

Living in a Paradox: The Lavender Scare and the Creation of a Liminal Space

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the unique position the LGBTQ+ community holds in society, specifically around the 1960s. Unlike the second Red Scare, the paralleling Lavender Scare demonstrated the persecution of allegedly homosexual government employees under the guise of national security. Through analysis of the rhetoric and narratives that propagated during the Lavender Scare, many contradictions are uncovered to reveal the complexities of homosexuality in society. Furthermore, the community occupies a special liminal space of contradictions. Ultimately, its inability to be defined is a testament to the fluid nature of sexuality.

Introduction

The number four nonfiction bestseller in 1948 was not the most recent memoir or a textbook on economics. It was about sex. Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was the first of its kind. Its research was based on fifteen years of data collected on the sexual histories of 6,300 males, relying mostly on personal interviews with individuals of various racial backgrounds, education levels, social levels, religious groups, marital statuses, and more.¹ This was a noticeable contrast for a man of academia, structure, and data, to publish a book about the taboo topic of sexuality and, even more scandalously, homosexuality. Ultimately, this nuanced contrast is what defines homosexuality: the in-between space of paradoxes.

From *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* emerged the "Kinsey Scale", which maintained that people did not fit exclusively into the labels of heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual. Kinsey argued that individuals could be evaluated on a scale from 0 to 6. His findings showed that feelings and desires in individuals were inconsistent and fluctuated over time. The labels of his scale follow that 0 is exclusively heterosexual, 1 is "predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual", 2 is "predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual", 3 is "equally heterosexual and homosexual", 4 is "predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual", 5 is "predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual", and 6 is "exclusively homosexual".² Ahead of its time, the scale framed sexuality as a fluid concept rather than the rigid structure that society enforced. Indeed, Kinsey was bisexual, fitting into his own theory of fluidity by presenting a certain way but practicing in a contradictory, unexpected manner.³ He was a prestigious scientist that conducted and wrote many structured research books. At the same time, he researched the taboo "moral problem" of homosexuality scientifically and was a homosexual himself. Here displays a small example of the uniqueness of the homosexual community in society: a community that is built upon paradoxes between language, appearance, and true identity.

¹ Alfred C. Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviors in the Human Male* (Indiana University Press, 1948), 5

² Kinsey, 638

³ Baumgardner, Jennifer, *Look Both Ways: Bisexual Politics* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 47

In relation to the context of the time, Kinsey stated that though a few years ago such research would have been difficult, “there is now an abundant and widespread interest in the possibilities of such a study”.⁴ For the public, sex was a private and “dirty” topic, and yet concurrently intriguing and alluring. Herein lies another contradiction within the topic of homosexuality in the 20th century: the concept of simultaneous attraction and repulsion. Though homosexuality and sexuality, in general, was a taboo topic, the public nevertheless blew sales of Kinsey’s book to bestseller number four.

These contradictions may be found in many areas of LGBTQ history. This paper will mainly focus, however, on the Lavender Scare, a moral panic tangent to McCarthyism, and analyze it as a case study of the homosexual community’s role and characterization in society. The Lavender Scare, including its specific context of national security, presented many conflicting narratives that both weakened and bolstered the homosexual community in convoluted ways. It is a salient opportunity to analyze the nuances of concurrent contradictions and unions within the homosexual community. These paradoxes are what ultimately define the homosexual community: a community that thrives between the borders of persecuted and protected, the liminal space of fluidity. In many ways, the Lavender Scare inadvertently provided the homosexual community agency and unity with intentional language that also unintentionally highlighted the permeable boundaries of homosexuality in society.

In the period before the Lavender Scare, sexuality had already been widely discussed because of the monumental impact of Kinsey’s book on society. Samuel Steward, a professor turned tattoo artist, in his oral history explains to interviewer Len Evans, “my god, you have no idea how it, what an effect it had. It simply blasted this damn country wide open. There wasn't a radio stand-up comic or a television comic or a nightclub comic who didn't have a thousand jokes to make about it. His name was a household word, he made the cover of Time. He upset the heterosexual population like it's never been upset before, with his statistics and what have you. Three men having homosexual encounters to the point of orgasm and five percent of the entire male population being homosexual. It just blasted the countryside open. You, you have no idea, everybody knew Kinsey. Even the dumbest guy on the street had heard of Kinsey”.⁵ Kinsey and his book was well-known for its controversial findings as individuals realized the higher-than-perceived frequency of homosexuality in American society. Ultimately, for the homosexual community at the time, “he [Kinsey] was a savior, he was the liberator, he was the, he was our Stonewall, you know, in 1948”.⁶ From all perspectives, *Sexual Behaviors in the Human Male* was explosive for American society, in both heterosexual and homosexual communities.

