resignations as confessions of guilt. In fact, the vast majority of separations were resignations to avoid publicity or further penalty. Through the end of 1956, only one accused employee had to be formally dismissed because he refused to resign (or, indeed, admit any guilt). Between January and September 1953, a total of 114 employees were removed from State for reasons of homosexuality.<sup>13</sup> The total removed for all other security reasons in the same period was 192. An internal memo boasted that “Our batting average (is) now one a day.”<sup>14</sup>

State Department security did not confine their efforts to their own department or even their own government. The United Nations was constantly pressured to follow similar security protocols and share information, despite being outside American jurisdiction and ostensibly neutral in the Cold War. Loyalty by citizens to member governments was already covered by U.N. security policy, but State pushed hard for the addition of “suitability” to U.N. employment requirements. This pressure included investigating American U.N. employees who had already cleared loyalty checks for evidence of “unsuitability,” and proactively forwarded incriminating findings to the U.N. In 1953 alone, the names of 248 United Nations employees holding American citizenship were forwarded to the U.N. as potential security risks. Forty-one of these were fired. Pressure and lobbying of the U.N. continued. Scott McLeod stated plainly that a

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 127-31.

<sup>14</sup> Dean, p. 114.

homosexual scandal at the U.N. would threaten U.S. financial support or potentially even membership in the organization. This veiled threat was later echoed by American Ambassador to the U.N., Henry Cabot Lodge. These efforts were partly successful in tightening U.N. security requirements, but the Secretary-General, Trygve Lie of Norway, set up a standard of evidence higher than what the State Department required for its internal investigations.<sup>15</sup>

American pressure in this regard on NATO allies was more successful. Motivated by the fear that the United States would withhold intelligence data in the absence of cooperation, the security agencies of Britain, Canada, and Australia all partly emulated the American crackdown on homosexuals. The first gay Canadian fired as a security risk was a middle manager in the Communications Branch whose loyalty was never questioned. His 1952 dismissal was explicitly motivated by fear that Canada could be frozen out of intelligence sharing if such actions were not taken. Interestingly, over time Canada developed a less punitive practice of transferring gay personnel into non-sensitive positions.<sup>16</sup> Thus, much of NATO gradually adopted anti-gay security measures similar to those originating in the U.S. State Department.<sup>17</sup>

Within the Civil Service as a whole, the purge was felt at all levels and in all agencies, and the number of careers ended by it grew steadily. Employees discovered to be gay were put under intense pressure to reveal the names of their associates, in and out of government, so that these people could also be investigated. Such was the domino effect that a civil servant like John Edward Collins could credibly ask, when an arms-length acquaintance was incriminated, “When will my turn come?,” so sure was he that the trail would now inevitably lead to him.<sup>18</sup> Of the thousands affected, most remain anonymous, but some have names. Commerce Department economist Madeline Tress was accused of lesbianism by one of her co-workers and resigned

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, pp. 131-3.

<sup>16</sup> John Sawatsky, Men In The Shadows: The RCMP Security Service. (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1980), p. 124-5.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, p. 133-4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

after interrogation.<sup>19</sup> She happened to be “guilty,” but any woman of rank was automatically suspected of deviance for having exhibited career ambitions. That assertion was made by Joan Cassidy, a civilian manager with Naval Intelligence with security clearance so high she was forbidden to travel to any Eastern Bloc country.<sup>20</sup> Cassidy quietly left government without being accused and falls into a category of gay civil servants who were not counted as victims of the purges because the reasons for their departure were unknown. Individuals who in previous periods might have escaped the full force of an anti-gay crackdown were now equally targeted, in circumstances indicative of how thoroughly attitudes and sexual boundaries had shifted. No longer was gender identity the benchmark of the hetero/homosexual divide, as it had been in the Newport matter. Men who did not transgress gender roles (such as by cross-dressing) by acting as “queers” or “fairies” were now considered equally homosexual with those who did. One employee of the U.S. Information Agency, who was dismissed after admitting he had received fellatio from another man (whom he considered homosexual), consistently and sincerely denied that he was himself homosexual because he had never been the active participant in those encounters.<sup>21</sup> In 1919, that defence might have carried some weight, but by the 1950s such distinctions were obsolete.

Nor was homosexual activity of any kind a rigid requirement for dismissal proceedings. The case of Miss “E.M.” is highly revealing of the new intensity of anti-gay feeling. Its details were described in a letter by E.M. to the pioneer gay magazine *ONE*, in which it was published in April, 1953. E.M. was not a government employee at all, but rather worked in Germany for a private relief organization. A lesbian, E.M. had fully repressed and resisted her homosexuality throughout her adult life, and had no history of homosexual activity and no gay associations. Some years earlier, she had voluntarily sought psychiatric treatment to help her deal with the feelings of guilt and depression related to her homosexuality. However, through chance the State

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 147-8.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 162-3.

Department learned of these sessions and immediately pressured her organization to recall and dismiss E.M. The relief organization refused to dismiss her without cause, and its own staff psychiatrist personally vouched for her mental health and suitability for her work. The State Department refused to budge and, dependent as it was on State's good graces for its overseas activities, the organization reluctantly agreed to her recall to the United States (which occurred within hours of E.M. being informed of the situation). The relief organization offered to continue E.M.'s employment in its DC headquarters, but she resigned rather than face the humiliation of her co-workers knowing she had been forced to leave her previous post.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most interesting aspects of this case is that E.M. had conformed to all of the restrictive social expectations on gays in the period, including celibacy (from homosexual acts), seeking of treatment, and total discretion, yet was not immunized from harassment in any way. This reflects a definite shift in the very conception of homosexuality, in practice even beyond that defined in the Hoey Report. Previously, homosexuals had essentially been considered heterosexuals who engaged in homosexual acts (the traditional Judeo-Christian conception). Now, in the eyes of the state, a homosexual was a distinct type of person, regardless of behaviour or history, in whom homosexuality was an innate characteristic. One homosexual incident was enough to negate a lifetime of heterosexuality, where it might previously have been dismissed as a single indiscretion which, while considered shameful, need not define one's identity. In the case of people like E.M., simply the admission of homosexual feelings was now enough to define her entire identity and worth as a person.

Another interesting feature of the "E.M." and Tress cases is that both were among the seemingly rather small number of women (relative to their total numbers) to have been specifically targeted as gay security risks. As of 1950, fully 22% of civilian Federal workers were women, for a total number of 406,438. Within the District of Columbia, that percentage

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<sup>22</sup> Letter reproduced in Jonathan Ned Katz, Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the USA: A Documentary History (revised) (New York: Meridian, 1992)p. 102-3.

doubled to 44% or 93, 806 women.<sup>23</sup> In 1953, Alfred Kinsey published his second report, Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, which found that just under one-third (28%) of American women had experienced homosexual arousal, while nearly 1 in 5 (19%) reported some homosexual contact on their histories.<sup>24</sup> Given these numbers, and the fact that investigators seem to have been aware that female homosexual activity existed, it is somewhat mystifying that greater attention was not paid to uncovering lesbian employees. One possible explanation is that sexism (specifically a tendency to minimize female sexual desire) outweighed homophobia to a great extent in this period.

Those who were dismissed or forced to resign carried the resulting stigma into future job searches. Madeline Tress won a Fulbright Scholarship to study abroad, but her award was vetoed by the State Department, and she ultimately had to leave the field of economics entirely. When Bruce Scott was fired after seventeen years with the Labor Department in 1956, he ultimately lost his savings and house as well when he was unable to find work. At one point, Scott lived on only fifty cents a day. Financial security and employment prospects were not all that some civil servants lost. The 1950s and early 1960s saw an unusually high number of suicides among single, male government employees, many of them within the State Department, with no apparent reason given for these deaths. This suggests a widespread internal cover-up of homosexuality-related interrogations leading to suicide. There is at least one known case of such a cover-up, the 1954 suicide in Paris of American embassy employee Andrew Ference. Ference killed himself after a two-day interrogation revealed his homosexuality, but his parents were told that he had been despondent after learning of (fictional) health problems. The real cause was widely known among expatriate gay Americans in Paris, but it took the Ference family two years and help from their Congressman to learn the truth of their son's death. Decades later, retired

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, no.223, 1951, p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> Alfred Kinsey et al, Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1953), p. 453-4.

