

Spying Gender: Women in British Intelligence 1969-1994

Jessica Renee Shahan

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Department of International Politics

Aberystwyth University

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Thesis Summary

While women have long been a part of the intelligence world, their roles in shaping contemporary intelligence organisation and practices have often been minimised, overlooked, or altogether erased. When their work is acknowledged, it is often through archetypal depictions of femme fatales or ingénues. As a result, the history of women in contemporary intelligence is piecemeal, and with few exceptions, women's voices and experiences are missing from intelligence histories.

This thesis explores the history of women in modern intelligence, centred on the British Security Service, MI5, from 1969 to 1994, a time period which contained many of the most significant changes for women in the organisation. This thesis addresses how structural and societal factors, in combination with organisational policies, practices, and cultures shaped women's experiences in modern intelligence employment. Sources include autobiographical writing and public speaking events such as lectures, panel discussions, television and radio broadcasts.

This analysis demonstrates the importance of women's employment to studies of intelligence history and organisation and explores the interconnectedness of larger structural factors within women's everyday lives and employment. Incorporating an interdisciplinary approach to women's and gender history, this thesis draws from intersectional feminist theory, research on women's employment and labour market participation, organisational and business management studies, and critical intelligence studies.

This thesis argues that women's narratives exist at a nexus of macro, meso and micro level forces and that these experiences are uniquely positioned to highlight how contemporary intelligence organisations have been shaped by women employees. In an ongoing fight for equality of opportunity, women have challenged and changed policies and practices which hindered their progression, including the gender coding of certain job roles. Foregrounding women's experiences in intelligence work allows us to discern these changes in ways that are not as visible if we only consider the experiences of men.

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Table of Contents

Volume 1

Chapter One

Spying Gender Introduction	1
Thesis Question	9
The Timeliness of Discussions on Women’s Employment in Intelligence	11
Thesis Roadmap	14

Chapter Two

Methodology and Theory: Forming and Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Framework	17
Existing Literature: At the intersection of women, labour, and intelligence history	18
Analysing the Value of Memoirs and Personal Narratives	22
Discussion of Unofficial Sources: Memoirs, Interviews, Public Engagement, and Fictional Accounts	26
Memoirs as Constructed Texts	26
The Contributions and Challenges of Interview Material	29
Public Engagement: Panels, Productions, and Participation	31
Fiction as Reflection and Critique	32
The Source of the Problem: The hurdle of official and archival source material in intelligence studies	34
Critical Intelligence Studies	37
Intersectionality and Structure	39
History of Intersectionality	43
The Potentially Problematic Use of Intersectional Theory:	45
How is identity defined and studied?	47
The Potential Problems of Focus	53
On selectivity, foregrounding, and the construction of historical narratives	56
Mapping the Margins	57
Complexities of Identity in Intersectional Analysis	60
How Intersectionality Informs Research Structure	61
Conclusion	67

Chapter Three

From Glass Ceilings and Elevators to Glass Boxes: Changing concepts and structural issues related to women’s labour force participation	69
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Introduction: From James Bond to Liz Carlyle	69
Glass Ceilings, Elevators and Boxes: Key concepts, themes, and approaches to women's employment	72
From Governess to Switchboard Operator: Technological and skill changes approaching the turn of the century	80
What did she do during the war?: Women's Wartime and Peacetime Employment Fluctuations	82
Reserve Army of Labour Theories	87
From Wartime to Postwar Employment	89
Economic Theories on Postwar Employment	94
Changing Demographics and Rising Social Mobility: Education, women in work, family responsibilities and household sizes in the 1950s and 1960s	96
Dissatisfaction, Activism, and the Path to Legal Protections	105
The Longer-term Effects of Women's Labour Activism and Recession in Britain	109
Rights, Privileges or Perks?: Women in paid employment and work-life balance	111
Conclusion	116

Chapter Four

Understanding the development of MI5 and Women's Employment in at the Organisational Level 119

Introduction	119
Key Concepts	124
The Gendering of Organisations	127
MI5's Early Employment of Women	130
Interwar Exclusion: Formation of the Nameless Club	136
Women as Observers and Camouflage	138
Returning to War: Re-establishing MI5 and Women's Employment	139
Agent-running in WWII: Femme fatales and ingénues	143
The Women Otherwise Known As "Miss X"	145
Women as the next best source of labour?	147
Slow Postwar Progression: Operational shifts and employment increases	149
Unions and Intelligence Service Employees	156
Signs of Change and Revolt in the 1970s	158
Establishing a Contemporary Security Service	162
Comparative Intelligence Service Historical Trends in Women's Employment	164
Comparable Trends in SIS Employment	165
Comparable Trends in Central Intelligence Agency Employment	166
Conclusion	169

Volume 2

Chapter Five

The Real James Bond: Exploring Women's Experiences in Intelligence Employment 174

Introduction	174
Experiences in Intelligence Work	179
More Than Just a Letter in the Post: Recruitment and hiring	179
Recruitment Contact Methods	181
Shifting Recruitment Demographics	185
Motivations and Expectations	187
Culture of Secrecy and Concepts of Trust in Recruitment/Hiring	190
Secrecy, Vetting, Testing	192
Working in Intelligence	197
Initial Employment and Training	197
Halt and Catch Fire: Impacts of technological advances and changes on intelligence work	203
Women Office Staff at Home and Abroad	205
Women in the Field, Women in the Office	208
Employee Rights and Unions	213
Social Aspects of Intelligence Work	215
Glass Ceilings, Glass Boxes: Promotion and Progression	227
Later Career Progression and Promotion	227
Promotion Denials and the Slow Path to Leadership	233
Departure	236
Conclusion	239

Chapter Six

Through the Looking Glass: Reflections on Gender and Intelligence 241

Introduction	241
Intelligence Professionals, Organisational Secrecy and Public Disclosures	246
To Speak or Not to Speak: Personal Choices, Spy Culture, and the Official Secrets Acts	246
The Various Ways Women Spies Have Been Depicted	251
Medium and the Message: Types of sources and key sources in this chapter	253
Memoirs and Other Written Autobiographical Accounts	256
Public Speaking and Lectures (including Academic Cooperation)	262
Interviews and Panel Discussions	263
Public Displays	265
The Potential Subversiveness of Insider Spy Fiction	266

Creating and Deconstructing the Image of the Female Spy – Definitions of self, rhetorical techniques	271
Spy, Diplomat, or Professional?	272
‘In the land of eccentrics’: Defining Self Though and in Contrast to Colleagues	273
Contract Wives	277
White Glove Checks and School Ties in the Dining Rooms	279
Training Pools and Culture Shocks	281
Seeking Something Interesting to Do: Education, Motivation, and Chance	283
The Development of Career Ambitions	286
‘You just make it work’: Spywork, Motherhood and Family Life	288
“Coming Out” As a Spy	289
Childbirth and Childcare Arrangements	293
Childcare	296
Guilt and Family Life	299
TC Marcus: Representative of a new type of male memoir?	300
Rimington, Childcare and Guilt	303
Glass Boxes: Career Experiences, Progression and Opportunity	305
Tradecraft, Agent Running, Perceptions of Women Working and Reporting Differences	307
Mentorship	309
Women, Power, and Role Models	312
Conclusion	313
Chapter Seven	
Conclusion: Not Quite Killing Eve	315
Overview	316
Key Findings, Contributions and Understandings	325
Women’s (Supposedly Invisible) Contributions to Intelligence	327
Contributions to Intelligence Studies and Critical Intelligence Studies	329
Going Forward	331
Appendix: Data Sources	333
Bibliography	336

Chapter One

Spying Gender Introduction

I visited the International Spy Museum in Washington D.C. in December of 2015. At the time, the private non-profit museum's exhibits covered a range of intelligence agencies and time periods, with emphasis on the artefacts and narratives of modern intelligence.¹ The museum is well known for its connections to intelligence agencies, and a number of former intelligence professionals either work for the museum or serve on its Advisory Board.² Many of the exhibits I viewed demonstrated clear collaboration between former intelligence professionals and the museum itself, such as video and audio files specifically recorded for the museum to display.

In the time since my visit, two parts of the museum have remained with me as I have engaged in research for this thesis on women in intelligence. The first, a room dedicated to women in intelligence history, both played on the archetypes of the seductress spy and featured profiles of women in intelligence. The image of Mata Hari – a woman whose stage name has become synonymous with the archetype of the female spy – featured prominently in this room.

The second aspect of the International Spy Museum that remained in my mind was found in the Bond film series exhibition. If one followed the intended flow of the museum, this would

¹ At the time of writing, the museum has just moved to a new location. A number of exhibits have been changed, updated, or altogether removed. The final day of the long running Bond exhibit mentioned here was 1 January 2019. Videos of the Bond Moment series are still available online, through the museum's YouTube channel.

² International Spy Museum "Advisory Board" [<https://www.spymuseum.org/about/leadership/board-of-directors>].

be the last major exhibit of the museum. “Exquisitely Evil: 50 Years of Bond Villains” featured film props and memorabilia, interactive experiences, and one particular element which stood out to me: a video series called, “My Bond Moment” which featured former intelligence professionals sharing short stories from their careers which in some way echoed the Bond experience.³ Most of these stories speak to moments of danger or intrigue. CIA officer Sue Burgraff speaks to a risky meet with a potentially valuable source in Poland during the Cold War. Jonna Mendez tells the story of disguising herself, the chief of station and a team to meet a terrorist who said they had information about plans to bomb an aeroplane. What is most engaging in these clips is not just the actions, but how these former intelligence professionals speak about their experiences. Mendez describes how dangerous the meet was, and we, as an audience, see her perspective of the situation.

That the International Spy Museum focuses on the James Bond franchise as a way to engage visitors with espionage is an important point. On its own, the “My Bond Moment” series could be seen as an effort solely from the museum to link fact with fiction. However, former intelligence professionals sharing their experiences through other means also incorporate the fictional in order to interest audiences in their personal narratives. In this sense, speaking on the topic of intelligence or, more specifically, spies, often the first image to come forward is James Bond – the quintessential British spy – suave, daring, and with just the right amount of rebellion. Bond, in its various incarnations, is perhaps the most prevalent popular image of espionage. Western, white, male, well-spoken and educated, Bond portrays an image that is explicitly classed and gendered. However, one does not have

³ International Spy Museum, “My Bond Moment”, [<https://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/exquisitely-evil/my-bond-moment/>]; additional information, including some of the videos included in this series available on the International Spy Museum YouTube channel, [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8p1_ubNPTRlyTMfJFOxGTUF4DB28b5pZ].

to look too far for images of female spies: the women Bond seduces, or who attempt to beguile him, the aforementioned mythologised interpretation of Mata Hari, the seductress spy, or other honeypot trap archetypes. With less information on the history and status of women in intelligence available compared to information on men, the fictional has filled in the gaps in perceptions of women in intelligence. It could be argued that Mata Hari, or more generally the trope of the *femme fatale*, has surpassed Bond in this regard. Like it or not, these archetypes often shape popular images of intelligence. For many, the fictional serves as an introduction to concepts of intelligence work, more so than in other vocations, due to the secrecy which shrouds intelligence work. Even those who have worked in intelligence recall the power of fictional works in shaping their views of the intelligence world.

The language of intelligence work is, in part, based on fiction. Even when speaking about their careers, former intelligence professionals refer back to these popularised images of their work. These references are employed for a variety of reasons, such as gaining audience interest in their work, distancing the speaker from more scandalous and daring interpretations of intelligence, or to illustrate how they feel about current fictional representations of their work.

As contemporary intelligence histories have emerged, including authorised works, the more sensationalised aspects of intelligence work have been challenged, and at times, reinforced, by accounts perceived to be more “truthful”. However, much of this history is made by and centred on men, rather than reflecting on the broader composition of intelligence organisations; women have been largely left out of this “re”-constructed history. While larger geopolitical shifts and various operations have made their way into this historical genre, the contributions and struggles of women have often been minimised (with the

exception of a rare few) or ignored and erased altogether.⁴ The presumption of the intelligence employee, the spy as male, has dominated discussions of intelligence history. As such, this thesis began as a project of “finding the women”.

This fits in with the turn in women’s history to finding women who have been ignored, minimised or forgotten in the historical record. Yet, finding the women in intelligence is simply not enough. It is certainly important to answer the questions of where women are in intelligence history, and how they shaped modern intelligence. These questions are central to this thesis. However, it quickly became clear that those women who spoke about their work often had much to say about it. While much of this discourse included anecdotes and personal narrative, there was also a clear theme of historical awareness. For some former (women) spies this has involved coordination with the International Spy Museum, or other museum exhibits, the writing of memoirs, or engagement with academia through lectures and public talks. Much of what these women have to say is both incredibly engaging, but also very interesting. Yet, for many of these women, their roles are often overlooked and missing from intelligence history and intelligence studies scholarly literature.

In this way, fact mirrors fiction. Even in scholarly literature, the touchstones for introducing and discussing intelligence work – be it intelligence agencies, operations, or individuals – remain predominately fictional. Intelligence studies remains an area where scholars must work to add accurate information to subject matter still largely subsumed by conjecture, conspiracy, or fictionalisation. The relatively recent and growing scholarly literature on the

⁴ Proctor, T. M., *Female Intelligence: Women and espionage in the First World War*, (New York, New York University, 2003); Vigurs, E. K., *The Women Agents of the Special Operations F Section – Wartime realities and post war representations*, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011); Toy, R. F., and C. Smith, ‘Women in the shadow war: gender, class and MI5 in the Second World War’, *Women’s History Review*, 27:5 (2018), pp. 688-706; and, Martin, A., J., ‘America’s Evolution of Women and Their Roles in the Intelligence Community’, *Journal of Strategic Security*, 8:3 (2015), pp. 99-109.

history of intelligence and espionage contains significant gaps. Though the popularity of novels and films on espionage have contributed to this status quo, practices of state secrecy have also helped speculation and misinformation. The largest contributing factor is the intelligence sector itself as intelligence organisations have historically not been forthcoming about their work. Reasoning for this reticence can be attributed to both the security based need for secrecy and an internal culture valuing secrecy that pervades these organisations. In recent decades the hard-line secrecy has shifted towards a limited policy of openness in many Western intelligence organisations. This shift, however, is not universal. For example, despite a 20th century history of cooperation, a transatlantic divide exists between the United States and United Kingdom in transparency, openness, and historical accountability. In 1976, the US Central Intelligence Agency created the Publications Review Board, an in-house panel to review and authorise publications.⁵ In contrast, the United Kingdom had no set review process for its intelligence services until former agency head Stella Rimington attempted to publish her memoirs in the early 2000s.⁶ Despite the restrictiveness of British secrecy, intelligence organisations on both sides of the Atlantic have increasingly engaged public relations efforts. These efforts have frequently been motivated by a desire to gain additional resources, increase recruitment, and combat negative public perceptions.