Communism and Homosexuality

Sexuality was emerging at the forefront of American society through Kinsey’s book just as the Lavender Scare was set into motion. The so-called “Lavender Scare” was a panic that spread throughout the United States beginning in the 1950s regarding fear of infiltration of homosexuals in the government. During the second Red Scare in the late 1940s, also known as the McCarthyism era, the U.S. government campaigned the fear of communist infiltration in the federal government. For example, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was formed within the government in 1938, focusing on exposing alleged communists working within the federal government.⁷ In tangent with the second Red Scare, individuals were also dismissed from their government positions due to their speculated sexuality. This paralleling persecution called the Lavender Scare subsequently led to the mass dismissal of individuals from government service after lengthy investigations regarding their sexuality. Unlike the second Red Scare, however, the Lavender Scare continued long after the Cold War and trickled even into the 1990s.

⁴ Kinsey, 4

⁵ Samuel Steward, “VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC” By Len Evans, July 2, 1983, 28

⁶ Stewardl, 29

⁷ "Red Scare," History.com, accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/red-scare>

Communism was furthermore associated with homosexuality as both threatened the American social structures of capitalism and heterosexuality. Views of both groups were similarly “believed to be cliquish, dishonest, and able to identify one another easily through common speech patterns and interests. In addition, both groups were portrayed as actively working to indoctrinate children”.⁸ Additionally, communism and homosexuality were deemed to be illegitimate; they were viewed instead as a reflection of an individual’s moral weakness. Communism was not seen as a political affiliation, but rather a “communist was a type of person who had given his will to the Communist Party”. In the same way, a homosexual was “a type of person who had no control over his sexual desires”.⁹ The views of the two groups converged as “communists sought to destroy public order through political subversion while homosexuals sought to destroy social order through sexual subversion”.¹⁰ These narratives and rhetoric connecting communists and homosexuals bolstered fears within the federal government and propelled the Lavender Scare.

Previous historians have focused on this dynamic between the Red and Lavender Scares, specifically in how language and media pushed narratives associating homosexuality and communism. Similar rhetoric was used to describe these two groups, which created connected traits of moral weakness, psychologically underdeveloped, and subversive behaviors that undermined social norms and family structures.¹¹ Additionally, other historians have studied the reasoning behind the rise of the Lavender Scare, specifically in relation to changing patriarchal and economic social structures. Naoko Shibusawa explores the issue of homosexuality and its impact on the public’s perception of American civilization as a whole, using the Lavender Scare as a clear point of entry to analyze. Shibusawa ultimately concludes that the enforced viewpoint was that “homosexuality was a sign of a society’s internal weakness and decay”.¹² Furthermore, sexuality represented power structures that differentiated the “civilized/uncivilized or worthy/unworthy”.¹³ Overall, Shibusawa takes more of an international perspective and states that “sexuality, then, fundamentally informs America’s relationship to the world”.¹⁴ She primarily discusses the ways homosexuality complicated America’s development in its growing years as a younger country. In general, literature regarding the Lavender Scare has either delved into its origins and context to attempt to uncover the reasons for its emergence or rather used this occurrence as a case study to closely analyze homosexuality in America. This paper is mainly concerned with the

⁸ Holly S. Heatley, “‘Commies and Queers’: Narratives That Supported the Lavender Scare”, 2007, pg 2. Note: this paper was presented to the faculty of the graduate school of The University of Texas at Arlington in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY.

Note: Heatley references two sources:

Melvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 61-63.

U.S. Congress, “Homosexual International,” Appendix to the Congressional Record (May 1, 1952) 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, vol. 98 pt. 10, A2652-A2654; U.S. Congress, Appendix to the Congressional Record (May 15, 1950) 81st Congress, 2nd Session, vol. 96, pt. 15, A3661; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Vital Center* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 127, 151.