State Department security officer Peter Szluk, a self-described “hatchet man,” was more candid about the connection between the purges and suicides, acknowledging numerous instances known to him, some within a week of an accusation. He recalled with particular regret the case of a man who shot himself in the street just minutes after leaving Szluk’s office.<sup>25</sup>

What is noticeably absent from all of this security activity is any connection to genuine treason or espionage. This reflects one of the considerable ironies of Cold War history, because it is now known that there were ongoing connections between homosexuality and espionage at the time, though admittedly none were American. The most prominent instance of such connection was the 1951 double defection of British agents (and life-long Soviet moles) Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, both of whom had homosexual histories. This defection appears to have had little direct impact on the American national security system, beyond the subsequent refusal of the CIA to deal directly with Kim Philby, former superior to Burgess and Maclean, in whom it no longer had confidence.<sup>26</sup>

Conceivably the defection of homosexual spies merely reinforced the prevailing viewpoint concerning gays. In fact, it is now known that the KGB used every opportunity to sexually entrap foreign officials visiting Moscow using male or female “honey traps” (lured seduction for blackmail) as the situation required. Several of these attempts were successful. The KGB succeeded, for example, in forcing gay British embassy clerk John Vassall to commit repeated espionage to avoid exposure. On another occasion, high profile Labour MP Tom Driberg (whose sex life was notoriously indiscreet) was entrapped on a visit to Moscow and recruited to provide inside information on Labour Party matters.<sup>27</sup> None of this came to light at the time, but reveals the genuine Soviet interest in sexual espionage. Notably, the best known example of attempted Soviet blackmail of an American was a failure. In 1957, prominent

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<sup>25</sup> Johnson, pp. 157-9.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 210.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

columnist Joseph Alsop was entrapped by the KGB while visiting Moscow, but when pressured to commit treason he refused and went directly to the CIA and FBI (Alsop had solid connections among Republican luminaries, including CIA Director Allen Dulles, that probably helped to immunize him).<sup>28</sup>

Between 1953 (the peak of the gay with-hunts) and 1955, more than 800 people were fired or forced to resign as sexual security risks from the State Department alone. By the end of the 1950s, the number of dismissals from State alone exceeded 1000. That figure refers only to persons expressly dismissed for homosexuality; it does not include those who resigned preemptively, were dismissed on technicalities, or were weeded out during employment applications. Exact figures for that last category are unknown, but 1700 applicants were barred for having homosexual histories by State alone between 1947 and 1950, before the investigations were systematic.<sup>29</sup> It is safe to conclude that the number barred or who decided against application increased considerably after 1950, parallel to the increase in dismissals.

The vast majority of those caught up in the purges were lower echelon employees, but determined lavender hunters never stopped searching for the next Sumner Welles. An opportunity arose early in 1953 when President Eisenhower nominated Charles Bohlen as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Bohlen had impeccable credentials, but was hated by conservatives and McCarthyites for his elite background and links to the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. He had also served in the 1934 embassy to Moscow. Unverified rumours of both heterosexual and homosexual escapades (as well as unreliable loyalty) by that delegation had long been widespread in Washington. During his confirmation hearings, Bohlen was grilled on Alger Hiss, the fall of China to Communism, and Roosevelt's acquiescence at Yalta to Soviet control of Eastern Europe, but skilfully parried these questions. Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles were caught off-guard by the anti-Bohlen backlash, but refused to back down after satisfying

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<sup>28</sup> Angus McLaren, Sexual Blackmail: A Modern History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 243.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, p. 166-7.

themselves as to his loyalty and suitability.<sup>30</sup> Bohlen, it seemed, was beyond the reach of his enemies, but his brother-in-law, Charles Thayer, was not.

At first glance, Thayer would seem as untouchable as Bohlen. In addition to his service in the Moscow embassy in the 1930s, he had been mentored by both Bohlen and George Kennan, two of State's top Russia experts. During World War II, he served in both the Army and the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S), the precursor of the CIA, and received the Legion of Merit for combat alongside the Yugoslav partisans. From 1947 to 1949, he ran the Voice of America, which broadcast pro-Western propaganda behind the Iron Curtain. By 1953, he was Consul-General in Bavaria. His father-in-law was the Ambassador to Spain. None of this would save him. A 1949 bureaucratic dispute between the VOA and FBI gained him the lasting enmity of J. Edgar Hoover, who had Thayer discreetly investigated for years.<sup>31</sup> Now, even as Bohlen moved into the clear, old innuendo about Thayer was coming to the fore. The bulk of the attacks had neither evidence nor an identified accuser, but the allegations were numerous and the investigators determined. An old admission by Thayer (during his earlier security check) that, during a mission to Afghanistan in the 1930s, he might have drunkenly received oral sex from a boy prostitute (he had been too drunk to even be sure) was the only hint of homosexuality ever linked to Thayer, but it was enough to cancel out ample evidence of his enthusiastic heterosexuality.<sup>32</sup> Thayer's case was not helped by the near simultaneous fall of Samuel Reber, U.S. Deputy High Commissioner for Germany, who confessed to homosexual activity after a polygraph and was forced to quietly resign. Eventually realizing that the White House and State Department were not prepared to support him under the growing hail of accusations, Thayer resigned. Charles Bohlen was subsequently confirmed as Ambassador to Moscow.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dean, pp. 120-1, 125-6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 98, 101.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 132-3, 111.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 134, 140-1.

Sometimes the gay issue cut both ways. The most famous example formed part of the eventual self-destruction of Joe McCarthy. A bachelor into his 40s, McCarthy had been dogged by rumours of his own homosexuality for years, but withstood them. However, in 1954, the Senator, who now chaired the same committee that had produced the Hoey Report, and his committee counsel Roy Cohn (who was gay but never admitted it) made the tactical error of attacking the Army. The Army Department charged that McCarthy and Cohn had tried to blackmail it into granting preferential draft treatment to David Schine, a member of the Senator's staff. Though never proven or directly charged by the Army, there were rumours that a homosexual attachment between Cohn and Schine was at the root of this. During the subsequent televised hearing into the matter, both sides gay-baited each other, most blatantly during a discussion of a doctored photograph. The lawyer for the Army Department, a dapper and soft-spoken Bostonian named Joseph Welch, sarcastically asked Cohn: "Did you think this [photograph] came from a pixie?"<sup>34</sup> McCarthy retorted by asking Welch to define a pixie, adding "*I think he might be an expert on that*" (emphasis added).<sup>35</sup> Clearly the Senator sought to imply that the elderly, leprechaun-like Welch was homosexual. Unfazed, Welch calmly replied that "A pixie is a close relative to a fairy."<sup>36</sup> Welch was aware of the Cohn-Schine rumour, but had not raised it directly. His reply to McCarthy was quite possibly a warning to Cohn to back off. The Senator laughed at Welch's pithy reply. Cohn did not. Later, liberal Republican Senator Ralph Flanders of Vermont, a long-time McCarthy foe, publicly speculated on the sexuality of both Cohn and McCarthy.<sup>37</sup> The issue of gays in government was increasingly taking on a life of its own, to the extent that some in Washington began to wonder if the requirement of "suitability" was being taken too far.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, Citizen Cohn (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 201.