Despite a shift towards increased openness, relatively little is still known about many of these intelligence organisations and their histories. For most of the 20th century, intelligence agencies in Britain have remained hidden from public view. It was not until the end of the

⁵ Hedley, J. H., 'Reviewing the Work of CIA Authors: Secrets, Free Speech, and Fig Leaves' in *Studies in Intelligence*, Spring 1998:75-83, available at: [<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/docs/v41i3a01p.htm>].

⁶ For more information on the struggle over the publication of Rimington's memoirs see Chapter Six. For a history of British attempts to block memoir publication see Christopher Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

century that the existence of British intelligence was officially acknowledged. Modern British intelligence infrastructure of the 21st century is dramatically different in many ways compared to its 20th century predecessors

The contemporary British intelligence community, commonly referred to as the UKIC, is chiefly composed of three organisations: MI5, SIS, and GCHQ.⁷ MI5, otherwise known as the Security Service, responsible for domestic intelligence was originally formed as a military intelligence branch responsible for counterespionage in 1908. SIS, the Secret Intelligence Service, more colloquially referred to as MI6, was created shortly after MI5, in 1909. SIS also originated as a military intelligence branch and was tasked with foreign intelligence. A decade later in 1919, the Government Code and Cypher School was formed to provide peacetime codebreaking and signals intelligence, such as cable or wire decoding services to Britain. After the Second World War, this organisation became known as the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).

All three organisations contribute to British intelligence gathering and processing needs in different, and often overlapping ways. Of these three organisations, MI5 and SIS are the closest in terms of historical methods, organisation, employment and intelligence targets. Though their methodology has diverged, MI5 and SIS share a historical operational focus on human intelligence, such as the use of informants, interrogation, or following of potential sources of information. All three are now considered civilian intelligence organisations. For MI5's case, it left War Office (and thus military) supervision in 1931, falling under the remit of the Home Office.

⁷ The composition of the UKIC is much broader than this and contains other organisations. However, for the purposes of this thesis, these three primary organisations will be the ones referred to.

British intelligence officially remained out of the public eye for most of the 20th century, though through various scandals, mistakes, and unauthorised releases they were secret only in formality. As a result, British intelligence organisations were partly an open secret, one which remained officially unacknowledged until the 1990s. In 1989 with the Security Services Act, MI5 was the first organisation to come out of the cold. Statutory acknowledgement from the British government placed MI5 in the public eye and under official Home Office oversight. Similar status was granted to SIS and GCHQ in 1994 with the Intelligence Services Act.

As part of the public relations efforts some Western intelligence agencies have engaged in, MI5 and SIS have allowed the publication of authorised histories. Though informative, these works have limitations, not just in content, but in chronological and subject scope. Less is revealed about the internal workings of and everyday life in these organisations, especially when compared to the presently available information on larger operations and intelligence targets. As a result, we generally know more about what they do than why or how. Similarly, unauthorised histories privilege operations and major organisational changes over the subject of everyday life. This is somewhat attributable to limited information releases.

British intelligence organisations are exempt from the standard 30-year release rule which applies to other branches of government. Public interest and security concerns have also influenced which files are voluntarily released. Popular interest regarding the World Wars has led to greater availability of information on the first half of the 20th century compared to the second half.

The abovementioned institutionalised secrecy has contributed to significant gaps in intelligence studies literature, particularly in the areas of intelligence history and

organisation. Comparatively less is written on intelligence organisation employment history, policies or practices.

To summarise, two primary gaps can be identified. The first gap in the scholarly literature which this thesis will address is the topic of missing information on intelligence organisation employment practices and development. The second gap in the literature is perhaps even more substantial. In histories of intelligence within the context of British employment, or more specifically British state employment, women are often missing.⁸ Yet, the employment of women had profound impacts on the intelligence services, especially MI5. Women not only contributed to the organisations they served, they also helped shape, challenge, and change their policies, practices, and organisational cultures.

Another key understanding in approaching a history of women in intelligence is that intelligence organisations do not exist in isolation. Though MI5, for example, was secret officially until the early 1990s, the organisation was influenced by outside labour markets and socio-cultural changes impacting women's employment (such as widening access to higher education, the women's liberation movement, and even attitudes about what types of vocation were suitable for women). Further, intelligence organisations themselves changed and grew during the twentieth century. From the small outfits of the pre-WWI years to the corporatized intelligence product oriented bureaucracies of today, intelligence organisation and employment structures have dramatically transformed, yet, in MI5's case, themes and threads from its earlier years can be seen in its contemporary operation.

Though some historical works already address this development, particularly in line with the

⁸ One notable exception to this is: Toy, R. F., and C. Smith, 'Women in the shadow war: gender, class and MI5 in the Second World War', *Women's History Review*, 27:5 (2018), pp. 688-706.

professionalisation of intelligence as a vocation, few speak to MI5's changing and developing role as an employer.

Finally, as mentioned above, those intelligence professionals who speak openly and publicly about their work and/or write biographically, often have much to say, even if little is given away in terms of operational detail. In this sense, the public interactions of former intelligence professionals are intentional, seeking to share their personal experiences with wider audiences. Though often limited by organisational secrecy (imposed through both policy and pressure from former colleagues) these public representations of intelligence work contain certain unwritten or implied claims to accuracy and truthfulness. In this way, the public representations of intelligence work are contributing to an intelligence history, a historical canon of intelligence literature and other resources which has grown considerably in recent decades. One key advantage to this genre is the addition of (minority) voices from those who were largely overlooked by the mainstream intelligence literature.

For some, this contribution to intelligence history is intentional, for others it is an unintended by-product of telling personal narratives. Within this range of intention, these sources not only add to intelligence history, they provide unique insights into how otherwise unheard voices have felt about, rationalised, remembered and even how they want their work and selves to be perceived.

Thesis Question

This thesis exists at the intersection of intelligence history, women's experiences, and organisational change. The goal of this thesis is to disentangle and examine women's employment in intelligence by looking at it through multiple levels of analysis, from wider

structural and socio-cultural changes, to organisational decisions, policies and practices, and then how these contexts were experienced by women themselves.

As such, the central research question asks: How have sociocultural, political and organisational contexts shaped women's career trajectories and experiences in MI5 (1969-1994), and in what ways can analysing the narratives and reflections of these women contribute to a critical, multilevel approach to intelligence studies?

This larger question can be broken down to component questions, as each chapter of this thesis looks at the question of women's employment in intelligence work through different lenses. These questions include: What wider structural issues have had the most impact on women's employment in MI5? At the organisational level, how have practices and policies regarding women employees changed throughout MI5's history? What understandings of women's employment are most useful for analysing women's experiences in MI5? For the latter half of this thesis, some of the key questions are: What were women's experiences working in MI5, and what similarities or differences do these experiences have with other sectors or intelligence agencies? How do women in intelligence describe and share their experiences? What factors influence the decision to publicly share experiences? What can we learn from personal narratives that other sources leave out?

Longer-term employment practices of MI5's early years established and informed policies regarding women's and men's employment through the 1960s. These policies and practices which governed MI5 employment were informed by wider employment trends and commonly held opinions on gender roles, class and nationality. Throughout much of MI5's history, women were limited in positions they could hold, progression, pay received, and operational tasks. In the 1970s some of MI5's women employees challenged the status quo,

demanding access and opportunities for promotion to higher employment grades, including work categories and job tasks which had been restricted to men.

The challenges to this internal system happened at a time of widespread social challenges and economic change for employment in the United Kingdom. The British labour market faced changing demographics, with increasing numbers of women entering employment. Unlike previous generations, more women were obtaining degrees, contributing to the demand for women's advancement in the workplace. Just as significant, increasing numbers of married women either continued working after marriage, or returned to the labour market once their children were older.

The 1970s challenges to MI5's employment policies by women led to changes in the 1980s and 1990s. These changes continued to reflect larger shifts in the labour market, especially in terms of women's employment along with the changing role of MI5's security focus, and wider changes in the employer-employee relations.

The Timeliness of Discussions on Women's Employment in Intelligence

This thesis began as an examination of history of women in MI5. Owing to available sources and a remarkable consistency between British and American intelligence history – women's experiences are drawn from a variety of organisations to give context to the experiences of women in MI5. In this sense, this thesis is particularly timely. In 2015 the UK Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) released a report on women in the UK intelligence community (focusing on the big three organisations: MI5, SIS, and GCHQ).⁹ This report

⁹ Intelligence and Security Committee, "Report on Women in the UK Intelligence Community", (London: HMSO, 2015), available at: [<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>].

incorporated and quoted feedback from current and former employees of these organisations and made a number of recommendations to improve working conditions for women. Further, with this report came the promise of a further report addressing the experiences and status of black and minority ethnic employees in the UK intelligence community. This report was released in July 2018, albeit in a more expanded form as a report on Diversity and Inclusion, discussing issues of BME, LGBT, and disabled employees.¹⁰

Preceding the above UK ISC reports, the United States Central Intelligence Agency released their own report focusing on women in leadership roles within the organisation.¹¹ Unlike the British releases, the American report on women in the CIA was accompanied by a release of related historical documents discussing women's employment, highlighting women's achievements and struggles in the organisation. This archival release, known as the Typist to Trailblazer collection, contains more information on women in intelligence than any other archival release to date.¹²

These releases show a shift in the intelligence community. Given the shift to diversity focused language and initiatives in the business world, and the shift of the intelligence community to incorporate certain business structures and terms, this added interest in workforce diversity did not appear out of nowhere, and marks a larger ongoing trend in public sector employment. As a result of this shift, diversity is beginning to be more

¹⁰ Intelligence and Security Committee, "Diversity and Inclusion in the UK Intelligence Community", (London: HMSO, 2018), available at: [<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports/>].

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Director's Advisory Group on Women in Leadership Unclassified Report", March 2013, [<https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/>].

¹² Central Intelligence Agency, "Typist to Trailblazer series", available at: [<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/typist-trailblazer/>].

common in public discourse about the intelligence community. This also serves to further highlight the lack of women and/or other minority groups in intelligence histories.¹³

Though finding women in intelligence history is one goal of this thesis, the aim is to expand on that and analyse women's experiences. Simply put, finding women is not enough and is only a first step in the writing of a more inclusive history of intelligence. As such, a further goal is to analyse women's experiences, recollections, and public representations of their careers in intelligence in the context of this growing subgenre of intelligence history.

In order to effectively examine the experiences of women in British intelligence this thesis makes use of comparisons both within British government employment and within the intelligence sector. Though this thesis focuses primarily on the experiences and history of women in MI5, it also intentionally incorporates the experiences of women in other organisations, primarily from the CIA. As will be explored in the latter chapters of this thesis, there is a remarkable similarity between women's experiences in MI5 and the CIA. The comparison to women's experience in the CIA is particularly advantageous. There is considerably more information on women in the CIA than any other intelligence organisation. The increased access to information can be attributed to the CIA's archival releases in the Typist to Trailblazer collection and to their policies and practices surrounding the publication of memoirs. The inclusion of the CIA provides a benchmark for comparing timelines. Women in both organisations faced a similar stop-start path of progress, including similar limitations on assignments and career progression. As Chapter Six will discuss, there

¹³ One key example of this shift can be seen in: Callum, R., 'The Case for Cultural Diversity in the Intelligence Community', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 14:1 (2001), pp. 25-48.

are clear thematic similarities in how women from both intelligence organisations have shared their career experiences.

Thesis Roadmap

The Second Chapter focuses on methodological and theoretical issues. In doing so, the chapter seeks to identify some of the primary hurdles faced in research on women in intelligence. One such issue that arises in the British context is the delay and restriction of archival information. Source material is a key issue for work within intelligence studies more widely. However, particular issues in researching women in intelligence work are also addressed here. Further, outside approaches to and critiques of intelligence studies are discussed. This includes ways around the archive and source material issues, and the importance of personal narratives to understanding women's experiences. This chapter also seeks to expand on the intersectional feminist and historical framing of this thesis, identifying the theoretical basis for the following chapters in greater detail. It will discuss intersectional feminist approaches to the writing of women's and gender history and how these approaches have shaped the structure and content of this thesis.

Chapter Three discusses the historical shifts related British women's employment, such as structural barriers and changing labour markets. It looks at the impact of socio-cultural attitudes on women's education and employment opportunities. The importance of wartime work for women, relevant to the formation of MI5 and its later employment policies and practices is also discussed. Chapter Three will also introduce key theories on gender and employment used to describe and understand the changing labour market for women, and changing patterns in women's occupational and hierarchical progression. In addition to education and employment opportunities, women's experiences while in

employment, and factors influencing career progression are also discussed. Tying these themes together, the concept of work-life balance and gendered assumptions about women by management and in senior roles are also brought in to this chapter. Comparisons to employment in other branches of government and the private sector are also to be made throughout this chapter in order to set the stage for a more in depth discussion of MI5's employment history in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four contains a closer examination of MI5's organisational history and culture, with specific focus on employment for men and women. Key concepts related to understanding intelligence organisations as employers are introduced in this chapter. Some of these concepts are drawn from business and management literature and organisational psychology literature, including the distinction between formal policy and informal practices, gendered organisations, and organisational culture. Of these, organisational culture has been touched on in intelligence studies literature, but the usage of the concept in this chapter combines both intelligence studies and organisational psychology usages. Importantly, these concepts are used to address the changes to employment policies and practices within MI5 throughout its history. MI5's role as an employer and its relations with different groups of employees are also discussed in this chapter, including how this relationship changes as the field of intelligence work becomes increasingly professionalised and bureaucratised. While this chapter provides a broader overview of women's history in MI5, it also draws comparisons with other intelligence organisations, such as the US Central Intelligence Agency.