⁹ Heatley, 2. Note: Heatley references two sources:

William M. Wiecek, “The Legal Foundations Domestic Anticommunism: The Background of *Smith v. United States*,” *The Supreme Court Review* (2001), 378-407.

Margot Canaday, “Who is a Homosexual?: The Consolidation of Sexual Identities in MidTwentieth-Century American Immigration Law,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 28 (Spring 2003), 363.

¹⁰ Heatley, 2.

¹¹ Judith Adkins, “These People Are Frightened to Death”, *Prologue Magazine, National Archives*, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2016/summer/lavender.html>

¹²Naoko Shibusawa, “The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2012), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44376170>, 752

¹³Shibusawa, 751

¹⁴ Shibusawa, 751

latter to argue that the Lavender Scare is a testament to the unique role of the homosexual community throughout history. Through persecution, many similar yet paradoxically different ideas were propagated.

It Could Be Anyone

Sexuality is an inherently fluid concept. Unlike one's race or ethnicity, it is unidentifiable by appearance, heritage, or background. It is true to say that anyone could be a homosexual. As it follows, Kinsey wrote that “males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white”.¹⁵ This finding created an underlying understanding that anyone could be a homosexual and show homosexual tendencies. Kinsey introduced in his research that sexuality worked in degrees, and furthermore, homosexuality was more prevalent than thought before. This conclusion was why his book became so controversial. Samuel Steward in his oral history observed that “one of the reasons why I don't think we'll ever be completely accepted anywhere or by the heterosexual majority, is the fact if you're a complete homosexual, the idea of licking a cunt is repulsive to you, and the same is true for the complete heterosexual - the idea of sucking a cock is revolting. And that is so deeply ingrained that I don't think it's going to be completely removed, not in our society.”¹⁶ Steward identified that societal preconceptions of homosexuality were black and white; either one is hetero or homo. In both communities, there was a rigid view of sexual preferences. He pinpointed that the problem was a lack of understanding of the gray in-between space and general acceptance of others' preferences so deeply ingrained within society.

The Lavender Scare, occurring two years following the publishing of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, embodied the same premise as Kinsey's findings with a misconstrued message to instill fear. The most prominent contradiction that is evident throughout the Lavender Scare is the concept that “anyone could be a homosexual”. This notion is in line with the belief and rhetoric surrounding communists: that anyone could be a communist, even in the government. This is what sanctioned the panic amidst the 1950s and fueled McCarthyism: the fear that sensitive information could be disclosed unknowingly because anyone around could be a “subversive”. Though originally, this statement was in line with the fluidity of sexuality, the government misconstrued this notion into fear mongering. Here arises a paradox stemming from the very premise of the Lavender Scare: the emphasis on the malleability of sexuality which transformed into a narrative on the pervasiveness of homosexuality.

The government's language furthermore bolstered the idea of fluidity in sexuality by debunking stereotypes. The committee specifically warned that “contrary to a common belief, all homosexual males do not have feminine mannerisms, nor do all female homosexuals display masculine characteristics in their dress or actions”.¹⁷ This language taken on its own promoted the fluidity of gender and sexuality and discerned that labels have no true purpose. Anyone, regardless of their gender orientation, could be a homosexual. Taken within context, however, the government's language stemmed from fear and motivation to propagate fear. As observed by Marko Dumančić in his review of literature regarding Cold War sexuality, “the title of Stearn's bestseller [*The Grapevine*] conveyed the idea that lesbians had formed a ‘vast, sprawling grapevine, with a secret code of its own’ because they had successfully disguised their aberrant sexuality. As a result of Cold War anxieties, sexual attraction to other women, rather than the externalization of masculine identity, became the basis of lesbian identity”.¹⁸ Ironically ahead of its time, this exposé

¹⁵ Kinsey, 639

¹⁶ Steward, 68

¹⁷ Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Expenditures in The Executive Departments, “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government”, December 15, 1950, <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:fd720pb8753/employment-homosexuals-serialset.pdf>, 2

¹⁸ Marko Dumančić, “Spectrums of Oppression: Gender and Sexuality during the Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, (2014), 195. Note: Dumančić references another scholar Robert J. Corber and his book *Cold*

on lesbians by Jess Stearn inadvertently shed the concept of sexuality from stereotyped caricatures and simplified sexuality into whom one was attracted to. However, such language also created a devious, underground, and subversive narrative surrounding the homosexual community. Dumančić synthesizes in his review that “the Cold War construction of the lesbian paradoxically and ‘inadvertently highlighted the mobility of sex, gender, and sexuality in relation to each other’”.¹⁹ Rhetoric and narratives surrounding the Lavender Scare arrived ultimately to the conclusion of the fluidity of gender and sexuality with the misguided intentions of fear of infiltration.