<sup>36</sup> Dean, p. 151.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

The growing rate of dismissals and the careless use of statistics by security personnel led to widespread speculation that the gay/morals issue was being used as an easy way to inflate the number of dismissals to show results. Some of the press became critical of these numbers. They did not object to firing homosexuals, but did object to the use of the anti-gay purges to support the boasts of security personnel. Increased press scrutiny revealed numerous security excesses, such as heterosexuals dismissed on flimsy allegations of homosexuality or for strictly heterosexual “immorality,” such as being an unwed mother.<sup>38</sup>

Some members of the public also began to resent what appeared to be a crackdown on “sin” rather than security risks. A famous 1953 case involved an unmarried woman named Marcelle Henry, an employee of the VOA, who was fired for her active sexual history despite having passed a loyalty check. Miss Henry openly asked how *both* heterosexuality and homosexuality could be dangerous to security. Behind the scenes, even Eisenhower himself complained about the “one-size-fits-all” approach to security dismissals.<sup>39</sup> The State Department had been so stigmatized by the dismissals that an unsuccessful attempt was made to establish “honourable discharges” to help former employees who had left under ordinary circumstances but still had trouble in the private sector.<sup>40</sup>

In 1953, the purges claimed the life of Democrat Senator Lester Hunt of Wyoming. After his son was arrested cruising by DC Vice, the Senator was subjected to blackmail by Styles Bridges and other Senate Republicans. They demanded he decline to seek re-election in 1954 or face a scandal involving his son, against whom charges had been dropped. Hunt initially refused. His son was recharged and tried. Senator Hunt became depressed, withdrew from the race, and shot himself in his Senate office. Though the details were not widely published, insiders knew the real cause of death.<sup>41</sup> Some years later, novelist Allen Drury, a former

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, pp. 134-6.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 136-9.

<sup>40</sup> Dean, p. 117.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, pp. 140-1.

Washington reporter, alluded to the case (with sympathy for the Senator) in his Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller, Advise and Consent.<sup>42</sup>

By the mid-1950s, liberals, intellectuals, media, scientists, and many congressional Democrats were pushing for a review of the entire security program. They were especially critical of the perceived overemphasis on morals at the expense of loyalty.<sup>43</sup> One 1951 book, The Loyalty of Free Men by liberal editorialist Alan Barth, went so far as to make a veiled criticism of the anti-gay measures themselves. Using only the euphemism “security risk,” Barth attacked the prevailing system for its excessive attention to “personal associations and private morals,” which invited “allegations of sexual irregularities from the naïve, the prurient, and the malicious.” Such allegations, in Barth’s view, were not only impossible to disprove, but also largely irrelevant to one’s fitness for public service.<sup>44</sup>

After regaining control of Congress in 1955, Democrats began to look into the excesses of security under the Eisenhower administration. The Government Operations Subcommittee on Investigations was now chaired by the very liberal Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. Humphrey was highly critical of the Executive Order 10450 for being both broad and vague, and he directly attacked security officers as a self-serving, self-perpetuating group who lacked the training and competence to oversee complex security issues. Humphrey bitinglly described the security system as a whole by reversing the classic definition of a “republic,” calling it “a government of men, and not of laws.” He also attacked the firing of private sector workers by companies afraid of losing vital federal contracts (by 1955, workers in firms doing such contracts were subjected to security checks by Executive Order). “Michelangelo might not be able to get a job under such terms,” the Senator quipped.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Allen Drury, Advise and Consent (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), p. 475-6.

<sup>43</sup> Johnson, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Barth, The Loyalty of Free Men, (Archon Books, 1965) (second edition, orig. pub. 1951), p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, pp. 143-4.

While the security system that largely enforced Cold War anxiety about gays was now under critical review, the image of the predatory gay infiltrator was beyond anyone's control. The construction of gays as a threat to national security had coincided with a more general anti-gay anxiety within postwar American society. As mentioned previously, by 1952 homosexuality was officially considered a "sociopathic personality disorder" by the American Psychiatric Association.<sup>46</sup> Where psychiatric professionals had been among the most progressive in approaching homosexuality during the war, during the 1950s numerous studies were published aimed at eliminating it through treatments, some of them shockingly extreme. A 1953 issue of the Journal of Social Hygiene included an article by Dr. Karl Bowman and his research assistant Bernice Engle entitled "The Problem of Homosexuality," which discussed the potential benefits of castration in treating sex deviates. The article also noted the effects of lobotomy were being studied elsewhere. In the same year, Dr. Ernest Harms published the article "Homo-Anonymous" in the journal Diseases of the Nervous System, in which he suggested the use of group self-help techniques, á la Alcoholics Anonymous, to combat homosexuality.<sup>47</sup>

The following year, Dr. Frank Caprio published Female Homosexuality, the first American book written specifically on that subject since 1941. Caprio's materials were both out of date and inaccurate, including among sources quotations from lurid magazines. Though seemingly little more than a collection of aphorisms (such as the observation that a lesbian who sincerely wants to be "cured" will respond better to treatment than one who feels nothing is wrong with her), for a time Caprio's book became "the" expert text.<sup>48</sup> Having received the explicit endorsement of the federal government, anti-gay anxiety no longer relied on the government alone for enforcement and self-perpetuation.

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<sup>46</sup> Allan Bérubé, Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> Katz, Gay, pp. 1823-4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

Paranoia about gays was an integral part of the social fabric of the 1950s, and the victims of that paranoia were not confined to employees of the federal government, or to those who violated any of the numerous laws restricting homosexual activity (e.g., cruising for or propositioning sex in public areas). Any person who was gay or thought to be gay lived in a state of jeopardy. Where once homosexuality had been a subject barely mentioned, now motivated observers found signs of it everywhere, and could link any number of social ills back to it. If homosexuality and Communism could be conflated, then so too could homosexuality and juvenile delinquency, violence, or murder. Even children's comic books were subjected to a hostile gaze.

In 1954, a paediatrician named Fredric Wertham launched a highly successful crusade against comics, which he believed caused all manner of destructive and perverse behaviour in their readers. In his influential Seduction of the Innocent, Wertham claimed that, among other effects, reading comic books contributed to child prostitution and encouraged homoeroticism through misogynistic images of women and the portrayal of male heroes with exaggerated, muscular physiques. He went so far as to compare some comic books to the "beefcake" magazines that catered to homosexual readers at the time.<sup>49</sup> Wertham may have been the first person ever to explicitly accuse Batman and Robin of a homosexual relationship. Exploring the topic at length, Wertham directly compared their older man/younger boy dynamic to the pederastic relationship of Zeus and Ganymede. Of the luxurious home-life of this "ambiguously gay duo" (due credit to Robert Smigel), Wertham flatly declared, "It is like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together."<sup>50</sup> Later, he identified Wonder Woman as the lesbian equivalent, a man-hater with girl followers.<sup>51</sup> While Dr. Wertham's claims seem laughable in hindsight, he very nearly destroyed a great American art form, and the hysteria he tapped and exploited was

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<sup>49</sup> Fredric Wertham, MD, Seduction of the Innocent (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1954), pp. 187-8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

real, rampant, and highly dangerous. The Civil Service crackdown had begun with a “panic on the Potomac.” Panic could happen in ordinary American communities, too.

In the autumn of 1955, a local example of such a panic gripped the city of Boise, Idaho, far from Washington’s corridors of power. The Boise panic began with what was a routine event in any American city in the 1950s, the arrest of three men for soliciting gay sex. In this case, there was the additional wrinkle of soliciting gay sex from teen-aged hustlers. While definitely a crime, this was not something that would have shocked a seasoned Vice officer like Roy Blick. But in Boise, the impact was dramatic. On November 3, the Idaho *Daily Statesman* published an inflammatory front-page editorial entitled “Crush the Monster.” It read in part, “It seems almost incredible that any such cancerous growth could have taken root and developed in our midst,” and called for swift, decisive action.<sup>52</sup> It is revealing to read the phrase “cancerous growth” in comparison to the “corrosive influence” noted in the Hoey Report, a similarity not noted in John Gerassi’s 1966 *The Boys of Boise*, still the classic text on the case. The editorial helped touch off a major police campaign against gay men. While the initial arrests were of obscure individuals, later targets were more notable, such as the Vice-President of the Idaho First National Bank.<sup>53</sup>

Once the scandal broke, the city police and government hurried to show signs of an effective counter-attack. They hired “Bill Goodman” (Gerassi’s book used only pseudonyms), who had formerly worked as State Department security officers, to take direct charge of interrogating gays.<sup>54</sup> Goodman’s Boise methods were exactly like those used at State. The name of a potential homosexual would be given by an informer or during interrogation. That person would be brought in for questioning, confronted with the accusation, and grilled until he confessed, whereupon he would be pressed to provide more names. While in fairness the initial