Chapter Five speaks to the experiences of women working in intelligence. This chapter is thematically organised by various aspects of the work-life cycle. In doing so, this chapter

includes recruitment and hiring practices, everyday employment experiences, progression and promotion in terms of career advancement, and how women left employment with the organisation. Everyday employment experiences addresses the working tasks of those employed in MI5, along with the issues affecting life outside work, and how employees mentally and emotionally dealt with the pressures of intelligence work. By looking at the various aspects of intelligence careers it is possible to show how employment was experienced more widely in intelligence and allows for comparisons across organisations. These separated stages of employment also show how experiences of intelligence work for women, differed from those of men and also changed over time.

Chapter Six examines the challenges former employees have faced in speaking about and sharing their experiences through various formats, along with the impact of changes in the process of sharing in recent decades. In doing so, the difficulties with organisational secrecy at the policy and organisational culture levels are examined. At the same time, motivations for choosing to discuss or not discuss secrets work are also explored, along with the role this plays in influencing what sources are available on MI5. In looking at how and what women write about their experiences in intelligence work, it is possible to identify key themes women have faced. This chapter examines the role women play in constructing histories of intelligence, while also examining how they felt about and reflect on their work.

As the conclusion to this thesis, Chapter Seven will discuss the overall aims of the thesis in relation to the central research question posed in this introduction. It will also provide an overview of the key points of the thesis and the core findings of each of the chapters. In addition, it will be important here to look forward towards future research in this field, including gaps which remain in the topic.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Theory: Forming and Interdisciplinary and

Intersectional Framework

Scholarly research on women in intelligence faces a number of hurdles, including organisational secrecy and an inconsistent availability of archival information. The topic is also one which exists at a nexus of personal narrative, organisational studies, and more widely, political history. The goal of this chapter is to examine some of the primary problems faced in conducting this research and how these issues have been addressed or overcome. In the case of this thesis, it will be argued that the study of women in intelligence work is a highly interdisciplinary topic which touches on many, often disparate fields of study, and that an interdisciplinary lens is essential to understanding this topic.

The first section will discuss the issue of primary and secondary source material and how this impacts decisions taken in direction of this research, such as the use of memoirs and preference for personal narratives. The second section will delve further into the reasoning for this approach, discussing the need for critical intelligence studies in a way which incorporates other, interdisciplinary approaches.

This chapter focuses on the creation of a framework to address the complexities of women in intelligence. This thesis takes a particular approach to how this topic is discussed and organised, influenced by intersectional feminist frameworks and multi-level analyses.

Throughout the four central chapters, concepts and terms from a variety of disciplines are brought in. Women's and gender history, (feminist) business and management studies, and

organisational psychology feature strongly in the discussion of structural and organisational factors in women's intelligence employment. These various scholarly fields are brought together by this intersectional framework, which, as discussed in the introduction, breaks down the chapters of the thesis into different levels (or focus areas) for analysis: structural, organisational, experiential and representational. These areas of analysis, which form the core of this research, are drawn from approaches found in feminist intersectional practices. The origins and thinking behind this methodological framing will be examined in the final section of this chapter.

Existing Literature: At the intersection of women, labour, and intelligence history

The following section will provide a brief overview of the most relevant literature to this thesis. The focus of this review of the literature is to highlight the literature which exists at the nexus of women and intelligence work. Of primary importance are works which directly address women in contemporary and modern intelligence history. This section will first examine relevant secondary literature to women in intelligence. Following this, there will be a closer look at the analyses of intelligence memoirs.

Perhaps the most important work for this project, and for shaping my approach to intersectionality in intelligence history is Tammy M. Proctor's work on women and girl guides in MI5 during the Second World War.¹ Proctor's book on the topic is one of the first comprehensive works on women in MI5's history. It diverges from previous work on MI5 women which has remained largely biographical in focus, to look at both individuals and the organisation within the wider British wartime context. Proctor's work addresses the

¹ Proctor, T. M., *Female Intelligence: Women and espionage in the First World War*, (New York, New York University, 2003).

intersections on gender, class and nationality, on intelligence and concepts of trustworthiness in intelligence hiring, particularly during the formative first few decades of MI5. Her article, 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence' takes this a step further, her concluding argument is that the policies and practices formed during MI5's early years have had a profound and long-term impact on the hiring practices of the contemporary MI5. She states, 'Because the use of nominations, family connections, and class/gender assumptions was embedded in the very founding of intelligence agencies in Britain, they still linger in the decision-making and recruitment strategies used today, despite the availability of advanced surveillance techniques and states policies of equal opportunity hiring.'²

During the course of writing this thesis, there has been an increase in academic interest in women in intelligence work. Notably, much of this work is emerging at the graduate studies level or from early career researchers. These works present challenges to existing literatures and serve as steps towards a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence work and organisation. A large portion of the following works are either from the graduate level (doctoral and master's theses) or from early career researchers, suggesting that the topic of gender in intelligence work is not just of increased interest for the intelligence agencies themselves, but that the scholarly community is also taking notice of this shift. In line with Hamilton Bean's calls for critical intelligence studies which will be discussed in more detail in this Methodology Chapter, some of the following examples bring in outside disciplinary perspectives to intelligence studies.³

² Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence', *Journal of Social History*, 39:2 (2005), pp. 451-466.

³ See for example: Bean, H., 'Intelligence theory from the margins: questions ignored and debates not had,' *Intelligence and National Security*, 33:4 (2018), pp. 527-540; and Bean, H., 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', *Intelligence and National Security*, 28:4 (2013), pp. 495-519.

Most notably, E. K. Vigurs' doctoral thesis on postwar constructions of history through the creation of popular media (films, books) is also relevant in shaping this project. Vigurs examined the roles of those involved in creating public representations of women who served in the SOE's F Section (deployed in France) during the Second World War.⁴ Of particular influence was Odette Sampson who served in that section, wrote a memoir, and served as a consultant on her own and with other film depictions of F Section women. In doing so, Vigurs' highlighted the role of experience and perceived authority and truthfulness in creating influential representations of then-recent historical events, and how those representations had a longer impact on shaping how women in the SOE were viewed both in historical and popular discussions. As such, Vigurs' approaches to constructions of memory in history are particularly useful for Chapter Six of this thesis, which focuses on how women in intelligence work (intentionally or unintentionally) construct public representations of their work.

Much of the archival research on women in intelligence necessarily focuses on the role of the organisation, both in an intelligence capacity and as an employer. A more recent addition to the literature on women in MI5's history is Toy and Smith's article on gender and class in the organisation during the Second World War.⁵ The authors provide an interesting overview of the topic, addressing Proctor's work and incorporating a range of archival documents. Their analysis focuses primarily on the organisational level. This is one of the key advantages in examining MI5's wartime history, as considerably more archival material is available than for the latter half of the twentieth century. In this sense, it is relevant to the

⁴ Vigurs, E. K., *The Women Agents of the Special Operations F Section – Wartime realities and post war representations*, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011).

⁵ Toy, R. F., and C. Smith, 'Women in the shadow war: gender, class and MI5 in the Second World War', *Women's History Review*, 27:5 (2018), pp. 688-706.

wider mission of constructing an organisational history of MI5, particularly one which includes women in the context of a class and gender analysis. By extending the project of an identity aware history to the Second World War, they are adding to the patchwork of what currently comprises a gender history of MI5.

Following the CIA's release of the "Typist to Trailblazer" collection of documents related to women's history in the organisation, there has been an increase in academic interest in women's roles in the agency as seen through these documents. Public relations events at the time of this document collection's release included an event at Smith College highlighting the work of women in intelligence.⁶ Involved in organising these events, Brent Durbin published an article which provided a general overview of women in CIA history and sought to highlight important documents within this collection. While it is not a comprehensive overview of women's CIA history, Durbin's account does highlight organisational shifts relevant to gendered employment history within the agency. Though not by name, Durbin notes trends in occupational sex segregation, and also directly identifies the role underemployment played in shaping women's experiences and careers.⁷ Much of the emphasis is on drawing comparisons at the organisational level, noting similarities between the CIA and MI5, FCO, and the US FBI. Another important contribution is that Durbin focuses on the longer-ranging history of women in the CIA, noting how the pace of change was often slow to create tangible change in women's working lives. Amy J. Martin also makes use of this collection, by examining women's role in the intelligence

⁶ The joint CIA and Smith College event, 'From Typist to Trailblazer: The Evolving View of Women in the CIA's Workforce' was held 30 October 2013 at Smith College.

⁷ Durbin, B., 'Addressing "This Woeful Imbalance": Efforts to Improve Women's Representations at CIA, 1947 to 2014', *Intelligence and National Security*, 30:6 (2015), pp. 855-870.

community and how that role has changed over time.⁸ Martin's approach is an exception to the existing literature as it is more personal, looking at the interactions between the CIA and women employees, and what those women have said about their careers.

Another, more in depth look at the role of women in the CIA's history is Martina Uková's recently completed master's level thesis centred on the Typist to Trailblazer collection.⁹

What warrants the inclusion of this work in this literature section is Uková's inclusion of feminist theory in the analysis of women in the CIA. Though much of Uková's work remains focused on the organisational level and includes an inherent assumption of the reliability of archival sources, this thesis represents the abovementioned trend towards critical intelligence studies by attempting to demonstrate the link between wider social change and workforce change within the CIA.

[Analysing the Value of Memoirs and Personal Narratives](#)

As noted above, much of the work on intelligence history focuses on wider organisational approaches. However, one exception to this is the scholarly literature on spy memoirs. The available research on spy memoirs is varied, but few comprehensive examinations of intelligence memoirs exist. Work on intelligence memoirs tends to focus on publications related to wartime experiences. This trend is not unexpected, considering the prevalence of war related memoirs. It should also be noted that wartime spy memoirs have a broader appeal, crossing over into genres of war histories and war memoirs. On the topic of

⁸ Martin, A., J., 'America's Evolution of Women and Their Roles in the Intelligence Community', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 8:3 (2015), pp. 99-109.

⁹ Uková, Martina, 'Women in CIA: From Typists to Trailblazers?' unpublished master's dissertation, Charles University, Prague, (2016).

American Civil War espionage memoirs, Davis notes that the spy memoir is a document of social history due to the wider ranging nature of the narratives contained in these texts.¹⁰ He concludes that the image of the spy featured in the memoirs of this era is a sort of “folk hero”. Though an interesting look into the literary aspect of espionage memoirs, Davis does not make the case for their value. While intelligence memoirs have value as autobiographical texts, their value to intelligence studies has been under recognized.

One exception to this trend in intelligence studies is Deborah van Seters’ analysis of depictions of women in intelligence.¹¹ Van Seters examines the memoirs of women who served in different intelligence capacities from the US and Europe during the World Wars. Her selection of memoirs is varied, spanning multiple locations of operations and types of intelligence work. Despite the variance in where women were assigned and the roles in which they served, van Seters identifies thematic similarities in women’s intelligence work recollections. These similarities include motivations for engaging in intelligence work, references to popular images of espionage, humour, personal relationships, and formal and informal barriers women faced. On this topic van Seters writes, ‘The task of self-assessment of a secret service career is clearly not a simple one for these authors, as they struggle to convey a combination of frustration, satisfaction and uncertainty. In spite of their differences, however, the women are linked by a number of common threads which, in turn, reflect their ability to transcend the stereotypes.’¹² These thematic similarities are

¹⁰ Davis, C. C., ‘Companions of Crisis: The Spy Memoir as a Social Document’, *Civil War History*, 10:4, (1964), pp. 385-400.

¹¹ Van Seters, D., “‘Hardly Hollywood’s Ideal’: Female Autobiographies of Secret Service Work, 1914-45’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 7:4 (1992), pp. 403-424.

¹² Van Seters, “‘Hardly Hollywood’s Ideal’”, p. 421.

particularly relevant to Chapter Six, as some of the themes can be seen in the autobiographical accounts of women in modern intelligence work.

While the role of thematic similarities is an important contribution, van Seters' work also contributes to the study of women in intelligence in two additional ways. She concludes in her study that there is a clear "female voice" in the autobiographical writings of women in intelligence work during the World Wars. This is also an important understanding for Chapters Five and Six, as the voices and experiences of women are foregrounded in these chapters. Through memoirs and other methods of sharing experiences, such as panel discussions, it is clear that there are not only similarities in what women have experienced, but in how they share those experiences.

Further to this point, as van Seters' examines literature on women in intelligence, she does so with a critical view, noting the reliance on archetypes in depicting historical events. When women are depicted in literature on intelligence there is a tendency to rely on archetypes. The works highlighted above are more the exception to the rule. As van Seters observes, in comparing fictional literature to popular historical literature, 'The common factor, present in varying degrees, is an adherence to the sinner/saint stereotypes of fiction.'¹³ This critique has been echoed elsewhere

It is important to note here that popular representations of intelligence outnumber the factual ones. As mentioned in Chapter One, the prevalence of fictional images of intelligence work, often centring on the role of the spy in espionage thrillers, has superseded the factual in popular discussions of intelligence work. However, the fictional remains an important touchstone for former practitioners who speak publicly about their

¹³ van Seters, "Hardly Hollywood's ideal", p. 408.

work. Often used as a hook to draw in an audience, references to popular works are a gateway for those unfamiliar with the world of intelligence to engage with the personal narratives of former intelligence professionals. As van Seters notes, 'In fact, almost all these accounts make a direct reference to those contemporary popular images.'¹⁴ This point has been seen throughout the research for this thesis. In doing so, she focuses on both personal and the public aspects of these women's lives. She notes the roles of humour, introspection, frustration, and other stylistic similarities in shaping a canon of texts.

Emily Jane Haire has identified the intelligence memoir as a critical source to intelligence history, not just as an aid to triangulation of information from official documents, but as a source unto itself.¹⁵ Haire moves from analysing intelligence memoirs on their own from a literary perspective to intelligence memoirs as historical documents. Critiquing the trend in intelligence studies to minimise the analytical impact of memoirs, Haire makes the observation that 'The gold standard of the archive has apparently rendered the memoir a debased currency.'¹⁶ Haire's analysis of the situation still has resonance with the more recent status of the discipline. As will be discussed in the following section, there is a need in intelligence studies for a more critical, varied approach to intelligence studies and intelligence history.

¹⁴ van Seters, "'Hardly Hollywood's ideal'", p. 413.

¹⁵ Haire, E. J., 'A Debased Currency: Using memoir material in the study of Anglo-French Intelligence Liaison' *Intelligence and National Security*, 29:5, (1990), pp. 758-777.

¹⁶ Haire, 'A Debased Currency', p. 758.