Persecution or Protection?

Homosexual individuals were Lavender Scare cleverly discriminated against under the guise of security and protection for the country and all individuals. The United States government underwent great lengths to understand, detect, and force homosexual individuals out of their government positions. One prominent group created was the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, also called the Hoey Committee. The resulting document, “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government”, discussed the “extent of employment of homosexuals and other sex perverts in Government; to consider reasons why their employment...is undesirable; and to examine into the efficacy of the methods used in dealing with the problem”.²⁰ Analyzing the language and frameworks used to describe homosexuals in the state department reveals a specific narrative that outlines unique permeable boundaries to the homosexual community.

Another paradox emerging from the Lavender Scare was the government’s treatment of homosexual individuals during their targeted dismissal from government positions and the narratives spread regarding the situation. From reading into official documents, statements, and investigations, the government’s standpoint boiled down to two seemingly opposed forces. On one part, narratives spread created a stigma around the community. On the surface, however, the same narrative framed the government as the savior “protecting” homosexual individuals’ safeties. The two opposing stances of the government combine to create a unique narrative and position for the homosexual community.

Joe McCarthy, infamous for spreading fear of communist infiltration in the government through investigations and hearings, spoke at the Republican Women’s Club concerning the 54 resigned homosexuals from the State Department.²¹ Not particularly accusatory in tone, he stated that “some of them [dismissed homosexuals] are very energetic, very loyal Americans. Some of them have that unusual affliction because of no fault of their own – most, of course, because they are morally weak.”²² McCarthy did not outrightly accuse homosexual individuals of being communists but rather recognizes their humanity and faults. Furthermore, he identified homosexuality as an ailment or condition of moral fragility rather than an inborn trait. He explained that the reason for their dismissal is more of a concern for national security, stating that “as has been previously discussed in this report, the pervert is easy prey to the blackmailer. It follows that if blackmailers can extort money from these individuals under the threat of disclosure, espionage agents can use the same type of pressure to extort confidential information or other material they might be seeking”. Using this language of “prey” and “extort”, the government is framed as the altruistic savior that is protecting both national security and homosexual individuals.

First and foremost, it was defined within the government’s rhetoric that homosexuality could not possibly be a trait one was born with. Instead, homosexuality was portrayed as a practice chosen by morally corrupt individuals. The Hoey Committee’s report stated that “psychiatric physicians generally agree that indulgence in sexually perverted

War Femme: Lesbianism, National Identity, and Hollywood Cinema, and primary source *The Grapevine* (1964) by Jess Stearn (p 5)

¹⁹ Dumančić, 195. Note: Dumančić references scholar Robert J. Corber’s book *Cold War Femme: Lesbianism, National Identity, and Hollywood Cinema* (p 29)

²⁰ Subcommittee on Investigations, 1

²¹ “McCarthyism,” Britannica, accessed April 30, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/McCarthyism>

²² “Homosexuals in State Department,” Joe McCarthy, Audio Excerpt, February 2, 1952

practices indicates a personality which has failed to reach sexual maturity...can be cured if they have a genuine desire to be cured".²³ There is an established power imbalance when presented in this manner. There is the patient and the doctor: the sick and the healthy. This language placed homosexual individuals on a lower plane in terms of morality: a valuable currency in society. Because of their lower status as degenerates, it was easier to reprimand their behavior and persecute them from government positions. Following the previous line of reasoning, "sex perverts, like all other persons who by their overt acts violate moral codes and laws and the accepted standards of conduct, must be treated as transgressors and dealt with accordingly".²⁴ The government's reasoning followed that due to the moral corruption of homosexual individuals, the government was solely doing society a service in policing and maintaining social order by treating homosexuals as convicts of society's codes of conduct.