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<sup>52</sup> John Gerassi, *The Boys of Boise: Furor, Vice and Folly in an American City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), second edition, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

investigation began in response to a genuine crime, prostitution involving minors, homosexuality itself (as distinct from sodomy, lewd acts, or soliciting gay sex) was not strictly speaking a crime in Idaho. Yet, the resulting wave of accusations and interrogations made no distinctions. Every homosexual in Idaho was a potential target. Suspicion spread everywhere, to the point where any bachelor had cause to be nervous, and all-male social interaction of any kind (such as “poker night”) vanished, even those involving groups of husbands.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately only sixteen men were charged with any crime, but several hundred men were investigated, interrogated, and harassed.<sup>56</sup>

Disturbingly, according to John Gerassi, the real driving force behind this panic was not the police or prosecutor, but the so-called “Boise gang” of power brokers (mostly lawyers, landowners, and businessmen) who controlled most of the state’s economy and natural resources. This group was anti-progressive, anti-reform, and anti-development to a much greater degree than it was anti-gay. Their goal in the gay scandal was not to destroy homosexuals per se, but to discredit the liberal Boise city government and destroy a member of their own elite group, a wealthy gay man whom Gerassi (revealing his roots in journalism) nicknamed the “Queen.” This “Queen” was ultimately too powerful to ever be arrested or even named.<sup>57</sup>

For all the excesses of the Boise panic, the near simultaneous panic in greater Sioux City, Iowa was worse. In the Boise case, the argument can at least be made that a gay-related crime was the initial spark. The crimes that touched off the Iowa panic, while much more horrifying, had nothing to do with homosexuality. On August 31, 1954, eight-year old Jimmy Bremmers disappeared from his quiet Sioux City neighbourhood.<sup>58</sup> Within three days, the press was speculating whether a “sex fiend” might have abducted the boy.<sup>59</sup> Police routinely questioned

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-1, 47-8.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-21.

<sup>58</sup> Neil Miller, Sex-Crime Panic: A Journey to the Paranoid Heart of the 1950s (Los Angeles: Allyn Books, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Ernest Triplett, a semi-itinerant music store employee of borderline intelligence who had been in the neighbourhood the day of the disappearance. When questioned, he revealed a life-long history of homosexual activity and told conflicting versions of his activities on August 31. In the absence of a known crime, he could not be charged, but voluntarily committed himself to a state mental hospital. While there, Triplett was repeatedly injected with various drugs by hospital staff, including LSD. Jimmy Bremmers's body was found on September 28. On October 6, while still recovering from the narcotic effects, lack of food, and sleep deprivation, Triplett confessed to the murder. He was convicted of second-degree murder in June 1955 and sentenced to life in prison. In 1972, his confession and conviction were overturned on appeal due to his drugged state at the time.<sup>60</sup>

The Bremmers/Triplett case had motivated the Iowa legislature to enact the state's first-ever sexual psychopath law, which passed both Houses unanimously and was signed into effect as of April 14, 1955. The law provided for indefinite confinement for treatment in a state mental facility of convicted criminals who were declared sexual psychopaths by the courts in cases where local prosecutors, who had discretionary authority, moved for "preventive detention." A special sexual psychopath ward was established at the Mt. Pleasant state mental health facility, where it stood completely empty for several months.<sup>61</sup> Then on July 10, 1955, twenty-two month old Donna Sue Davis was abducted, sexually assaulted, and murdered. Panic and outrage spread at what was undeniably the work of a genuine sexual psychopath.<sup>62</sup> The special ward at Mt. Pleasant now needed inmates to prove that law enforcement was getting results.

In September, 1955, local police forces solved this problem by initiating a series of sting operations to entrap gay men. The Sioux City jail began to fill with a significant portion of the local gay and bisexual male population, some from as far away as Sioux Falls, South Dakota. As was customary, the names of those arrested were published in local newspapers. The men were

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 18, 23-5, 36, 59-60, 246.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 76, 84, 89.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-7.

interrogated about the Davis murder. They knew nothing and most had alibis.<sup>63</sup> Because Iowa's sodomy law carried a penalty of ten years in prison, all the men pled guilty to lesser charges, such as conspiracy to commit criminal sodomy. In most cases, the sentences would have been in the form of fines and probation, but the atmosphere was harsher at this moment. Prosecutor Don O'Brien (later a notably liberal federal judge)<sup>64</sup> asked the court to declare all the men criminal sexual psychopaths. Twenty were so declared and sentenced to indefinite confinement at Mt. Pleasant Hospital.<sup>65</sup> To be clear, these were all perfectly ordinary men who had been sexually entrapped by police in local gay bars, in their homes, or in casual conversation. By the spring of 1956, all the men committed to Mt. Pleasant had been declared cured and released. In the fall of 1956, the sexual psychopath ward, again empty, was closed.<sup>66</sup> The murder of Donna Sue Davis was never solved.<sup>67</sup>

While at first glance these cases may seem of little relevance to the Civil Service purges, it is highly unlikely that the Idaho and Iowa crackdowns would have reached the same level of harshness and hysteria in the absence of the Lavender Scare in Washington. The intensity of these local panics starkly reflected the conjunction of Cold War paranoia and the post-war sex crime anxiety. While the Civil Service purge cannot be said to have caused these local hysterias, their specific character of reflected the conceptual shifts of the war and Cold War. The most accurate interpretation is likely that, while broader cultural trends regarding sexual "deviance" were the fundamental agents of these and similar events, the Lavender Scare functioned to place an official stamp on anti-gay policies, even in instances where the Civil Service purge was not directly in play.

In a speech to Republican women on September 22, 1955, Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois referred to the ongoing task of ferreting out subversives, including gays, from

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 101, 115,117-9.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 263-4.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-2.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

government as “No Picnic” and listed the targeted groups to include “wreckers, destroyers, security risks, blabber-mouths, drunks, traitors, and saboteurs.” The speech received an unusual written response. In “An Open Letter to Senator Dirksen,” an unnamed Republican Party worker, who was gay, chided Dirksen, asserting that gays were American citizens first, with all the virtues and flaws that implied. Loyal, able gay people, wrote the author, were working in the Civil Service, the military, the Executive branch, and the judiciary.<sup>68</sup> The letter climaxed with the following declaration:

Thousands of graves in France, many many thousands more graves on South Pacific Islands and beneath the seas, contain the sad remains of men who were brave soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines *first* and homosexuals second. They were no less brave, they did no less to win the war for democracy, than did their heterosexual compatriots. But the democracy for which they did fight and die, and still fight and die, and will yet fight and yet die, denies them and us our rights as individuals, and classifies us with “wreckers, destroyers, security risks, blabber-mouths, drunks, traitors, and saboteurs.”<sup>69</sup>

The letter, which was eventually printed in an obscure homophile publication called the Mattachine Review, ends with the statement that “Equal rights under the law we want and will fight for.”<sup>70</sup>

There is no way of knowing how Senator Dirksen reacted to this letter, or if he even read it, but it nonetheless reflected something new and increasingly important to the issue of homosexuals in government, homosexuals in private industry, homosexuals in cities like Washington and Boise and Sioux City, homosexuals in American society at large. Through all the hearings, studies, investigations, interrogations, and purges, one perspective had always been absent. The invisible population of nameless, derided, dismissed, and despised gay and lesbian Americans was slowly beginning to announce itself, bit by bit. Homosexual silence was giving

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<sup>68</sup> “An Open Letter to Senator Dirksen” reproduced in Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (editors), We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 290.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

way to something new: anger. Even as repression of homosexuals in America was increasing throughout the 1950s, homosexual resistance to that repression was also slowly emerging.

The period roughly 1950 to 1955 marked the greatest extent and intensity of Cold War anti-gay hysteria. The parallel images of gay security risk and gay sexual predator became fully merged in much of public perception. The postwar sex-crime panic and the Cold War Red and Lavender Scares had created a degree of fear and animosity that could not have been predicted in 1948 or even 1950. Ironically, however, in this repression were the roots of subsequent gay identity politics. The social stigma attached to homosexuality cancelled out all of a person's other characteristics, thus defining that person's identity by his or her sexuality. If a person was "condemned" to be gay even in the absence of a homosexual behaviour pattern, then that person's only refuge was within the community of homosexuals themselves.