Discussion of Unofficial Sources: Memoirs, Interviews, Public Engagement, and Fictional Accounts

The following section will discuss the various types of unofficial primary sources employed in or relevant to this thesis. Memoirs form a key portion of the source material for Chapters Five and Six, both in examining women's experiences and their recollections of these experiences. They offer distinct advantages as written records of women's careers, yet, at the same time are distinct from other primary sources in their editing processes. Interviews will be discussed in contrast as a relevant but more limited source of information on intelligence work. In addition to memoirs, another significant amount of unofficial primary source material comes from speaking events, such as panel discussion and speeches. Though discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, analysing the role of public engagement is important for how this thesis approaches source material. A final area of unofficial sources to be discussed is that of fictional accounts. These are unique sources of material, offering the potential to critique intelligence work in ways which accounts of lived experiences may be less likely to engage in, though these sources are quite limited in availability.

Memoirs as Constructed Texts

Autobiographical writing serves as an important source of information for this thesis. Of the autobiographical writing used, the majority of sources are memoirs. As discussed in the above section, thematic similarities can be identified within women's intelligence memoirs, and more widely, within other methods of sharing experience of intelligence work. Memoirs can help triangulate information found in archival sources, elaborate on the official record, and discuss events left out of other sources. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that these documents are constructed and shaped in ways which other key

primary sources used this thesis are not. For the purposes of this discussion, three key areas are identified: the role of the audience (or intended audience), the role of the editing process for publication, and the impact of self-editing in writing one's autobiographical narrative. These factors in the construction of memoirs can impact their usefulness as sources, along with the types of information that can be gained from them.

The intended audience for intelligence memoirs can have influence on the content of the writing and the marketing of the publication. It is important here to consider who the author is writing for and why. For example, in the case of former Director General of MI5, Stella Rimington, her memoir was intended for general public consumption. The tone and text of contemporary memoirs suggests the desire to appeal to a wider audience, and to give the non-intelligence world insights into what it is like to work in this sector. As will be explored further in Chapter Six, the writing and publication of memoirs can be controversial within the intelligence community, and the motivations for publication can be varied.

Motivations can include a desire to share one's experiences, correct the record, and critique or support an intelligence organisation or some part of intelligence work.

Despite any assumed or stated motivation, intelligence memoir publication can be viewed as a breach of trust and secrecy by former colleagues, even when one has gone through the hurdles of authorisation to publish imposed by intelligence organisations and governments. While former intelligence professionals do not necessarily write for one another, they do on occasion acknowledge each other's work. There is an intertextuality that has begun to emerge within the genre as more intelligence memoirs are authorised for publication and this genre grows. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, with the case of Annie Machon's memoir. Machon makes direct reference to Rimington's memoir in an

attempt to correct the record.¹⁷ In this instance the intended audience is not directly Rimington, rather, it is clear that instead Machon is writing for a more general audience. This also fits in with the role of motivation in choosing to share one's experiences, a recurring theme throughout all of the unofficial source types.

Unlike panel discussions and other public speaking sources employed in this thesis, memoirs go through additional editing for publication. While public speaking engagements and interviews can be subject to some editing, written autobiographical publications have outside influences. Further to this point, intelligence memoirs are unique compared to other types of memoir in that the editor and publisher are not the only additional influencers of the text. While an editor might push for a more cohesive narrative of intelligence work, intelligence organisations can require redactions of material they deem to be too sensitive for publication. The method and amount which this happens varies by intelligence organisation.¹⁸ As such, intelligence organisations present an additional layer of influence over the content of memoirs. Authors can note the percentage of material removed or where material has been redacted, and all of the modern memoirs used for this thesis acknowledge this process in some way within their text, most frequently in an introduction or preface.

At the same time, authors themselves can engage in editing and self-censorship. This process can be intentional or unintentional. Sensitive material may be left out by choice, while embarrassing or personally damaging material might be included only when the author feels comfortable doing so. While this is a topic further explored in Chapter Six, it is

¹⁷ See Chapter Five, section on Views of the Security Service and its Organisational Culture

¹⁸ Key organisational differences in approaches to publication authorisation are explored further in Chapter Six.

important to note here that memoirs are not alone in being impacted by this process.

However, as written accounts and edited texts, they may be subject to this process more than panel discussions and question and answer sessions where text is often unprepared.

In the examination and incorporation of the written autobiographical material, these points must be considered. Within intelligence memoirs, there is both a presumption of authority and assumption of truthfulness which these texts rely on. However, authors are not so frequently as candid as readers might presume. As edited and curated texts, memoirs offer insights not seen elsewhere, particularly into the personal, emotional, and psychological impacts of intelligence work. In addition, how intelligence professionals make sense of their experiences and structure their accounts can be as important as the experiences themselves in analysing their career experiences. Unlike the other sources examined in this thesis, memoirs often seek to create cohesive detailed narratives which span careers. In contrast, public speaking events such as lectures and panel discussions focus more on anecdotes and pieces of these larger narratives.

[The Contributions and Challenges of Interview Material](#)

At the outset of this research, one of the primary goals was to obtain interview material.

This aim of obtaining interviews was unsuccessful, but this benefitted the project by contributing towards a shift in focus to other types of sources. This thesis does make some use of interviews already conducted, most notably, ones prepared for television broadcast.

For the purposes of this analysis, interviews exclude panel discussions. The panel discussions used in this thesis are less of an interview format and more of a discussion between panellists, with some containing considerable audience participation in question and answer sessions. However, it is important to discuss what role interview material can have in the

study of women in intelligence. The remainder of this subsection will discuss the limitations of interview material and the contributions interview material can make.

Both interviewee and interviewer can impact the direction, tone, and depth of the interview process. This can have advantages and disadvantages for research on gender and careers.

When former intelligence professionals engage in interviews, there are limits placed on the topics discussed just like with any other source material. However, one difference between interviews and memoirs is the role of candidness. It should be noted that a certain level of candidness can also be found in other less scripted sources, such as panel discussions and question and answer sessions following lectures. However, interview material, like memoirs, can be subject to editing from both interviewee and interviewer. This is the case if an interviewee wishes to redact information upon review of the transcript.

In addition to editing, the role of the interviewer or of the selected topic can shape the narrative presented in an interview. One potential risk in seeking interviews centred on the topic of women in intelligence is that the interviews could be focused partially or even entirely on the role of gender. This can have influence over the responses of the interviewee, in that they might attempt to provide particular insights into the role of gender at the exclusion of other information. As noted above, this thesis does make use of some pre-existing, outside interview material. One advantage in these sources is that they are not sought solely for the purpose of discussing gender in intelligence. As such, gender is discussed in relation to other aspects of identity, such as class. However, with the pre-existing interviews used for this thesis, there is a presumption of editing, both for content and to fit the desired broadcast format. This must be kept in mind when incorporating interview material.

Another key aspect of interviews is the opportunity to question interview subjects at the time. Interviewers can question, ask for more detail, or challenge interviewees to reflect on their experiences. This is one key advantage not found in the other sources used in this thesis. While the ability to question is useful, the format of the interview can lead to anecdotes and prepared stories being told. This can hinder the insights provided if the interviewee does not deviate from their own scripted version of events. However, the repetition found in interviews, and in other sources can be useful for researchers. As noted in Chapter Six, at times this repetition and questioning can lead to new information being added or additional reflection on the emotional impact of an event.¹⁹ Further, information from memoirs is volunteered, whereas information from interviews is both volunteered and sought in the context of the interviewer-interviewee interaction. An interviewee can choose how much or little to elaborate or refuse to answer altogether. It is with this point that the parallels to public engagement are clearest.

Public Engagement: Panels, Productions, and Participation

While public engagement is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, it is useful to acknowledge the role of these sources here in relation to the other source types. Public speeches and panel discussions with question and answer sessions form the bulk of this material. However, this category also includes other formats, such as a television news production and a privately held panel discussion on women in the CIA. Like memoirs, one cannot pose direct questions to the speakers after the fact. Some of the panel discussions employed in this thesis have been subject to editing or transcription. For example, the panel hosted by the CIA on women employee experiences is part of an archival release from the

¹⁹ See Chapter Six, section on Childbirth and Childcare Arrangements

agency, only available as a transcript with some material redacted. On the other hand, the International Spy Museum's annual panel discussion, "Mother, Daughter, Sister, Spy" does not appear to have undergone editing in the same way. The videos of these panels have been made available on YouTube for public viewing. For the purposes of this research, and given the large number of panellists at the second annual panel, I found it necessary to transcribe these panel discussions myself.

The role of the audience and of question and answer sessions following lectures or as part of panel discussions is also an important factor here. Questions can challenge speakers, or shape how narratives are connected in panel discussions. There are also some clear parallels to issues brought up by interviews. For example, the International Spy Museum panels are centred on gender-related theme with all of the panellists being women former intelligence professionals. In addition, interactions between panel members or between panel members and audience members posing questions can provide useful information. The interactions between panel members can provide insights into debates within the field, along with differences or commonalities in career experiences. Both the question and answer contributions and the interactions between panellists are particularly noticeable within the International Spy Museum's panels.²⁰

Fiction as Reflection and Critique

Similar to memoirs, fictional accounts have a unique impact as source material on women in intelligence for the purposes of this thesis. While some fictional material is incorporated into Chapter Six, the focus of this thesis remains on lived experiences. However, the case of former MI5 Director General Stella Rimington is useful to acknowledge here, as she has a

²⁰ These panel discussions are incorporated in Chapters Five and Six.

successful series of spy fiction novels featuring a female protagonist.²¹ Fiction also has an important role in shaping perceptions of intelligence. As former intelligence professionals turn to fictional writing, it can impact perceptions of their work and the accuracy of their fictional narratives. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, spy fiction has the potential to be both subversive and subject to censoring.²²

Current insider spy fiction novels feature the “credentials” of their authors as advertising features to gain readers. There is a presumption of accuracy or insider knowledge in the creation of insider spy fiction. Like with Rimington’s spy novels, there is a similar theme of privileged knowledge in the advertising of former MI5 officer Tom Marcus’ memoir and novel.²³ At the same time, it is important to remember that these accounts are fictional. As narratives constructed to engage and entertain readers the key purpose is not to share experiences. The spy novel is necessarily exaggerated and sensationalised. Despite this, the insider spy novel continues to be an interesting vehicle for critiques of intelligence organisations and intelligence work.

²¹ See for example: Rimington, S., *Illegal Action*, (London: Arrow, 2008 reprint).

²² For a continuation of this discussion Chapter Six, section on The Potential Subversiveness of Insider Spy Fiction

²³ See: Marcus, T., *Soldier Spy*, (2017 paperback reprint, London: Penguin); and Marcus, T., *Capture or Kill*, (2018, London: Pan Macmillan).

The Source of the Problem: The hurdle of official and archival source material in intelligence studies

As can be seen from the above sections, one of the key hurdles in research on intelligence work is that of source material.²⁴ This is particularly true for intelligence related official and archival primary source material. However, as Gill Bennett argues, the availability of official primary sources on intelligence history has increased considerably since the 1990s.²⁵ In her 2002 article, Bennett notes that, 'The process of review and release, particularly of material formerly closed or retained, is a slow one, and not surprisingly many researchers are impatient with what seem like incomprehensible delays.'²⁶ This is a point which holds true nearly two decades later, despite periodical releases of records, the information, particularly on post-1945 intelligence can be inconsistent in its availability.

From the organisational and archival perspectives, there are limits to what can be released and how long documents can be held. As Bennet points out, even when material may be suitable for release, budgetary constraints and other considerations must also factor in.²⁷ For most research into government employment practices in the UK, the limiting factor is often time between the creation and release of material (30 years). For research into the intelligence services, access to official material becomes a more complicated and limited process. Since the intelligence services have been exempt from required releases, the

²⁴ See for example: Wark, W. K., 'In Never-Never Land? The British Archives on Intelligence', *The Historical Journal*, 35:1 (1992) pp.195–203; Aldrich, R. J., 'Never-Never Land and Wonderland? British and American Policy on Intelligence Archives', *Contemporary Record*, 13:1 (1994), pp.133–152; Hughes, R. G., and Scott, L., "Knowledge is Never Too Dear": Exploring Intelligence Archives' in R. Gerald Hughes, Peter Jackson and L.V. Scott (eds.) *Exploring Intelligence Archives: Enquiries into the Secret State*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) pp. 13–41.

²⁵ Bennett, G., 'Declassification and Release Policies of the UK's Intelligence Agencies' *Intelligence and National Security*, 17:1 (2002), pp. 21–32.

²⁶ Bennett, G., 'Declassification and Release Policies', p. 30.

²⁷ Bennett, G., 'Declassification and Release Policies', p. 30.

available archival material as a result contains less information than other areas. Some material is available through the National Archives in Kew. Much of the releases are related to the wartime activities of the intelligence services, including cases of popular interest and those subject to frequent requests.²⁸ Various other problems exist for research on the intelligence services including past damage to the internal archives and uneven, inconsistent collection practices. Other scholars have sought out archival sources from abroad. As Aldrich notes, this has been a fruitful practice for those seeking information on pre-1945 British intelligence in American archives. However, the issue with post-1945 information remains.²⁹ Selected scholars have been allowed access to the archives of the intelligence services. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, these scholars were tasked with writing the official histories of intelligence organisations in line with their centenary celebrations.³⁰ For the history of women in particular, official sources are a difficult topic. As will be discussed further in Chapter Six, official sources can be inherently gendered sources of information. One example highlighted in the chapter is of a CIA officer discussing reports of agent recruiters. She makes the point that women do not recruit in the same ways that men do, but that one could not discern a difference in reading men's and women's reports. Women officers, she believed, 'reported like a man would report it because we knew how to survive in the system.'³¹ Official sources can provide information about organisational structures, such as employment policies and, to some extent, everyday practices. However,

²⁸ For more information, the Security Service releases are listed under the KV call letters at the National Archives, Kew.

²⁹ Aldrich, R. J., 'Never-Never Land and Wonderland? British and American Policy on Intelligence Archives', *Contemporary Record*, 13:1 (1994), pp. 140-141.

³⁰ Andrew, C., *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5*, (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Jeffery, K., *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909–1949*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

³¹ Patty, 'Divine Secrets of the RYBAT Sisterhood: Four Senior Women of the Directorate of Operations Discuss Their Careers', [<http://www.foia.cia.gov/typisttrailblazer/pdfs/1994-01-08.pdf>], pp. 10-11.

in terms of understanding employee experiences they are inadequate, particularly for women's experiences.