However, while discrediting the morality of homosexuality, this document simultaneously provided protection for these individuals. The committee observed that "the social stigma attached to sex perversion is so great that many perverts go to great lengths to conceal their perverted tendencies. This situation is evidenced by the fact that perverts are frequently victimized by blackmailers who threaten to expose their sexual deviations".²⁵ The narrative claimed that because of social stigma, ironically reinforced by this document, homosexual individuals were more susceptible to blackmail in attempts on their part to continue the secret of their "practices". The language created shame for homosexual individuals to hide their "conditions" but also placed them in a to-be-protected vulnerable position that threatened their own security along with national security. The power structure between homosexuals and society as represented through government narratives is similar to the dynamic between children and adults.

Power Dynamics Within the Narrative

It is important to recognize who is performing the action when analyzing this power dynamic. A common perception of homosexuality followed that it is enticing and preys on weaker individuals. In a 1964 pamphlet published by the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, homosexuals were compared and contrasted with child molesters. Unlike molesters, "the homosexual prefers to reach out for the child at the time of normal sexual awakening and to conduct a psychological preliminary to the physical contact. The homosexual's goal...is to 'bring over' the young person, to hook him for homosexuality."²⁶ Similar to communists, homosexuals were viewed as disreputable and given the agenda to pollute susceptible minds. Different from this common narrative, the Lavender Scare framed homosexuals in an in-between third role in which they were not directly at fault nor were they exempt from blame. Furthermore, the narrative that associated homosexuality and communism was rather convoluted.

Instead of claiming that homosexuality was a subversive trait that germinated communist beliefs, individuals "inflicted" by homosexuality were deemed to be vulnerable and susceptible to blackmail from communist agents, endangering the country with the security risk of divulging sensitive information amidst the Cold War.²⁷ The Subcommittee framed these individuals as "victims addicted to homosexuality"²⁸. The narrative placed action into the hands of the communists, creating a common enemy within American society. In addition, the action was given to the protectors of weaker individuals. Ultimately, the power was in the hands of the protectors, the government itself, who were raised to a noble savior position.

²³ Subcommittee on Investigations, 3

²⁴ Subcommittee on Investigations, 3

²⁵ Subcommittee on Investigations, 3

²⁶ Florida Legislature, *Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida, a report of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee*, (January 1964), 8

²⁷ Subcommittee on Investigations, 3

²⁸ Subcommittee on Investigations, 4

Homosexual individuals were discussed as weaker beings who failed to reach “sexual maturity” and this underdevelopment was viewed to be evident through their homosexual practices.²⁹ This notion coexisted with the attitude that they must also be protected for national security. It is hard to identify whether this narrative and treatment completely bolstered or brought down the community. The Lavender Scare was harmful both short and long-term for the LGBTQ community by outing individuals in a society where homosexuality was widely shunned. The government's rhetoric regarding homosexual individuals created a distinct narrative and connotation to the queer community, especially as they were closely associated with communists and labeled as equally dangerous subversives. However, delving into the nuances shows that the government's attitude towards homosexuals was a testament to the fluidity of sexuality in a rigid societal structure, and in general, the Lavender Scare inadvertently provided the homosexual community agency and unity. Herein lies the paradox of Cold War homophobia.

Unity

As persecution continued, the homosexual community was driven underground and together, creating unity and camaraderie. Fearmongering, though resulting in misconstrued narratives regarding homosexual individuals, also pushed individuals together to create a tight-knit community. There was immense pressure and fear placed upon the community. Samuel Steward in his oral history outlined that “there was more pressure from the community, the heterosexual community, and the entrapment by the Chicago Police was a fearful thing in those days. They entrapped you and then they shook you down for amounts, three to five hundred dollars, in those days, quite a considerable sum.”³⁰ Individuals were vulnerable in gay bars due to raids from local police. The narratives affected the ways the rest of society viewed homosexuals. Madeline Tress, in her oral history, mentioned that “there were ah, were - they were raiding bars, that was the worst thing...that was again everybody's fear and that's why maybe we had more parties.”³¹ Though fear of bar raids permeated the social scene, it did not deter individuals from continuing to gather as they opted for parties and private gatherings instead. Though the government and police attempted to choke the culture, the homosexual community continued to find more ways to thrive.