## Chapter 5 “From Silence:” Gay Americans Respond to the Purge.

While Washington, DC was the epicentre of the gay purges, events near the seat of government directly affected both Federal employees and employees of firms with Federal contracts in every region of the country, and directly helped fuel the intensified anti-gay feeling in American society in the postwar decade. Thus it is perhaps unsurprising that the response and eventual opposition of the emerging gay community began thousands of miles from Washington, whether in hushed private homes in Los Angeles or on the peaks of Mauna Loa in Hawaii. Slowly, quietly, and with well-founded anxiety, the beginnings of political awareness and activism within the gay community were occurring, beneath the attention of most of the public. While certainly never foreseen or intended by the Lavender Hunters, this was in many respects a direct consequence of the increased repression of the 1950s. Forasmuch as gay people had increasingly formed communities in many urban centres, especially during and after World War II, the travails of the early Cold War period unquestionably forced gay people both to new solidarity with each other and to a level of resistance to their oppression that had not previously been seen.<sup>1</sup> This final chapter will explore the origins of early gay organization and civil rights activism during the anti-gay purges, culminating in the emergence of the “homosexual citizen” as a permanent fixture in American political discourse. Ultimately the policies excluding gays from Civil Service employment would, one agency at a time, be casualties of this activism.

Those victories were far away in November 1950, when a small group of gay men in Los Angeles began quietly meeting to discuss establishing a permanent organization to educate the public and other gays in opposition to the prevailing ignorance about the causes, lifestyles, priorities and related issues of homosexuality in the United States and abroad. Ironically, given the prevailing paranoia about such linkages, several of these pioneering organizers had Communist links (though there was never any involvement of or encouragement by the

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<sup>1</sup> David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 169-70.

Communist Party, which was itself anti-gay at this time). Instrumental in these earliest discussions was an actor and Marxist political organizer named Harry Hay. Hay had been looking into the idea of organizing gays as early as 1948, when he had made abortive steps toward setting up “Bachelors for Wallace,” an umbrella group with which to mobilize gay voters behind the Progressive third party candidate Henry Wallace. Nothing had come of the “Bachelors” idea, but Hay had retained the desire to organize. Failed efforts to enlist liberal heterosexual allies as advocates for gay rights convinced him that, if meaningful activism on behalf of gay Americans was going to happen, it would have to be done by the gays themselves.<sup>2</sup>

The result of this feeling and of informal discussion among Los Angeles area gay friends and associates in the months after the first meeting was the formation, in 1951, of the Mattachine Society.<sup>3</sup> Named for the court jesters of the European Renaissance who had the freedom to speak the truth to the powerful, the Mattachine Society would become the first nationwide organization dedicated to gay issues in American history.<sup>4</sup> While Mattachine could accurately be described, in the loosest terms, as a form of political action committee, discussion and education were very much central goals of the society.<sup>5</sup> This education was aimed as much at gay people themselves as at the heterosexual majority. The founders had discovered in their earliest meetings, held in a locked room with the shades closed for fear of arrest (it was not a crime to join a gay group, but many gays thought it might be), that they themselves knew astonishingly little of the history and character of their own kind, despite being well-read.<sup>6</sup> The discussion promoted by Mattachine was thus initially drawn from the founders’ own questions.

From the start, several of the Mattachine founders, including Hay and Chuck Rowland, increasingly conceived of homosexuals as a distinct minority group, invisible to both the

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<sup>2</sup> John D’Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) (second edition), pp. 58- 62.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> D’Emilio, pp. 64-5.

<sup>6</sup> “Hieronymous K.,” “The Mattachino,” ONE, vol.1, no.1 (Jan. 1953), p. 18.

majority and to each other. Lacking any real precedent to guide it, the society began holding semi-public discussion meetings, at which pseudonyms were commonly used for security, in order to recruit members and promote education about homosexual life and issues.<sup>7</sup> Mattachine gained a more direct outlet for its activism in 1952 when one of its board members, Dale Jennings, was entrapped by police and arrested for lewd behaviour.<sup>8</sup> Mattachine came to his defence, formed “The Citizen’s Committee to Out-Law Entrapment,” supplied a lawyer, and was instrumental in causing the charges against Jennings to be dropped. Police entrapment of gays, especially gay men, was a commonplace danger in the lives of homosexual Americans in the 1950s. It is worth reiterating that it was not illegal to be a homosexual at the time, though it was illegal to engage or in any way solicit homosexual intercourse. Anti-entrapment anger became an early rallying point for Mattachine and a major feature of its public education program.<sup>9</sup>

Jennings himself articulated gay resentment against the automatic equation of homosexuality with criminal and lascivious behaviour in his essay “To Be Accused Is To Be Guilty,” published in the inaugural issue of ONE, the first American journal of homosexual news and opinion begun at arms-length by Mattachine in January 1953. His tone dripping sarcasm throughout, Jennings described his entrapment and arrest by a plain-clothed officer as “typical” in its circumstances and “familiar” in its design, so much so that he was both amused and embarrassed at being taken in. He had stopped into a public washroom at night, where a stranger engaged him in a one-sided conversation and followed him home, entering uninvited. The officer made lewd advances to Jennings, all of which were rebuffed. Nonetheless, Jennings was arrested on the spot. Despite being released due to a vigorous defence by a Mattachine-hired lawyer and a deadlocked jury, Jennings felt no relief. In his essay, he pointed out both the groundless nature of the charge against him and the disturbingly accurate fact that such sloppy

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<sup>7</sup> D’Emilio, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> “Hieronymous K.,” p. 19.

and malicious behaviour by law enforcement could potentially strike anyone. What, after all, had Jennings done other than be a man walking alone through a public park after sunset?<sup>10</sup>

One amazing thing about Jennings' essay was that it was published under his own name, probably due to a combination of bravery and realism (since obviously Jennings' arrest and trial were matters of public record). The bulk of ONE articles were written under pseudonyms to protect the authors from harassment or job dismissal. Many Mattachine operations were also conducted using pseudonyms for the same reason. This and the system of local chapters or cells were conscious holdovers from Harry Hay's years as a Communist Party organizer.<sup>11</sup> By-lines aside, ONE quickly began to fulfill its intended role as a forum for homosexual views and priorities, ultimately reaching thousands of subscribers across the country and uncounted thousands of non-subscribers as copies were passed hand to hand among friends. By registering as a non-profit educational foundation in 1952, Mattachine was able to side-step restrictions that might otherwise have faced its publications. The widespread dissemination of ONE was a great aid in recruiting, and by May 1953 there were more than 2000 Mattachine members in greater Los Angeles alone, with more in chapters in other cities, especially San Francisco and the Bay area.<sup>12</sup>

Eventually, even as Mattachine was growing by leaps and bounds, the defunct Communist links of Hay and others in the leadership began to get media attention. This resulted in alarm among the membership and was exploited by more conservative, assimilationist elements that opposed the activist agenda of the founders and rejected their idea of a distinct homosexual minority. At the first national convention in 1953, the founding circle were voted out of their leadership role and most left altogether as the new executive pursued a course that emphasized integrating into heterosexual society by conforming to its mores. Essentially, the new policy encouraged gays to present their homosexuality as a single characteristic of an

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<sup>10</sup> Dale Jennings, "To Be Accused Is To Be Guilty" ONE, vol.1, no.1 (Jan 1953), pp. 11-13.

<sup>11</sup> D'Emilio, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-3.

otherwise conformist personality. While politically safer, this new direction was uninspiring and, by eschewing political activism, failed to provide any compelling reason for the organization's existence. Numbers steadily declined throughout the rest of the 1950s, with some chapters, including Los Angeles', vanishing entirely.<sup>13</sup>

ONE, because it was not an official arm of Mattachine, remained under activist control and retained a more militant tone. In 1955, the new Mattachine leadership launched a new publication, the Mattachine Review, to articulate its moderate message. The layout of the magazine was reflective of its editorial bent. The front cover of the first issue displayed a photograph of part of the Jefferson Memorial, specifically Jefferson's quotation on the necessity of laws and institutions to evolve with changing times, circumstances, and values, ending with the phrase "we might just as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him as a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."<sup>14</sup> The back cover included a direct rejection of liberationism, specifically the goal of a "homosexual society," in favour of assimilation and an even more explicit rejection of "any subversive political activity."<sup>15</sup> This latter comment reflects both the genuine 1950s concern with accusations of Communism, but can also be seen as excluding more radical activists like Harry Hay or Chuck Rowland.