Intelligence studies is at times problematically skewed toward the organisational and the structural. There is a focus on operations and activities, but less so on the everyday lives within intelligence organisations. There are various ways around the archival issue, but few sources go directly to personal narratives, which are key to understanding employee experience in intelligence. Reliance on and a preference for archival sources can reinforce this organisational focus.

Interviews have been one solution. While the original goal of this thesis was to triangulate using official sources and original interview material, the research process changed direction. Finding MI5 sources who were willing to be interviewed was one hurdle which clearly shifted the focus of this thesis. At the same time, the wealth of information available in public source material stood out to me. Reading memoirs, viewing the International Spy Museum's various exhibits, listening to interviews and panel discussions, it became clear that these various recollections were working to constitute and shape a history of intelligence, or more specifically, a history of women in contemporary intelligence work.

Speaking engagements, radio and television broadcasts, memoirs, or other forms of public engagement work to construct certain images of individuals and their careers. With an emphasis on how and why former intelligence professionals share experiences of their work, these public engagement sources are particularly useful for this research. These sources became central to the construction of this thesis. However, institutional policies of secrecy are reinforced by negative attitudes towards individuals who share their work experiences publicly, a topic discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. Though attitudes are

starting to change regarding public discussions of intelligence, the material is limited compared to other areas of public sector employment.

As noted elsewhere, compared to British sources there is more available information on American intelligence with regard to experiences of women, particularly for the US Central Intelligence Agency. This is in part due to the efforts of the agency to release documents related to women's history in the CIA. The other contributing factor is the CIA's longer history of openness to employees who share their experiences publicly – within the context of a formalised process created by the CIA for reviewing releases. As discussed in Chapter One and above, the CIA released a collection of documents relating to women's history in the agency. This "Typist to Trailblazer" collection, though useful, is a selected accounting of the organisation's history. The comparative openness of the CIA's Publication's Review Board, for the authorisation of works such as memoirs and fictional accounts, has led to a more streamlined publication process in the US. As such, the CIA provides a useful point of comparison and contrast to British intelligence, women faced similar organisational practices and cultures within the CIA and MI5.

Critical Intelligence Studies

Though intelligence studies has a general preference for archival and official sources, along with an organisational focus, challenges to these limitations have emerged. As Hamilton Bean asserts in his recent work, intelligence studies could benefit from outside approaches.³² Bean identifies an important critique of intelligence studies, that it is subject to similar issues as other disciplines such as insularity, but also that it suffers from 'a post-

³² Bean, H., 'Intelligence theory from the margins: questions ignored and debates not had,' *Intelligence and National Security*, 33:4 (2018), pp. 527-540.

positivist, problem-solving orientation' which has limited progression of the field.³³ Bean notes a historical discouragement of non-traditional approaches within the field of intelligence studies, such as post-structuralism, cultural studies, feminism.³⁴ As a feminist approach to intelligence studies, this thesis aims to contribute to both intelligence studies and critical intelligence studies. This section will expand on the ways in which this thesis aims to contribute to critical intelligence studies.

Bean writes, 'Despite assertions that intelligence practitioners and academics uniquely apply scientific methods that make their work resistant to the influence of these structures, a critical theorist maintains that intelligence practitioners (and IS academics) are not insulated from the forces of history, culture and social positioning. A critical theorist investigates the consequences of these structures for multiple intelligence stakeholders – especially for those whose voices are suppressed – and intervenes in various discourse communities in order to promote reflection and change.'³⁵ In this, he argues that constructions of knowledge within intelligence studies are subject to socio-cultural outside forces, structural inequalities, and processes of selection of information which influence how intelligence is researched and debated on scholarly and practitioner levels.³⁶ As such, Bean's depiction of and call for critical approaches to intelligence studies is particularly useful and relevant for this thesis.

More specifically, Bean calls for the development of a "critical intelligence studies" which 'emphasizes the sociocultural, political and institutional contexts that shape how

³³ Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins', p. 527.

³⁴ Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins', p. 528.

³⁵ Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins', p. 529.

³⁶ Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins', pp. 528-529.

“information” is identified, gathered, processed, disseminated, and consumed.’³⁷ These thoughts echo the work of Bean’s 2013 article, which argues for the inclusion of critical and cultural perspectives. However, for the purposes of this research, one of the largest gains from this discussion is the relevance of post-structuralist approaches to biographical intelligence accounts.

This thesis seeks to make a direct contribution to this area of critical intelligence studies. First, this thesis examines the structure and operation of intelligence organisations. By analysing the structure of intelligence organisation employment, this thesis goes beyond surface-level analyses of organisational culture in intelligence studies, to identify long-term employment trends in both policy and practice. Second, in doing so, it foregrounds women and their experiences. This thesis examines how organisational and structural issues are experienced by women, along with how these experiences compare to other employment sectors and experiences of their male colleagues. Third, this thesis incorporates methods not otherwise used in intelligence studies. As the remainder of this chapter will discuss, this thesis incorporates a framework drawn from intersectional feminist theory. While the use of intersectionality theory shapes the overarching structure of this thesis, it also impacts how the topic of gender is addressed at different levels of analysis and within different stages of MI5’s history.

Intersectionality and Structure

Feminist intersectional historical work informs the structure and approach of this thesis. As such, the remainder of this chapter will focus primarily on the concepts which have

³⁷ Bean, ‘Intelligence Theory from the margins’, p. 536.

influenced the structure of this thesis and have informed the approach to gender taken within this thesis. As such, intersectional feminist approaches to studying identity and power are at the core of this thesis. Influential scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Nira Yuval-Davis are essential to the framework developed for structuring the following chapters. The remainder of this chapter will explore how their frameworks and approaches to gender within feminist and intersectional feminist thought are incorporated into this thesis.

It is important to note that while the term intersectionality emerged in the 1980s, it only gained ground in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most notably Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in its modern usage. As the term has grown in popularity, more scholars and activists have been involved in shaping and defining intersectionality as a new approach, critiquing the centrism present in previous Western feminist approaches. In incorporating intersectional feminist thought into this research there is an important distinction to make between the politics of intersectional theory and the contributions of intersectional approaches. Both points are relevant for this research, although the latter has a greater impact on the overall structure of this thesis.

As the following sections will explore, intersectionality theory seeks to address gaps in research on multiple, intersecting, and overlapping identities. It is important to understand that intersectionality was developed explicitly to examine the experiences of members of multiple minority groups. Politically, intersectionality seeks to address the concerns of people who may face multiple or overlapping sources of marginalisation. It is intrinsically political, a product of Black feminist scholarship and activism through the foregrounding of identity and attempts to locate and address issues of prejudice and discrimination through structural and institutional lenses.

At the same time, research based on intersectionality theory seeks to foreground the role of identity in societal, organisational and interpersonal contexts. The theoretical approaches which have emerged from intersectionality are particularly well suited to researching women's lived experiences. These approaches to studying multiple and intersecting identities founded in intersectional theory are uniquely adept tools for discussing power dynamics affecting a selected demographic from larger (macro level) structural issues through to personal (micro level) experiences.

While it would be possible to write a history of women in intelligence without intersectional influence, there would, for example, be significant gaps in considering the overlaps in issues of gender, class, and nationality. Even historians such as Tammy M. Proctor acknowledge the intersection of these areas in understanding the hiring and employment of women in MI5.³⁸ This is a key theme which will be explored throughout this thesis as the hiring and progression of women in MI5 was mediated by different aspects of identity throughout the organisation's history.

Part of this turn to intersectionality in women's and gender histories, rather than a specific gendered approach is the need for a non-isolationist approach to studying gender. This is something that many authors have highlighted, though historian Joan W. Scott has done so more explicitly, by arguing that one cannot look at women's historical narratives in isolation from those of men and that gender cannot be looked at without considering other assumptions and aspects of identity.³⁹ Within non-isolationist approaches, there can be

³⁸ See Proctor, T. M., *Female Intelligence: Women and espionage in the First World War*, (NYU Press: 2003); and Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence', *Journal of Social History*, 39/2 (2005) 451-466.

³⁹ Scott, J. W., 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *Culture, society and sexuality*, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 77-97.

multiple issues. For example, some have argued that Marxist feminism problematically privileges focus on class over that of gender.⁴⁰ I argue that intersectional theory, if taking this issue into account, could partly address this issue by looking at multiple aspects, holding them – if not on equal – perhaps on historically relevant ground. The role of identity and the balancing of different axes of identity in this project are key points that will be discussed in the following sections.

In her article credited with shaping modern intersectional theory, Crenshaw states at the beginning, 'I should say at the outset that intersectionality is not being offered here as some new, totalizing theory of identity.'⁴¹ Her work, and the work of other intersectional theorists builds on many other critiques. In doing so, she does not attempt to make one, completely inclusive theory. This is a particularly important point to this thesis on women in intelligence work. While the theories and approaches discussed in this chapter allow for a multi-level analysis of this complex topic, the framework employed is not a totalising theory. Instead, it is relevant to and designed with the chosen research topic in mind.

James Bliss, in an analysis of Crenshaw's writing within the context of Black feminist theory writes:

Intersectionality itself can be read as a concept becoming. It is a mode of deconstructing rather than solidifying identity, of revealing the subject to be disarticulated and disarticulable rather than either compound or complete. Intersectionality is not an insistence that identity is knowable or nameable. Instead, intersectionality approaches the known and named subject and challenges practitioners to look beyond, underneath, and around it.⁴²

⁴⁰ Mann, S. A., 'Third Wave Feminism's Unhappy Marriage of Poststructuralism and Intersectionality Theory', *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, Spring (2013), p. 54.

⁴¹ Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', p. 1244.

⁴² Bliss, J., 'Black Feminism Out of Place', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 41:4 (2016), p. 742.

This articulates an important point for understanding developments within intersectional theory and the potential uses of intersectional theory. Intersectional theory seeks to examine (and deconstruct) subjects in ways which challenge conceptions and assumptions of identity. It is in this aspect where (activist) political and theoretical applications of intersectional theory potentially diverge. However, the politics and theoretical approaches of intersectional theory are necessarily entangled with one another. At its core, intersectionality theory seeks not only to make sense of complex political subjects within an analytical lens, but also to identify and challenge structures and institutional power systems. The following section will first look briefly the development of intersectionality and ethical concerns in using an intersectional framework. Intersectional theorists and some influential works outside intersectionality will be discussed in relation to the topic of identity. This will include some of the key problems and hurdles in conducting intersectional (and interdisciplinary) research. Following this, the work of Crenshaw and Yuval-Davis will be examined. The work of these two authors holds the most influence over the framework used in this thesis. Finally, the framework developed will be discussed, explaining the levels of analysis used in the following chapters, the reasoning behind their selection, and the influences in their topical selection and construction.

[History of Intersectionality](#)

For an understanding of the roots of intersectional thinking, traced back to anti-slavery and women's suffrage activism, one can look to Avtar Brah. Though articles from other scholars follow the same thinking, Brah emphasizes the role of intersectional thought before it was termed so in Crenshaw's influential 1989 article. Brah traces intersectional thinking to Sojourner Truth's short but critical statement from the mid-1800s asking, 'ain't I a woman',

which challenges both gender and racial divides, along with interrelated socio-economic oppression.⁴³ The sentiments contained within Truth's statement are echoed in more recent, and more commonly cited writings which have generally garnered more attention from intersectional theorists. The most well-known of which is the Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement" in which the collective defines their political focus as being 'actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that major systems of oppression are interlocking.'⁴⁴ In this statement, the views that come to comprise intersectionality are stated again, demonstrating the prevalence of problems that intersectionality was designed to articulate, and why Crenshaw's article addressing these problems is indeed timely.

It should be noted that while seen in only a few works before the mid-1980s, the use of intersectionality and the related phrase "axes of identity" increased drastically during the 1990s, and interest in intersectional theory only seems to have increased since. Usages of intersectionality are continuing to evolve, both in scholarly and public discourse. Feminist intersectional approaches have gained a wider audience, even in the time since this research concept was originally developed. In this sense, intersectionality is beginning to challenge and shape mainstream feminist movements, furthering the voices of groups all too often marginalised in mainstream contemporary (and historical) feminist debates and activism.

⁴³ Brah, 'Ain't I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, (2008:5), pp. 76-77.

⁴⁴ Combahee River Collective, 'A Black Feminist Statement', *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 9, No. 6, June 1979, p. 6. This has been reprinted many times, but this particular reprint appears to be more reliable.

The Potentially Problematic Use of Intersectional Theory:

While the use of intersectionality is becoming more common, especially in feminist activism, intersectional historical projects are still emerging in scholarly work (at perhaps a slower pace than other intersectional work). The perceived problem of rigidity in categorical selection mentioned earlier in this chapter may contribute to interest in employing this framework.

One issue for this research on women in intelligence is that intersectionality is a theory that works, but there is a distinct lack of information on key categories of analysis used in other intersectional research. It is simply the best way I have found to accurately depict these overlapping social levels. The type of analysis that I want to conduct makes adopting a one or even two-dimensional approach (for example just looking at issues of nationality and gender) inadequate.

As noted above, intersectional frameworks originated through a desire to articulate and analyze the unique social positioning of black women (and men) in the United States, often incorporating sexuality as another axis of analysis. As a result, some have argued that intersectional theory should not move beyond this scope, that to do so is to co-opt the term for use in a wider movement. Perhaps in using intersectional theory I am co-opting a movement, or perhaps adopting a strategy for my own research that might eventually gain wider acceptance in its applicability. From my own perspective, I would argue that contemporary gender research needs to incorporate intersectional theory, that to ignore the intersecting dynamics of social categories and the lack of homogeneity within them is to have blinders on when looking at one's own research subject. The increased interest in intersectionality, even during the time in which this thesis research has taken place,

suggests that understandings of the wider applicability of intersectional approaches are continuing to evolve within scholarly research.

The question that remains: is there a way to use intersectional theory, or a framework heavily influenced by intersectional theory, to analyze a topic that will likely focus on white British women, responsibly? I think that in this body of theory, this topic may remain contested ground. I would argue that it is irresponsible and unethical to drop the term intersectional and create a new term. In this sense, it is not creating a new body of theory, just another branch of an already existing body of theory. This would just serve to reinforce the idea that to use intersectionality to study other social groups would be co-opting the term. As a result, the best answer at this point appears to be to acknowledge this contested area, to acknowledge the origins and intended purpose of intersectional theory, and to attempt to do so in a way that furthers responsible and critical use of the term.