Within the community, the caution manifested itself into code words and terms that solidified the camaraderie between members. Interviewer Len Evans additionally mentioned the cautiousness and cryptic ways individuals communicated, “no, but I remember the '60s; I came out in '60, you know, it was still, people were afraid to talk to people in the bars. You were very cautious about getting around to the subject of going home. You, you played a lot of games too, you know, feel out the other person”.³² Even as McCarthyism faded, its negative stigma on the homosexual community continued into the '60s. Members were cautious to connect and people continued to fear. However, Steward's oral history alluded that the community nevertheless continued to thrive. He mentioned that “all the usual signs, through the code words or the hairpins dropping, whatever you wanted to call it. In those days we all had our terminology too about, terminology of reference, so that if you dropped a code word, somebody would recognize it, and away you'd go from there”.³³ When forced into a corner, members instead adapted and created different ways to communicate that only one another would understand. Members found ways to connect under regimes of fear. In this way, connection thrived rather than choked. The colorful culture that stemmed from fear manifested into union and resistance against political and social oppression that the infrastructure enforced.

The Lavender Scare inadvertently gave agency to homosexual individuals and a definition to their community. As noticed by Marko Dumančić, “the Cold War defined queer communities not only as scapegoats but also as

²⁹Subcommittee on Investigations, 3

³⁰ Steward, 20-21

³¹ Madeline Tress, “VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC” By Len Evans, April 16, 1983, 25

³² Tex or J.R. (pseud), “VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC- McCarthy Era Project”, By Len Evans, 26

³³ Steward, 11-12

active participants—even as Cold War regulatory systems profoundly circumscribed the agency of queer actors.”³⁴ Cold War homophobia in some way included homosexual individuals into the narrative. Rather than ostracizing individuals, the government pulled members within its realms of protection, including them as participants. In attempts to separate and isolate, the Lavender Scare instead forced individuals together to connect in deeper ways as surface-level communication failed. Dumančić summarizes the situation fully, writing “the first two decades of the Cold War as formative for the queer community’s sense of group identity”.³⁵ Though the Lavender Scare was a persecution of homosexual individuals, it also paradoxically grouped them to create unity.

Conclusion

The homosexual community occupies a liminal space within society, flowing between inside, outside, and ultimately occupying the spaces at the boundaries of society. Sexuality is different from other identifiers such as racial and ethnic backgrounds or religious beliefs. Being a homosexual can come in many forms and have no specific tradition or culture that is associated with it. Sexuality is a private topic because it revolves around the intimate matter of sex. The community is built upon connections based on sex and pleasure, which are viewed as personal affairs. Because of persecution and oppression, unity emerged and inadvertently solidified and publicized these intimate matters.

Furthermore, sexuality is inherently fluid and comes innately with human desire. The unique role of the community in society manifested itself in the Lavender Scare through the contrasting rhetoric which highlighted the paradoxes between the intentions of the government and its actual effect on society. Such treatment solidified the community into its place within the liminal space of society. During the 1940s and 1950s, American society was simultaneously attracted yet repulsed by homosexuals and what they represented. Furthermore, during the Lavender Scare, the government treated individuals with a special “persecuted and protected” treatment. Even the rhetoric used to describe the homosexual community paradoxically stemmed from fear but in effect reinforced the fluidity of sexuality. Most important for the movement going forward, the Lavender Scare persecution in turn created a group identity that set a strong basis for development in years to come.

When society instills set-in-stone boundaries and blockades, sexuality acts as the water that flows between its cracks: becoming inside, outside, and surrounding the spaces in between. The homosexual community has been put in an interesting position within the liminal space of society and has admirably advocated for their rights with the ability to flow in a stagnant society. The Lavender Scare was a testament to the strength of this community in which members were able to adapt and connect regardless of hindrances. Water, a liquid with the ability to fill constrained spaces, also possesses the ability to break down stones with quantity and persistence. The homosexual community is gifted with the unique potential to traverse boundaries and thrive in the in-betweens, equipped with the skills to fight, unite, and endure.

³⁴ Dumančić, 194

³⁵ Dumančić, 193. Note: in this specific sentence, Dumančić is referencing three books (*Gay Artists in Modern American Culture: An Imagined Conspiracy* by Michael S. Sherry; *Cold War Femme: Lesbianism, National Identity, and Hollywood Cinema* by Robert J. Corber; *Life among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* by Jennifer V. Evans) and claims that “collectively, the three books paint” this specific picture of the first two decades of the Cold War

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