While its editorial policy was geared more toward assimilation than activism, it would be unfair to deny the place of Mattachine Review as a journal of resistance and of what would today be called gay "pride." In addition to a critical summary of the California statute concerning vagrancy and lewdness (under which most arrests of gays in the state occurred),<sup>16</sup> and an article by novelist James Barr on the challenges facing a homosexual living outside the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 77, 79, 80-1.

<sup>14</sup> Mattachine Review, vol.1, no. 1, (Jan-Feb 1955), cover.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., rear cover.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-8.

relatively friendly metropolitan centres,<sup>17</sup> the first issue also contained the famous, defiant call for equal rights, “An Open Letter to Senator Dirksen,” referred to in Chapter 4.<sup>18</sup> The issue also reflected the new *Mattachine* emphasis on psychiatry as a means to attain “normal” status by including an influential article by UCLA researcher Dr. Evelyn Hooker entitled “Inverts are Not a distinct personality type.” Hooker had conducted one of the earliest studies to contradict the prevailing view of homosexuality as a debilitating mental illness. Working directly with *Mattachine*, Dr. Hooker studied a number of gay men and concluded that homosexuality occurred in men of every personality type and did not necessarily reflect either a non-conformist lifestyle or any particular psychological difficulty.<sup>19</sup> The issue ended by summarizing a study by Dr. Karl Bowman of the University of California Hospital in San Francisco that concluded that harsh legal penalties were totally ineffective at decreasing rates of homosexual activity.<sup>20</sup>

The first American organization of and for gay women, the Daughters of Bilitis, was formed in 1955. Founded in September by a group of eight lesbians and named for a Nineteenth century French poem, the Daughters of Bilitis modeled itself on the new *Mattachine* emphasis on education. Working closely with both *Mattachine* and ONE, the Daughters published their own journal, The Ladder, and acted primarily as a kind of self-help group for women coming to terms with their lesbianism. Troubled or conflicted lesbians would find a welcoming and nurturing environment within the group within which to renew their strength.<sup>21</sup>

While these early “homophile” organizations were critically important in the emerging movement toward a positive gay identity and the pursuit of fair treatment for gays and lesbians, especially through the publication of their journals, they did not operate in isolation. In 1951, a married homosexual named Edward Sagarin, under the pen name “Donald Webster Cory,”

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Evelyn Hooker, “Inverts are Not a distinct personality type.” Mattachine Review, vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1955), pp. 21-2.

<sup>20</sup> Mattachine Review, vol. 1, no.1 (Jan-Feb 1955), p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> D’Emilio, pp. 102-4.

published the first true manifesto of gay equality written in the United States. The Homosexual in America joined the Kinsey Report as one of the books most widely read by gays in the early Cold War era. Highly autobiographical, Cory's book was partly an indictment of the treatment of gay Americans, and partly an affirmation of their right to basic dignity and equality before the law. He did not mince words. The first paragraph of Chapter 1, "The Unrecognized Minority," ended with the statement, "The lack of recognition of the rights of dissident and nonconforming minorities is the most distinguishing characteristic of totalitarianism."<sup>22</sup> Cory defined homosexuals as a distinct minority in the sociological meaning of a marginalized or subordinate group and stated emphatically that "homosexual desires, whether one indulges or suppresses... (are) virtually as ineradicable as (if) it involved the color of one's skin or the shape of one's eyes."<sup>23</sup> Cory exhorted his fellow homosexuals just as he chided the heterosexual majority, stating that "if we are to believe in ourselves, we must reject the entire theory of the inferiority status which the heterosexual world has imposed upon us."<sup>24</sup> To further solidify the idea of a homosexual minority with legitimate human and citizenship rights, he compared anti-gay feeling with the widespread, yet increasingly condemned, racism against African-Americans.<sup>25</sup>

Later chapters become more expressly political in tone and aim. Chapter 4 "Civil Liberty and Human Rights," condemned employment discrimination against gays and expressed immense frustration at the passivity of the gay population, writing that "They never fight back! That, more than anything else, is characteristic of the discrimination against homosexuals."<sup>26</sup> Cory also referred at some length to the Civil Service purges, especially of 1950, dismissing the Hoey investigations and conclusions as totally biased and motivated more by a desire to attack the Truman Administration and State Department than by any sincere anxiety about national

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<sup>22</sup> Donald Webster Cory, The Homosexual in America (New York: Castle Books, 1960) (second edition), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

security. The Hoey Committee, he noted, had set out, not to determine *if* anti-gay dismissals were even needed, but rather expressly to seek justification for such measures and the prejudices behind them. He reminded his readers that the 1913 Redl case was the only known example of a homosexual being blackmailed into treason and noted that a person actually *known* to be homosexual is impossible to blackmail. In fact, not a single member of the original 91 “shady category” dismissals had been even charged with disloyalty, much less convicted. The only American homosexual ever charged with corruption had been caught accepting bribes, rather than paying them, in an entirely conventional case of graft. Reflecting on the indiscriminate nature of security risk dismissals, Cory also pointed out (prophetically) the untenable prospect that gays might de facto be barred from *both* public and private sector employment. He directly attacked the Catch-22 by which the government created an anti-gay atmosphere that it essentially admitted would lead to increased discontent and make disloyalty more likely, and then used that potential disloyalty to justify the very atmosphere that made it possible.<sup>27</sup>

Cory’s Chapter 21, “The Society We Envisage” is at once sweeping in scope and modest in aims. “The homosexual,” he wrote, “first and foremost, wants recognition of the fact that he is doing no one any harm.”<sup>28</sup> He pointed out the inability (acknowledged by honest, informed heterosexuals) of any stricture to eliminate homosexuality from society. In the face of this inability, there was only one logical course, which was to eliminate the restrictions themselves. He further argued that anti-gay restrictions were themselves responsible for most of the social and psychological problems commonly associated with homosexuality. Progress in this area could only occur if and when the heterosexual majority became actively engaged in the resolution of issues related to homosexuality. Such engagement would be stimulated by growing, open discussion, which Cory emphatically believed would inevitably result in the fatal

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

undermining of the social stigma attached to homosexuality.<sup>29</sup> He would expand on this point and others the following year in an address given in Germany to the International Committee for Sex Equality, which was reprinted in the February 1953 issue of ONE. “From silence to discussion, even without enlightenment, is progress,” he declared, “for enlightenment becomes inevitable through discussion, and impossible without it.”<sup>30</sup>

Elsewhere in the address, Cory argued that, once recognized as a distinct minority, gays automatically fell under the rubric of American rhetoric concerning liberty, civil rights, and universal brotherhood. In other words, even though widespread discrimination against gays persisted, gay Americans themselves would ultimately benefit from the nature of American political culture, the basis of which was opposition to oppression.<sup>31</sup> In a sense then, the concept of a gay minority or community, once established, allowed gays access to a vocabulary of equality and resistance that was not only unifying within the minority, but could also be understood by members of the heterosexual majority as well. Here again, Cory was reiterating a point first made in “The Society We Envisage” wherein he had made a special effort to illustrate to heterosexual readers a common interest with homosexuals, in the form of freedom from all oppression. Citing the all-out attacks on homosexuality by the vicious totalitarians Hitler and Stalin, Cory argued that the inability of homosexuals ever to fully assimilate or conform is its “greatest historic value.” Going nearly as far as referring to the ancient Athenian lovers/tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Cory asserted that the homosexual had a vested interest in liberty and an essential commitment to progressivism (broadly defined), if only for his or her own survival. Thus, the homosexual was inherently valuable to a free society.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 227-30.

<sup>30</sup> Donald Webster Cory, “An Address to the International Committee for Sex Equality.” ONE, vol. 1, no. 2 (Feb. 1953), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Cory, The Homosexual in America, pp. 234-5.