It would do a great disservice to erase or minimise Black feminist knowledge production in intersectional theory. Coming up with a new framework does not work, especially when work has already been done in this area and intersectionality works so well. To call it something else, or to merely say that my framework is influenced by intersectional theory is as equally problematic. I would argue that to use a different term or to try to come up with a new theoretical basis for this analysis would be to further marginalize the Black feminist knowledge production, which has often been highlighted as the reason intersectionality needs to be incorporated into so-called mainstream – both in popular and academic – feminist writings. In other words, to limit the use of intersectionality, is to limit its potential contribution to understanding complex environments and identities. By continuing to use intersectional theory as the basis for this research framework, I will likely open the study up

to the aforementioned criticisms. Hopefully, however, it will be understood that this topic needs an intersectional framework due to its complex and multifaceted nature.

How is identity defined and studied?

The topic of intersectionality is explicitly and intentionally interwoven with concepts of and debates of identity. In this sense, discussions of intersectionality are inseparable from discussions on identity, as seen already in this chapter. This section will look more closely at how identity is discussed and studied, noting some of the key methodological concerns surrounding identity. Much of the recent work on intersectional theory focuses on the theoretical and methodological issues that arise when attempting intersectional research, though it should be noted that many authors, even in short articles, are still eager to define it in their own terms. The focus though remains on problems that arise from intersectional research and how scholars have addressed or might attempt to address these issues.

In a unique attempt to understand how intersectional theory has been applied, Leslie McCall writes, 'intersectionality has introduced new methodological problems and, partly as an unintended consequence, has limited the range of methodological approaches used to study intersectionality.'⁴⁵ McCall, in her attempts to frame how intersectional research has progressed, separates studies into three approaches: anticategorical, intracategorical, and intercategorical. Anticategorical rejects the use of identity categories, while intercategorical studies make intentional use of identity, and intracategorical it the midpoint between those two divisions. While not all studies fit into these categories, for the purposes of my own research it is necessary to examine some of the more relevant works which come from inter and intracategorical approaches. As this area of research chooses to make use of identity

⁴⁵ McCall, L., 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs*, 30:3 (2005), p. 1772.

categories, it falls more within the strategic and intentional use of identity. In this sense, it 'begins with the observation that there are relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups, as imperfect and everchanging as they are, and takes those relationships as the center of analysis.'⁴⁶ McCall's own work uses this approach, and focuses on class differences between women, conducting a multigroup analysis asking if the disparity amongst different groups of women has increased due to the recent economic crisis. Her research in this area shows that comparisons in intersectional research do not necessarily have to foreground issues of gender before other socio-economic factors, and is useful to note for this study.

In another example, there are attempts to measure and study identity quantitatively. In this way, authors like Lisa Bowleg try to define identity through a partly quantitative lens.

Bowleg argues that the additive method, wherein one identity category added to another, creates significant problems for research data. By suggesting that aspects of identity can be separated – for example in asking about gender without considering race or socio-economic status – the results then do not provide an accurate depiction of the respondent's experiences.⁴⁷ As a way to work through this problem, Bowleg calls for researchers to focus on 'experiences of ordinary people' suggesting this as a part of multidisciplinary research which combines qualitative and quantitative research methods.⁴⁸ Applied to research on women in intelligence work, it is important to acknowledge the data sources are often fragmentary. It is necessary to combine approaches and data sources (for example employment numbers and related statistics) to establish a more comprehensive

⁴⁶ McCall, L., 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', pp. 1784-1785.

⁴⁷ Bowleg, L., 'When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research', *Sex Roles*, 59 (2008), p. 314.

⁴⁸ Bowleg, L., 'When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman', p. 323.

understanding of women's experiences. In this sense, additive models for studying identity in intelligence work are grounded in qualitative approaches, but have the potential to be enhanced by quantitative methods, given the release of and access to appropriate sources.

Similar to Bowleg, Evelyn M. Simien argues that instead of having one aspect of identity, such as gender or race as a constant to allow for research that is more easily managed, it is necessary instead to create new methods to meet the demands intersectional theory creates.⁴⁹ This is an important challenge and contribution for the purposes of this research. This project necessarily centres gender, in part, due to the nature of secrecy in intelligence work and the availability of information. At this point, the foregrounding of and centralising of gender is both essential and of benefit to the aims of this project. It could however, be seen as a building block towards future research on identity in intelligence work.

Simien also makes reference to the work of Ange-Marie Hancock, for her efforts to critique the stereotype of the "welfare queen" and how it is reinforced by media and political depictions, thus preventing engagement between policy-makers and those who receive welfare benefits. Hancock's work takes on both the empirical and theoretical issues of intersectionality. Her work is useful for this project because she writes from the discipline of political science while incorporating intersectionality into her research. While Hancock's empirical work serves as a useful example of intersectional research, her articles on intersectional theory are perhaps more enlightening. She addresses this from the perspective of intersectionality becoming a research paradigm, identifying three approaches. She uses the first two, unitary and multiple, to demonstrate how intersectional

⁴⁹ Simien, E. M., 'Doing Intersectionality Research: From Conceptual Issues to Practical Examples', *Politics & Gender*, 3:2 (2007), p. 271.

differs.⁵⁰ Key to this understanding is how categories within intersectional approaches are seen as not being uniformly composed and how the individual and institutional levels are subject to an integrated analysis.⁵¹ Both the understanding of variation within categories and the need to connect individual experiences to institutional structures are particularly important for the latter chapters of this thesis.

In understanding variance within categorical understandings and the relation of different categorical understandings to one another within historical analyses, Joan W. Scott's work is helpful for this thesis. She traces the differences in identity construction and the uneasiness with gender as an analytical category. As such, her definition of gender is useful here, particularly as a 'constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes,' and as a 'primary way of signifying relationships of power.'⁵² Scott calls for a broader view of gender, one that 'must include a notion of politics and reference to social institutions and organizations.'⁵³ She invokes in this, the concept of the axis of identity, where individual axes such as race, gender, and class are the primary focus. At the same time, Scott notes that conceptualisations of class, unlike race and gender, have a more extensive theoretical background.⁵⁴

Yet, combining multiple axes of identity in a research structure can present issues of structure, focus and relevance. Susan Bordo brings up a similar question in asking, 'how many axes can one include and still preserve analytical focus or argument?'⁵⁵ It seems she

⁵⁰ Hancock, A. M., 'When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as Research Paradigm', *Perspectives on Politics*, 5:1 (2007), p. 64.

⁵¹ Hancock, 'When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition', p. 64.

⁵² Scott, J. W., 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', p. 42.

⁵³ Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', p. 43.

⁵⁴ Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', p. 30.

⁵⁵ Bordo, S. 'Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism' in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. L., J., Nicholson, (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 139. pp. 133-156.

does this partly to critique what she sees as the 'coercive, mechanical requirement that all enlightened feminist projects attend to "the intersection of race, class, and gender."'56 In this, she notes the pitfalls in focusing too much on difference, and though she describes it without using the term, it is clear that intersectional theory is her target. It seems at once as if she is arguing for and against intersectional theory. Her arguments seem to support using intersectionality, fighting against essentialist totalising narratives in order to show that identity itself is not so deterministic or rigid.

Scott's 1986 article, *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis* has been particularly influential throughout this research in forming understandings of historical applications of intersectionality. She combines history and intersectionality in a way that acknowledges the shifting and fluctuating nature of categories of identity, noting the importance of historical context in the analysis of aspects of identity. Scott merges theory of the study of gender with an empirical approach and calls for gender to be seen as a category by historians, similar to the categories of race or class. However, Scott notes that gender is unique, often having less concrete definitions than concepts like class. In this endeavour, she suggests a broad, but very useful framework for understanding gender. Her focus is on the intersections among categories and how these categories are not separate entities, but constantly interacting axes of power. In doing so, her work shows it is possible to foreground historically relevant understandings of particular axes of identity.

Scott is not alone in this approach. Other authors, such as Nira Yuval-Davis, continue to argue for the importance of historical context, suggesting that certain variables and power dynamics are not consistent and do not produce the same effects in differing contexts.

⁵⁶ Bordo, 'Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism', p. 139

Yuval-Davis suggests 'that in specific historical situations and in relation to specific people there are some special divisions that are more important than others in constructing specific positionings.'⁵⁷ In the early stages of research on women in intelligence it became apparent that this point would be particularly relevant for this study.

Two points here are worth summarising. First, the foregrounding of certain variables, without ignoring or erasing other aspects of identity is highly important for this thesis in its approach to gender as the primary, but not sole, category of analysis. The second point is that of historical context and the study of change over time. As will be shown in this thesis, highlighted in different forms in each chapter, is that women's experiences in intelligence, the organisations they work for, and the socio-cultural mediating structural factors which help shape these interactions, all experience change over time, some more haphazardly in pace than others.

Much of the discussion of identity, particularly in later chapters, comes from the experiences of women who have worked in intelligence. In particular, Chapter Six takes a closer look at the role of identity, asking how women intelligence professionals define themselves, and in doing so, how they either intentionally or unintentionally work to construct an image of women in intelligence. While I have discussed the levels of social difference that will be examined in the course of this research, it will be necessary to also discuss further the specifics of the identities and environment relevant to this research topic. For the purposes of establishing a framework, this means discussing more clearly how identity is defined and studied at multiple levels.

⁵⁷ Yuval-Davis, N., 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3) (2006) p. 203.

The Potential Problems of Focus

As a continued theme in intersectionality theory, the problem of focus is highly relevant here. The working concept of intersectional theory employed in this thesis renders it as an approach capable of highlighting the multi-level nature of social interaction, in the context of organisational and structural power dynamics. In other words, looking at how power based groupings of gender, class, nationality, and ethnicity amongst others, cross and overlap within social settings and historical contexts. In this sense, it is also necessary to question which aspects are focused on – or foregrounded – within this research.

This thesis looks at a particular topic from multiple lenses, multiple perspectives, but in this way also goes against the grain in intelligence and women's historical work. The primary hurdle in this appears to be the popularity of case studies within women's histories versus the more common organisational and more encompassing narratives that are generally more prevalent. To a certain extent, this is true for intelligence histories, which either often focus on the individual level, organisational level, or wider political levels.

In this sense, the main problem is combining these diverse and divergent areas into something workable. Susan Archer Mann addresses part of this problem in a journal article tracing the problems of combining poststructuralism and intersectional theory for third-wave feminists. She depicts the overlap and divergence between these two approaches as an "unhappy marriage" one that she depicts as currently unworkable.⁵⁸ In route to her conclusion that some sort of collective action focused epistemological balance needs to be established, Mann traces the origins and empirical basis of intersectional theory. In particular, the poststructuralist micro focus on the individual contrasts with the

⁵⁸ Mann, S. A., 'Third Wave Feminism's Unhappy Marriage' pp. 54-55.

intersectional macro focus on societies and marginalised groups. Between these approaches, the focus returns to how lines of power are drawn. While intersectional theory attempts to highlight dichotomies and power structures, poststructural works to highlight the uniqueness of individual experience.⁵⁹ This highlights one of the potential issues with intersectional theory, the tendency to generalise experiences based on shared identities.

The issue of generalisation is highly relevant to this research, as the goal is to use individual narratives to attempt to gain an understanding of the experiences of women working for the Security Service as intelligence organisations and women's roles within them change during the second half of the twentieth century. Chapters Five and Six both speak directly to the issue of experience. In Chapter Five, the goal has been to show the variety of experience in intelligence work for women at different career stages, how this has changed over time, and how this differs from the experiences of men. At the same time, it is clear from looking at the experiences of women that there are common themes and trends in their experiences which can be identified. Though variation in experience certainly exists, the similarity in certain aspects of women's work experiences is remarkable – and an issue which is further explored in Chapter Six. This chapter also works to counter the problem of generalisation by looking at how women speak about and share their experiences, asking how did they feel about their work, within an understanding of individual difference.

While Mann's discussion of the poststructural-intersectional divide highlights this problem, Mann does not really offer a solution, she just identifies and traces the epistemological origins of the problems. While I would argue that is possible to focus on individual experiences and larger organisational/societal histories within the same work, I question

⁵⁹ Mann, S. A., 'Third Wave Feminism's Unhappy Marriage' pp. 64-65.

whether this task is possible without foregrounding one perspective over the other. This is perhaps where I differ from Mann's perspective, arguing that intersectional theory has the potential to focus on the experience of the individual, with the advantage of doing so in a far more structured way. In other words, when looking at intersecting power dynamics, it must be done so with the idea that they can be experienced very differently. To this point, one example discussed in later chapters is former MI5 Director-General Stella Rimington's comments on gender, specifically how she speaks directly on the topic of gender discrimination, yet distances herself from those involved in collective action regarding it.

Yuval-Davis identifies one of the key issues with additive models. She argues that, 'One of the problematics of the additive intersectionality model is that it often remains on one level of analysis, the experiential, and does not differentiate between different levels.'⁶⁰ Through despite this statement, she notes that there are some who have managed to acknowledge the distinction between different levels. She continues on to address social divisions, both at the larger institutional level and at the interpersonal level, arguing that they, 'have organizational, intersubjective, experiential and representational forms, and this affects the ways we theorize them as well as the ways in which we theorize the connections between the different levels.'⁶¹ One key point that can be gained from Yuval-Davis' article is the need for greater understanding in exactly how those who use intersectional theory choose to foreground aspects of identity and the encompassing power dynamics within given contexts. This relates to the earlier question of which aspects of identity are also foregrounded within these contexts.

⁶⁰ Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', p.197.

⁶¹ Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', p.198.

On selectivity, foregrounding, and the construction of historical narratives

On the question of foregrounding and structure, a non-intersectionality related contribution is important here. Hayden White's depiction of the construction of historical narratives is particularly useful for this research, as White discusses in a straightforward way the construction which takes place in the writing of history, intentional or unintentional. This is both useful for understanding my approach to this research, and for discussions in Chapter Six on the representations of experiences in intelligence work.

White notes that certain events and certain elements are selected and highlighted or foregrounded by the historian in the construction of their historical narrative. Extending this thinking, one could identify or select identities, various axes of identity, or factors of social difference in an analysis in a similar way. Even when conducting intersectional analysis there are aspects or axes that are foregrounded while others are tangentially discussed or altogether ignored. This is also something that must be acknowledged within my framework: just as I am foregrounding the experiences of women working for British intelligence, I am foregrounding other differences (through discussion of individual experience) while ignoring many others. It is a necessary limit to this type of study and I think the framework discussed in this chapter assists in retaining a cohesive focus as thesis begins with the wider context and then works towards a more focused, individual centred perspective.

White's other writings often seem to be more commonly cited than his chapter, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" wherein he states that, 'in general there has been a reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the form of which have more in

common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences.’⁶²

Emplotment, ‘an encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures’ has made histories, as White implies, explanatory successes. He elaborates on the creation of the historical narrative, identifying a series of events, where certain events within the resulting historical narratives are defined differently.⁶³ In this, the example White uses letters to represent historical events, such as a, b, c, d, e. Certain letters are emphasized (capitalized) by different historians. For examples, A, b, C, d, E or A, B, c, d, E to show the various ways in which different historians can write notably different histories.

This idea assists with a useful working method of intersectionality and fits in well with Scott’s axes of identity. As a matter of practicality in research design, one cannot address all identity categories and must choose the relevant axes of identity to foreground. Based on this, I argue that this approach parallels White’s conceptualisation of historical narrative creation. In this sense, these ideas are not revolutionary. Yet, while essential in any historical narrative, the issue of construction and intent is especially relevant here.

Mapping the Margins

Construction and intent are at the core of this research framework. As such, the remainder of this chapter will turn to the formulation of the framework and structure of this thesis. In doing so, the work of Crenshaw and Yuval-Davis will be discussed in greater detail. The frameworks proposed by Crenshaw and Yuval-Davis are then combined to form the thesis’ structure.

⁶² White, H., “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) p. 82. pp. 81-100

⁶³ White, H., “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”, p. 92.

Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited as a modern founder of intersectional theory, having coined the term intersectionality in 1989. Her later 1991 article, *Mapping the Margins* is an example of an intersectional re-working of problems that have not been adequately addressed by feminist or anti-racist scholars: violence towards women of colour, particularly domestic violence and rape.⁶⁴ Crenshaw's work may be better described as an examination of the intersectional dimension of structural inequalities which specifically impact women of colour who have experienced these types of violence. This study, and Crenshaw's writing on intersectionality are useful for a number of reasons to this project. Crenshaw's work and the work of related writers on intersectionality represents a significant shift in how social environments and the interactions within them can and should be examined.

As a core point, in defining women of colour, Crenshaw does not depict a homogeneous group but instead acknowledges the limitations of these terms and social constructs while underlining the necessity of their use for her analysis. This can be seen through her examples used in each of the three sections (structural, political, and representational), chosen both to highlight her critiques of feminist and anti-racist one-dimensional approaches to the positionings of women of colour in gendered violence but also to demonstrate that women of colour are impacted by a variety of social factors. For example, Crenshaw identifies language differences, immigration status, and class divisions as hurdles to a woman obtaining access to assistance through domestic violence shelters. Further, these are identified as factors that can work together, separately, or even partially as barriers for women of colour. These are issues that are highlighted primarily in the first two sections on structural and political intersectionality. With structural intersectionality she

⁶⁴ Crenshaw, K. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Colour', *Stanford Law Review*, 43-6 (1991), pp.1241-1299.

looks at intersecting factors of subordination, such as unemployment or lack of access to community support. For political intersectionality she looks at the sometimes contradictory and often conflicting agendas of feminist and anti-racist groups that leave women of colour lost in the margins or overlooked entirely, often intentionally.

Another contribution from Crenshaw addresses the role of individual narrative alongside the larger policy debates and actions of influence in these communities. One example includes the topic of immigration reform, where she discusses the unwillingness of anti-racist campaigns to focus on domestic violence for fear of reinforcing racist stereotypes. She does this in a cohesive manner, using individual case studies, individual narratives to demonstrate the effects of policies and agendas, while also discussing the related organisational and larger scale political manoeuvring around them. This is an important aim for this thesis, particularly in Chapter Six, to use individual and collective narratives to analyse the structural and organisational factors of intelligence work for women.

Crenshaw identifies intersectionality as a powerful mediator between different perspectives in research and activism, for a key example, between identity politics and multi-dimensional identities.⁶⁵ For these reasons, Crenshaw's article serves as a relevant example of how an intersectional study can effectively address complex issues using both large and small scale focus. Further, in incorporating both individual experience and large scale policy, Crenshaw creates a pattern that allows for qualitative and quantitative to work towards the same key points.

⁶⁵ Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', p. 1296.

Complexities of Identity in Intersectional Analysis

In The Politics of Belonging Yuval-Davis addresses issues of national and ethnic collectives through what she identifies as an intersectional analytical perspective. Her first chapter is most useful, as she discusses this theoretical perspective in detail. She clearly states and then speaks to intercategorical and intracategorical approaches. The former looks at the macro, larger categorical divisions and intersections, while the latter looks towards the personal level, working to 'problematize the meaning and boundaries of the categories themselves'.⁶⁶ This relates to the divide between post-structuralism and certain uses of intersectionality theory. Yuval-Davis works to combine these approaches rather than work with them separately. In this, she balances the larger categorical placings of people with their individuality, particularly in how they interpret and construct their own identities.

Yuval-Davis states that, 'To be a woman will be different whether you are middle class or working class, a member of the hegemonic majority or racialized minority, living in the city or in the country, young or old, gay or straight, etc.' Though this statement relies on binary categorizations that are implied to exist in some sort of concrete form, Yuval-Davis continues on to say that, 'Viewing intersectional analysis in this way links the interrogation of concrete meanings of categories and their boundaries to specific historical contexts which are shifting and contested, rather than just abstracting ontological and epistemological enquiries.'⁶⁷ In this way, she leaves room open for the defining of contextually and historically appropriate categories, though she at times seems critical, like other scholars, such as Judith Butler, of the "etc." added to such lists of categories. Frustratingly, she does not go more in depth into this topic here and partly as a result, her framework at this point

⁶⁶ Yuval-Davis, N., *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional contestations*, (London, Sage, 2011), p. 6.

⁶⁷ Yuval-Davis, N., *The Politics of Belonging*, p. 7.

feels lacking. She addresses intersectional theory and social difference, but her earlier articles seem to explore the theory further, if only slightly.

On the topic of belonging, which comprises the latter part of her theoretical framework chapter, there are some useful additions that might be able to contribute to understandings of the other factors of social difference. She states, 'Identity narratives can be individual or they can be collective, with the latter often acting as a resource for the former.'⁶⁸ In this, she acknowledges the historical and contextual impermanence of identity constructions, particularly within collective narratives.

[How Intersectionality Informs Research Structure](#)

This section will look more closely at how the work of Yuval-Davis and Crenshaw can be combined. While the work of both scholars contributes significantly to the understanding of intersectional approaches of this research, their levels and types of analysis also help establish the overarching structure of this thesis. The categories and levels of analysis drawn from their work shape the methodological foundation of this research. These ideas have influenced the direction and core structure of this thesis from the early stages of research on this topic.

Yuval-Davis identifies levels of intersectional analysis which could potentially inform the structure of this research. These four levels identify and attempt to categorize some of the key ways in which social divisions are experienced and could be researched. She states that, "Social divisions have organizational, intersubjective, experiential and representational forms, and this affects the ways we theorize them as well as the ways in which we theorize

⁶⁸ Yuval-Davis, N., *The Politics of Belonging*, p. 14.

the connections between the different levels.⁶⁹ Yuval-Davis implies in her article that these manifestations of social difference can be categorically separated but still remain linked and that as a result of this effective intersectional analysis must address the role of social divisions on multiple levels. In doing so, she also identifies some of the ways in which social difference can be manifested in each of these levels.

At the same time, it should be noted that while she refers to these as “levels” in her article, she later uses the term “facets” in her 2011 book, The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations, as a way to show difference without implied hierarchy.⁷⁰ While the term level is used in this discussion, it should be acknowledged that “facets” is an equally valid approach. For the purposes of this research, it can be argued that both terms are applicable, but that levels is perhaps more descriptive. The sense of hierarchy that the use of levels implies can be seen in this research. While individual employees certainly have power and initiative, it should be acknowledged that there is a power discrepancy with the organisations that they work for. In this sense, levels, is a term particularly useful to studying employer-employee relations, and the impact of wider structural, cultural and legal forces on the decisions, practices and policies of organisations.

Though Crenshaw discusses a differently socially located group, her framework is also still very useful. Unlike others, such as Nira Yuval-Davis, who have theorised a four category approach, Crenshaw identified three levels of analysis: structural, political, and representational.⁷¹ She uses these three levels to organize her study. Though in article form, it should be noted that her study is significantly longer than most articles (involving

⁶⁹ Yuval-Davis, N., 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', p.198.

⁷⁰ Yuval-Davis, N., *The Politics of Belonging*, p. 7.

⁷¹ Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', p. 1245

intersectional theory). In explicitly stating she will address these three levels she does so methodically, using them to organise her writing, but also to build upon one another to construct a multi-dimensional depiction that represents the experiences and interactions of a diverse, yet commonly grouped demographic.

While Crenshaw’s use of three levels is helpful for understanding intersectionality, it feels as if one aspect is missing. At the same time, Yuval-Davis’ four level approach also leaves something lacking. This is where the inspiration for this thesis structure emerges, from a meeting of these two interpretations of intersectional frameworks. However, constructing a slightly different formation of these four levels would be a better solution to depict social interactions that by their very nature overlap and are somewhat inseparable. This is one primary benefit of Crenshaw’s work as she defines somewhat blurred categorical boundaries. She intentionally allows for overlap in her framework, but does so without constantly reminding the reader of it at every point of convergence. It is implicit in her design, and something that hopefully remains incorporated into this research framework.

Crenshaw	Yuval-Davis	Combination	Chapter	Examples
Structural	Organizational	Structural	3	Attitudes towards women’s employment, labour market
Political	Intersubjective	Organisational	4	MI5’s employment policies, practices
-	Experiential	Experiential (Intersubjective)	5	Career experiences, Personal reflections, Actions
Representational	Representational	Representational	6	Public Speaking, Memoirs, Insider Spy Fiction

Table 1: Summary of approaches to chapter structure

Larger scale government and policy discussions influence both the organizational, but also the background political environment. This is why the larger structural environment should be addressed first, encompassing cultural, legal, and other structural forces which shaped organisations and individuals' lives. In her usage, Yuval-Davis addresses the structural but layers it in with the organisational. For the purposes of this research, it is important to delineate between these two areas. From the intersectional perspective, this level might be best phrased as analysing the structural inequalities. As such, this structural level, sets up the context first, incorporating the socio-cultural, legal and historical factors which shaped women's opportunities in the labour market, and influenced the hiring of women by intelligence organizations.

The second level I would call organisational, though Crenshaw's political might also work, as it fits well with the need to analyse the organizations involved and actions that shape the environment and influence events in it. Crenshaw's use of political is to discuss political action groups, movements and organizations. That being noted, her use of political actually fits this second level and the first level (structural), so for this particular topic it is necessary to separate some of the organizational into this category and some, such as political activism and larger movements (women's liberation movement, for example) into the first level.

In this sense, the organisational level is perhaps the clearest level to understand. This is the meso level, of governments and organisations, and can clearly be understood within the scope of this research. For this research, at the organizational level it is possible to focus on the policies towards women, both within the MI5 and within other intelligence agencies, in addition to the roles of women working within the British government. Examples for this

organizational level would include MI5 and related agencies, such as the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Also relevant here are the Foreign Office and the UK Civil Service, along with comparison and understanding of how larger policy actions and changing societal norms (from the first, structural level) are interpreted and enacted at the organizational level. By examining the larger picture of the organisational structures, a basis for further analysis at other levels of social difference can be established in addition to identifying through the organisational level key factors influencing the careers and roles of women within the British Security Services.

While the organizational level is clearly understood, the Yuval-Davis' use of the intersubjective level is far less distinct. Intersubjective, refers to interactions between individuals. Yuval-Davis states that in this way social divisions, 'involve specific power and affective relationships between actual people, acting informally and/or in their roles as agents of specific social institutions and organizations.'⁷² While this might seem clear, she does not further distinguish intersubjective from organizational or experiential. As a result, her depiction of this area again demonstrates a crossover between two categories. Here, her concept bridges the gap from organization and individuals as actors of organizations, to the experiences of individuals and their actions not driven by organizational imperative. Intersubjective, at least from examining the interactions between individuals along with their thoughts and opinions relates closely to experience and memory and as such ties into the fourth category of representations as well. It could be possible to use this as a way to locationally ground experience in memory and opinion. In other words, discussing how individuals experienced and remembered/recorded these experiences.

⁷² Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', p. 198.

Before representations comes the third level, experiential which was touched on in the discussion of intersubjective. It is clearly stated as ‘the ways people experience subjectively their daily lives in terms of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, specific aspirations and specific identities.’ Notably, Yuval-Davis does not limit this to focus on one individual and how they perceive their context, but also includes that individual’s actions within the scope of this facet. This facet is obviously where the personal experience comes in.

In examining experience, this thesis looks at differences and similarities in the recollections of women who have worked in intelligence, comparing and contrasting where relevant to the experiences of their male colleagues. In this sense, Chapter Five, in discussing the role of the individual, looks at how the various aspect of intelligence employment are experienced.

The fourth level of representation is also quite clearly stated and links well to this research. Representations in this sense, are the constructions of social divisions that can take place in multiple mediums. I would add to this, stating that the constructions of social divisions can influence the way in which the other levels are constructed and interpreted both at the individual and societal level. As part of examining the impact of representations, it is important to ask who is doing the constructions, who for, and for what purpose. For this topic, recollections of women intelligence professionals are examined, including public speaking, memoirs, museum exhibits, and even in fictional writing. For the purposes of this research, my interpretation of representational falls closer to that of Yuval-Davis. Both the fictional and the non-fictional have impact here, not just because they have the potential to shape how we think about women in intelligence, but also because these works have the

capacity to reflect how individuals remember their own pasts and then construct depictions of those.

Conclusion

This chapter began by examining secondary literature at the nexus of women in intelligence history. In doing so, key issues in research on women and intelligence have been identified. Perhaps one of the most important issues is of access to and availability of source material. Creative approaches to incorporate a wider variety of personal narratives have been employed, particularly in Chapters Five and Six, to show the personal experiences of intelligence at the individual level of analysis. In doing so, one goal is to foreground personal experiences in a way which highlights themes, commonalities and differences in these experiences. In incorporating additional types of source material, some of the contributions and challenges of these sources have been examined.