Conversely, Cory warned heterosexual readers that a society or system of laws that oppresses *any* minority is equally capable of *and empowered to* oppress the majority as well.<sup>33</sup>

Ironically, given that his book was so vital to the genesis of an American gay rights movement, Cory/Sagarin was never able to liberate himself from the view that homosexuality was a “psychopathology,”<sup>34</sup> and that a gay person was, while possessing human rights, essentially ill and ultimately incapable of a truly happy and well-balanced life.<sup>35</sup> He likened the homosexual to an alcoholic, basically good and normal, but nonetheless disturbed and in need of curative measures.<sup>36</sup> The real Edward Sagarin embraced his heterosexual marriage in an attempt to find such a cure for himself, and withdrew from gay rights activity when it became more focused on liberation and “pride” than on education and assimilation. Sagarin subsequently trained as a sociologist, becoming an expert on deviance and a highly critical observer of 1960s gay rights activism. This in turn led to Sagarin being “outed” as Cory at a 1974 conference, after which he permanently left the arena of gay-related discussions.<sup>37</sup>

Both organizers/educators like the Mattachines and authors like Cory played a vital role in both disseminating knowledge to and about gays and in reinforcing the ideas of homosexual solidarity and entitlement to civil rights. In challenging specific policies of repression, however, there was still no substitute for the individual willing to put him or herself on the line by resisting. As of the mid-1950s, no one had actively opposed his or her dismissal from the Civil Service on homosexual grounds. Most employees had resigned quietly to minimize the scandal. This would begin to change in the fall of 1957, when a previously non-political astronomer became a reluctant activist.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>34</sup> D’Emilio, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> Claude J. Summers, “Sagarin, Edward (Donald Webster Cory) (1913-1986),” 2004, [http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/sagarin\\_e.html](http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/sagarin_e.html) (22 March 2005).

<sup>36</sup> D’Emilio, p. 167.

<sup>37</sup> Summers, (22 March 2005).

Dr. Franklin Kameny, having completed his doctorate in astronomy the previous year, was teaching at Georgetown University in the summer of 1957 when he applied for a civilian position with the Army Map Service. Despite the elapse of seven years since the Hoey investigations, the questions put to Kameny during the application process were quite generic, making no apparent effort to reconnoitre for homosexual “tells.” Despite the fact that the advanced work he would do had direct application to the emerging missile program, Kameny at no time had any sense of an ongoing investigation either before or after he was hired. Only months later, while Kameny was on extended field research in the western states and Hawaii, did an investigation get underway. Kameny was contacted while in Hawaii and instructed to return to Washington immediately to cooperate with an unspecified investigation. Irritated at the interruption of complex scientific work, Kameny pointedly refused to return until the stellar occultation project (helpful in missile guidance, among other applications) at Mauna Loa observatory was completed. Returning to Washington at that point, Kameny was interviewed by two security officers in the, by now, standard way. He was asked, “We have information that leads us to believe that you are a homosexual. Do you have any comment?” Kameny asked what the information was and was told that it could not be shared with him. He responded “Then I have nothing to say” and the interview abruptly ended. Given that at the time everyone resigned when pressured in gay-related cases, Kameny believes that the government simply assumed he would follow suit, and seemingly waited for him to do so. He did not and did not intend to.<sup>38</sup> After a period of weeks, Kameny was called back in and was dismissed on a technicality (on his application, he had labelled an arrest in a cruising area years earlier as “disorderly conduct” rather than “lewd and indecent acts”<sup>39</sup>).

This was not the end. Barred from his profession, in which security clearance was essential, because of the nature of his dismissal, Kameny managed to survive several desperately

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<sup>38</sup> Author interview with Frank Kameny, Washington, DC, June 24, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, p. 180.

lean years, during which he consumed his savings and was reduced at times to eating only a few cents worth of food each day. By law, three years were required to pass before his disqualification for federal employment ended and he could reapply. Having done so and been rejected, Kameny filed suit with help from the American Civil Liberties Union (which had remained silent on such cases in the 1950s). His case reached the Supreme Court, which declined to hear it, in March 1961. Despite, or because, of this setback, Kameny became committed to ending federal anti-gay employment discrimination, emerging as a leader of the resurrected DC chapter of Mattachine.

In time, he would become an amateur legal counsel specializing in security clearance/separation cases. While it would take decades of work, case by case and agency by agency, Kameny and his fellow activists were slowly able to erode the anti-gay employment practices of the federal government. It would not be until the 1970s that the bulk of federal departments would end their anti-gay barriers, and not until the 1980s and 1990s that the “hold-out” intelligence agencies (the FBI, NSA, and CIA) ended their own. While being interviewed for this thesis, Kameny cheerfully pointed out that he had recently been an invited guest at CIA headquarters, where he had spoken to the association of gay CIA employees, all serving openly at the centre of a national security system that would once have been used to destroy them.<sup>40</sup>

The legal victories of which Kameny and his colleagues are justifiably proud were decades removed from the point in time at which this thesis stops, circa 1955. But even in that dark time, the first voices of gay resistance were being heard, at least by other gays. In an irony that is perhaps the most significant long-term legacy of the anti-gay hysteria of the Cold War period, the formation of gay identity, a gay community, and gay rights organizations were in part a direct reaction against the increased oppression of the 1940s and 1950s. The earliest roots of a gay community do not begin with this development. In fact, urban subcultures had persisted,

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<sup>40</sup> Author interview, June 24, 2004.

even flourished, in working class districts of major cities for decades.<sup>41</sup> However, prior to the mid-twentieth century, most people who would today be understood to be homosexual (especially if white, middle-class, rural, or otherwise cut-off from the gay demimonde) lived lives almost entirely isolated from even the concept of a gay identity. They were cut off from any source of education, discussion, community, or the verifiable sense of themselves as “homosexual persons.” Most gay people would essentially have been considered a heterosexual person who felt same-sex desire or even engaged in same-sex contact. In addition, gay rights activism was essentially impossible in earlier periods, when adverse social and political conditions made simply living gay private lives an ongoing challenge.

The crackdown of the early Cold War forced people with histories of same-sex desire into the homosexual category where, sharing in the oppression and isolation of being gay, they had little choice but to increasingly identify with each other. Homosexuality, as Bradley Usher has pointed out, ceased to be an aspect of personal behaviour, and became, with direct state sanction, a defining characteristic of one’s personality and identity. The government itself, and its proxies, imposed a political element onto homosexuality that had not previously existed.<sup>42</sup> It forced people like Frank Kameny, who might otherwise have lived largely apolitical lives, to become politicized, even radicalized. The Lavender Scare had done more than shift and solidify the constructed boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality. It had in many ways forced the fulfillment of Donald Webster Cory’s prediction of the birth of a recognizable gay minority in the United States. Rather than being people who engaged in homosexuality, the post-purge era saw the emergence of people who *were* homosexual, just as others were black or Jewish, and who defined their identities by their inclusion in that category no less than might an

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<sup>41</sup> See George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940. (New York: Basic Books, 1994) and Brett Beemyn (editor), Creating A Place For Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories. (New York: Routledge, 1997) for full examinations of the urban gay enclave in the pre-war period.

<sup>42</sup> Bradley Usher, “Federal Civil Service Employment Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians, 1950-1975: A Policy and Movement History,” PhD dissertation,( The New School for Social Research, 1999), pp. 103-4.

Irish American or Italian American. And, again as Cory, predicted, once that sense of minority identity was established, those who shared in it expected and demanded the rights and privileges guaranteed to other American “ethnic” communities.

Homosexuality had evolved over the course of the twentieth century from an activity to a perversion to a condition to an identity to a kind of quasi-nationality. The very notion of a “homosexual citizen,” as opposed to “one who engages in homosexuality” or a “homosexual personality,” indicates both the extent to which sexuality and identity are contextually defined (and redefined), and the distance the concept of homosexuality had travelled. The crackdown provided not only an impetus toward gay community solidarity and activism, but also a natural, identifiable target for that activism. While it is likely that the gay communities already emerging in America after World War II (including specific neighbourhoods in such cities as San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles, as well as more intangible communities of association and self-discovery) would have evolved into a distinct minority with or without the crackdown and reactions to it, it seems very possible that the nature of that minority would have been different, more in tune perhaps with the assimilationist model conceived by the second, more conservative cohort of Mattachine leaders. In a very real sense, the Cold War purges of the Lavender Scare catalyzed the very protest movements that ultimately destroyed the legal basis for those purges.

## Conclusion

While preparing this thesis the author traveled to the National Archives in Washington, DC to examine records of congressional investigations into gays in government. The 1950-51 files of the Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments contain miscellaneous items in addition to formal transcripts. One of these was a brown manila folder containing assorted DC police records, which itself contained, midway through the pile, a small bundle of index cards wrapped in a sheet of white committee stationery with “Total 419” written across the top.<sup>1</sup> The index cards were blank except for a word and number: Army 101, Treasury 15, Smithsonian 1, White House 1, and so on-54 cards in all. Ironically, the numbers did not add up to 419, suggesting perhaps the loss or misfiling of other cards. Given that the specific files were police records and the complete file group was exclusively related to gay employment, there was only one logical conclusion as to the nature of these numbers. They could only have been records of either arrests or known dismissals and resignations of homosexual federal employees. This small collection of anonymous numbers captured much of the human impact of the government crackdown on gays in the late 1940s and 1950s. Each number represents a nameless casualty of the Cold War, and is only one of many thousands more numbers, some with names, some without, of gays and lesbians targeted by the national insecurity of the age.

The process by which gay people became “legitimate” targets began long before the files in the National Archives were drafted. Antipathy toward men and women who experienced homosexual desire and contact was not new, but the character of that antipathy evolved significantly during the Second World War. Historically, homosexual acts have commonly been viewed with hostility in the United States, but the precise significance assigned to those acts and people who engaged in them has changed from era to era. Prior to the war, homosexuality was primarily considered an unnatural and immoral activity, rather than a personality type or state of

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<sup>1</sup> Found among the miscellaneous files of the Hoey Committee, RG 46 NARA, Center for Legislative Records.

being, and only some of those who engaged in homosexual acts were considered to be homosexual. The mass mobilization of World War II, combined with the long-time ban on gays in the military, led to the first wholesale institutional effort at gay removals. This military removal process gradually fell under the auspices of medical and psychiatric officials. While this occurred for partly bureaucratic and partly humanitarian reasons, the long-term result was a redefinition of homosexuality as an innate personality type and a disorder. For the first time, the very idea of a “homosexual person” was recognized by public officials and institutions. Unfortunately, this “homosexual person” was considered to be disturbed. The increasingly tense domestic atmosphere of the Cold War period after 1945 placed this person in a very dangerous position.

The Lavender Scare affected the lives of millions with its security checks and employment restrictions. We may never know the total number of homosexuals who quietly resigned or passed over opportunities for employment or advancement. As David Johnson has shown, the number of government employees investigated and removed on homosexual grounds exceeded the number of suspected Communists.<sup>2</sup> While homosexual acts had long been criminalized, the Lavender Scare marked the first moment in peacetime in which individuals were systematically investigated and persecuted on a national scale for being homosexual (that is, for having non-criminal homosexual desire, as opposed to engaging in or pursuing criminal sexual activity). As security concerns intensified and expanded, at first through Federal agencies and then into the regions and the private sector, they carried with them the notion of the homosexual security risk. That notion found fertile ground in a culture experiencing a spike in social conservatism and a simultaneous sex-crime panic about real and imagined predators. This resulted not only in increased police entrapment and harassment of gays, but of dismissals from private agencies and corporations (especially those with Federal contracts), as well as state and

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<sup>2</sup> David Johnson, [The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government](#) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 73-5.

local emulations of the Federal crackdown. The dismissal of brilliant astronomer Frank Kameny, whose job consisted primarily of advanced mathematics, and whose loyalty to the United States had been proven in combat, well encapsulates the scope and blindness of the Lavender Scare. The purge itself reflected larger issues and a broader political and cultural context. This context was directly informed by post-war and Cold War realities, especially as related to gender and national security.

The dramatically increased Cold War security anxiety combined with both post-war social conservatism and a narrowing of acceptable gender roles to create a nearly hysterically anti-gay atmosphere in the United States. This hysteria was exacerbated by the revelation, most notably in the Kinsey Reports, of the “statistically common occurrence” of adolescent and adult homosexual activity. The discovery that an invisible population of supposed deviants lived and worked in all walks of American life could hardly have come at a less hospitable time. The United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s was engaged in a nearly pathological search for subversive and seditious enemies within. The modernized, medicalized homophobia of the period was a natural partner to the anti-subversive hysteria, and gays joined Communists as Cold War undesirables of choice.

Working from the well-established premise that sexuality is an evolving, socially constructed concept, this thesis advances the argument that the Cold War purges, in addition to their immediate repressive impact, had a critical catalyzing influence on the development, not only of a gay community, but of an “ethnic” gay identity as it is currently understood. The assorted politicians, social and sex conservatives, mental health professionals, security officers, and commentators who collectively launched and perpetuated the Lavender Scare imagined a gay security crisis in the absence of any supporting evidence. At the heart of this crisis they constructed the image of predatory, untrustworthy, and unstable homosexual persons to justify the resulting counter-measures. These measures, by violating the civil rights, destroying the careers, and invading the private lives of many gay Americans, provoked these victims and their

allies to organize for mutual support and resistance. This resistance slowly built up over succeeding decades to the point where the anti-gay Federal employment bans were finally overturned in 1973.

In many respects, this emergent gay identity, and especially its activist component, was the most signify legacy of the Cold War in the area of homosexuality. There was nothing new about homosexual activity in the Cold War period, but the conception of homosexuality as an innate, fundamental, and defining feature of one's personality was relatively new, the product of the wartime medical and psychiatric re-examination and reforms. While the conceptual shift from a "person who engages in homosexuality" to a "homosexual person" was, in the longer term, a positive development, the short-term impact was distinctly negative due to the defining of this innate homosexuality as a mental disorder. In a post-war environment in which the coalescence of social conservatism and national insecurity was the defining characteristic, being both statistically common and assumed mentally ill was a disastrous combination for gay Americans. When the intensification of Cold War fears led many in the federal government to seek out potentially subversive elements, gays swiftly joined Communists as primary targets. In this context, Undersecretary John Peurifoy's confirmation that homosexual removals were already taking place served as the trigger for a full-scale government investigation and crackdown, leading to the explicit condemnation of any gay employee as a "corrosive influence" and a widening search to drive that influence out of government.

Spreading first through Federal agencies and then outward into civilian organizations and state and local jurisdictions, the Lavender Scare ultimately prompted especially brave gay Americans toward acts of resistance. These included the formation of early gay rights organizations like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, the publication of manifesto documents like Donald Cory's The Homosexual in America and journals like ONE, and directly challenging Federal employment discrimination. Each of these developments was historic, but the most significant development was the underlying formation of a self-conscious

and increasingly confident gay minority identity. This sense of identity remained after the employment barriers that had helped stimulate it had been eliminated, and has informed subsequent gay rights activism and evolving gay community formation. The reason for its permanence is obvious, and was essentially predicted by Cory as early as 1953. As gay Americans increasingly came to view themselves as a real and distinct minority group, they simultaneously acquired the corresponding sense of entitlement to equality and freedom, as well as the political vocabulary with which to pursue that entitlement within a democratic society.<sup>3</sup>

While the excesses of the Lavender Scare mark some of the darkest hours in the history of gays and lesbians in the United States, in many respects they also mark the beginnings of gay rights and gay pride as they are defined in the early twenty-first century. The Lavender Hunters had attempted to create a demonized figure of the homosexual person: perverse, degenerate, potentially disloyal, and inherently corruptible. Time and struggle have scoured away the demon, but the homosexual person remains.

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Webster Cory, "An Address to the International Committee for Sex Equality." ONE, vol.1, no. 2 (Feb. 1953), p. 4.

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Appendix



Col Alley—*Memphis Commercial Appeal*  
“ATTACK!!”

Reproduced from Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), p.91.