This thesis seeks to contribute to intelligence studies and to critical intelligence studies. In contributing to critical intelligence studies, three primary aims were identified: to conduct a critical analysis of intelligence employment practice and policy in relation to gender and identity, to bring the roles of women and their experiences to the foreground, and to incorporate intersectional feminist theory in order to do so.

One primary takeaway from the discussion of intersectional methodology is the way in which such approaches can inform the study of complex historical topics. While the final section this chapter focused on the work of key contributors to contemporary intersectional analysis, Crenshaw and Yuval-Davis, it is necessary to also view intersectional theory as a continually evolving approach incorporating a variety of feminist approaches to understandings of identity, power, and hierarchical differences.

Similarly, critical intelligence studies also continues to be an evolving area, challenging intelligence studies to move into new approaches drawn from outside fields. It should be noted that most of Bean's articles on critical intelligence studies emerged during the time research was conducted for this thesis. It is my hope that the multi-dimensional approach to women in intelligence work outlined in this chapter and incorporated into this thesis will contribute in some way to furthering the challenges that critical intelligence studies poses to the wider field of intelligence studies.

Chapter Three

From Glass Ceilings and Elevators to Glass Boxes: Changing concepts and structural issues related to women's labour force participation

Introduction: From James Bond to Liz Carlyle

How did modern intelligence work become what it is today? How did James Bond, the epitome of the suave womanising intelligence officer archetype, become Liz Carlyle, the quick and clever symbol of a contemporary intelligence bureaucracy?¹ Though both are fictional characters, they each represent the changing nature and environment of intelligence work over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries. Today's MI5, often referred to as the Security Service, is drastically different from the MI5 that existed a century, or even half century ago. As a result, it is important to ask which factors shaped MI5 and more widely, modern intelligence work. At the organisational level, employment policies and operational foci have changed significantly during the past century. Yet, looking at intelligence organisations in isolation is problematic. MI5 was influenced by outside political factors; it both reflected and rejected socio-cultural changes within Britain. Though officially secret for much of its history, MI5 serves as an excellent study of how an intelligence organisation evolved both as employer and intelligence provider. In the histories and popular images of British intelligence, outside factors and tradecraft have been emphasised over internal organisational employment policy and development. MI5, for example, is often discussed in terms of its intelligence capability, but not as an employer or business

¹ Liz Carlyle - though still lesser known than the ubiquitous James Bond - has been the feature character of an ongoing popular spy fiction book series, written by former MI5 Director-General Stella Rimington.

organisation. Yet, to understand how the contemporary British intelligence community developed it is first necessary to look beyond these organisations and their operations, towards the larger historical contexts within which they existed, operated in and were influenced by.

In writing a history of British intelligence with focus on women's intelligence work, an understanding of outside employment conditions, labour market forces, and attitudes towards employment is absolutely essential. Structural forces had a profound impact on women's opportunities, education, and career paths. For example, women working in intelligence were not exempt from negative attitudes towards working mothers, pay disparity, or occupational discrimination. The goal of this chapter is to address the structural factors which have had the most relevance to women who have worked in intelligence.

The experiences of working women, particularly in the United Kingdom, have changed greatly over the course of the 20th century. What falls under the remit of women's work, including our understanding of the paid and unpaid labour women engage in, has also changed considerably. Public sector employment has shifted from an environment which once excluded women to one where diversity is a well-known buzzword.² More widely, women's challenges in cases of wage discrimination and limited opportunities on the basis of gender have shifted women's labour market involvement and opportunities. This chapter will analyse some of the larger historical trends and shifts in women's work – particularly the structural and economic factors that have had the greatest impact on women in government employ. In doing so, this chapter builds a foundation for a clearer

² Despite continued disparities in women's employment, there has been a diversity focused shift - particularly over the 1990s - which has changed some of the overarching discourses and attitudes towards employment of women and other minority groups. In other words, a notable change of tone, which has, to a certain extent, impacted employment policy and practice.

understanding of the organisational and employment management changes which will be discussed in Chapter Four. By focusing on the larger structural factors here – the macro level of women’s employment – this chapter seeks to build a foundation for understanding women’s employment experiences in intelligence within this wider historical context.

Understandings of women in employment, their roles, their economic contributions in the labour market, and notably, intelligence employment have shifted during the past century. As a result, the balance of this chapter is skewed towards the latter half of the 20th century when women’s work began to be questioned and researched in depth, primarily by feminist scholars. The focus on women in work in scholarly literature increased significantly with the rise of women’s employment activism in the late 1960s. Not only did this time period see changes put in motion – including legal protections – that would impact the working lives of women, it also brought about a rich body of research on their roles, both paid and unpaid, in the British economy.

First, this chapter will address some of some of the overarching debates and theories about trends in women’s employment. The development and application of concepts such as segmented labour markets and occupational sex segregation were amongst the first systematic attempts to understand and explain the role of women in employment. Though these concepts began to gain clearer form in the 1970s, many of these investigations were brought about by a desire to understand past, as well as contemporary employment.

This chapter will address some of the more significant shifts in women’s employment that have had impact on working women in the UK, particularly those working in government. This includes the impact of the World Wars on women’s employment, particularly of women who would likely not otherwise be employed, increasing access to education and its impact

on women's choices and employment opportunities in postwar Britain, and the longer term effects of women's employment activism. The chapter follows a loosely chronological approach, touching on how concepts of suitable employment for women, with regard to class and family connections, changed over the course of the twentieth century. As such, motherhood, family responsibility, and marriage are also discussed with regard to women's opportunities and life choices.

Glass Ceilings, Elevators and Boxes: Key concepts, themes, and approaches to women's employment

Though women entered the labour market in increasing numbers during the course of the 20th century, most were concentrated in certain vocations, such as clerical, secretarial, or paid domestic and household labour. Certain job tasks have been considered more masculine or feminine, and many vocations have tended to be predominately occupied either by men or by women. This has been mirrored in public sector work, where lower grade positions, for example those of typists or clerks, have been often filled by women in the Civil Service, Foreign Office and intelligence services. As a result, one of the most common questions asked about employment and gender is why women (and men) end up concentrated in certain job tasks, or in certain career paths and employment grades. From this comes the concept of occupational sex segregation.³ A myriad of theories and explanations have emerged from various fields including economics, sociology, psychology and other related disciplines, but few fully examine the question from multiple angles. As Maxwell and McDougal note in their multi-level analysis of work-life balance in the UK

³ More recent literature refers to either occupational sex segregation or occupational gender segregation.

public sector, few studies also seek to examine the issue of women's employment at multiple levels of analysis, incorporating all three macro, organizational, and individual levels.⁴

Occupational segregation is tied to the concept of segregated or segmented labour markets. In other words, the labour market is viewed as divided, segmented, dual or stratified in some way. This stratification may not necessarily be by sex but could be according to other identity markers, such as age, national origin, sexual orientation, ethnicity and/or race. Despite, or perhaps due to, the continually growing body of literature on occupational segregation, there are few undisputed understandings or measurements of occupational segregation. However, occupational segregation, including the following distinction, is a useful tool for examining women's employment in the public sector, and especially in intelligence.

One important and common distinction in this literature is drawn between horizontal and vertical segregation. Horizontal occupational sex segregation speaks to the number and types of paid work that women and men are engaged in. While much of the focus in this area has been on fields that exclude women, authors have discussed occupations that have relatively low ratios of men to women such as nursing or secretarial work, asking why such divisions exist. Vertical occupational segregation addresses hierarchical divisions such as promotion to management roles within an organisation. Even within women majority occupations, researchers sought to explain why a disproportionate number of men still occupied higher-level positions.

⁴ Maxwell, G. A., and M. McDougall, 'Work-Life Balance: Exploring the connections between levels of influence in the UK public sector', *Public Management Review*, 6/3 (2004), pp. 377-393.

Discussions about occupational sex segregation were arguably launched by events taking place during 1975. In the context of the International Women's Year in 1975, a first of its kind conference on occupational segregation took place, the proceedings of which are recorded in the volume *Women and the Workplace*. One of the key researchers to emerge in this area from the field of economics, Catherine Hakim, identifies this collection as the key "turning point" in literature on women and work.⁵ The emergence of the study of occupational sex segregation is significant in part because the research was directed at both historical and contemporary labour market segmentation. These efforts tied in with the sex equality based employment activism of the 1970s. Since then, authors such as Hakim, Shirley Dex and Heidi Hartmann expanded on previous class centric stratification theories as they argued that gender was also an important component in understanding the labour force. Attempts to explain sex based discrimination and choices of individuals in seeking employment have taken a variety of forms. Personal choice, cultural pressures, or discrimination against women have all been presented as causal factors. Some examples of the main arguments will be examined here in order to form a wider understanding of potential explanations for occupational sex segregation.

Early perspectives on occupational sex segregation provided explanations which were primarily social or cultural in origin. For example, in Heidi Hartmann's contribution to *Women and the Workplace*, she asks why and how a sex-based division of labour had shifted to a hierarchical division. Hartmann's contribution stands out because she examines factors other than employers in the formation of sex-differentiated work, such as social divisions, arguing that trade unions' exclusion of women played an important role in

⁵ Hakim, C., 'Women at Work: Recent Research on Women's Employment', *Work, Employment & Society*, 2 (1988), p. 103.

keeping women in unskilled labour.⁶ However, in her argument Hartmann implies that a division of labour is natural (that men and women are naturally suited to sex differentiated work, though she does not specify what work) and that it need not be hierarchal. She argues that job segregation 'is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women, because it enforces lower wages for women in the labor market' and that this situation reinforces a domestic hierarchy in division of labour.⁷ In the mid-70s Hartmann was one of the first authors to clearly ask questions about the formation of hierarchical job divisions and the creation of sex-ordered divisions of labour. Hartmann writes that, 'The present status of women in the labor market and the current arrangement of sex-segregated jobs is the result of a long process of interaction between patriarchy and capitalism.'⁸

Hakim conducted one of the first sex related historical studies of labour economics for the British Department of Employment in 1979. Her research has primarily focused on identifying examples and causes of occupational segregation in British employment. Hakim's publications of the late 1970s and early 1980s serve as examples of the empirical shift in the academic research on women and work in the UK and her later works in the 1990s demonstrate shifts in thinking about how labour differentiation can be measured.⁹ Hakim focuses her earlier study on the time period of 1901 to 1971, making extensive use of

⁶ Hartmann, H., "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex", in *Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation*, eds. Blaxall and Reagan (University of Chicago Press, London, 1976), p.159.

⁷ Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex" p. 139.

⁸ Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex", p. 167.

⁹ It should be noted that some of Hakim's later work, particularly on preference theory has come under heavy criticism, identifying it as too simplistic by downplaying structural forces while ignoring the ability of women to adapt to limiting structural and social factors. See, for example: Leahy, M., and J., Doughney, "Women, Work and Preference Formation: A Critique of Catherine Hakim's Preference Theory." *Journal of Business Systems, Governance and Ethics*, 1, no. 1 (2014) pp. 37-48.

census data from England and Wales. Overall she concludes that horizontal segregation decreased somewhat over this time period, with women working in a greater variety of occupations.¹⁰ Yet she notes that horizontal segregation remained a prominent force in the labour market. Notably, clerical occupations became associated more with women and this change was reflected in the increase in numbers of women working in this area.¹¹ For vertical segregation, Hakim noted that the gap widened. A lower percentage of women were in higher managerial or administrative roles from 1901 to 1961. Further, when considered in comparison to other cases such as with some European countries, it was clear that the UK had higher vertical segregation.¹²

Hakim noted that while government data sources, such as the census and Labour Force Survey were helpful for understanding women's employment, it did not paint a complete picture of their employment. Problematically occupations with more women such as clerical, secretarial and typist roles were grouped together, making analysis of horizontal occupational segregation more difficult. In contrast, certain types of scientific and manual vocations have a greater range of classifications in government data. It should be acknowledged that this also poses a key problem for examining public sector employment. Additionally, the lack of greater categorical specificity presented problems for identifying and analysing the extent of vertical segregation.¹³ Hakim's identification of problems in available data has been echoed by other authors such as Shirley Dex.¹⁴ Yet, from the available information they draw different conclusions, particularly for part-time workers and

¹⁰ Hakim, *Occupational Segregation: A Comparative Study of the Degree and Pattern of the Differentiation between Men and Women's Work in Britain, the United States and Other Countries*, Department of Employment Research Paper Series no.9. (HMSO, London 1979), p. 23.

¹¹ Hakim, *Occupational Segregation*, p. 27.

¹² Hakim, *Occupational Segregation*, pp. 40-41.

¹³ Hakim, *Occupational Segregation*, p. 29.

¹⁴ Dex, S., 'Issues of Gender and Employment' *Social History* 13, no. 2 (1988), pp. 141-150.

occupational sex segregation. Hakim argues that horizontal occupational segregation was not increased for women seeking part-time work.¹⁵ This contradicts claims from other authors that the limitation of part-time job availability to certain sectors further increased occupational segregation.¹⁶

Other economists have looked to dual labour markets as a way to explain occupational sex segregation. A study by Barron and Norris takes this particular labour market theory further. They argue that not only do women occupy this secondary status labour market, but their labour status also impacts their overall social position.¹⁷ In other words, lower earnings and limited employment opportunities can have an impact on women's social mobility. This theory incorporated the idea that women in paid work could not be analysed in the same way as men and that the labour markets in which men and women sought employment were different and often separate. The focus of Barron and Norris is on the interaction between employers and workers as groups rather than on the experiences of individual workers. This is important because it accounts for structural factors and changing cultural expectations of women in work. Similarly, Hakim notes that this theory 'provides an explanation of the trends in occupational segregation observed since the turn of the century.'¹⁸

Estevez-Abe notes that occupational sex segregation's primary impact on women is economic, and that this overall negative impact is why its prevalence is of concern. Lower entry wages and status for women associated with occupational sex segregation can limit

¹⁵ Hakim, *Occupational Segregation*, p. 30.

¹⁶ Hakim's later work will be discussed in relation to postwar and recessionary economics due to her emphasis on separating full and part time employment.

¹⁷ Barron and Norris, 'Sexual divisions and the dual labour market', p. 64.

¹⁸ Hakim, *Occupational Segregation*, p. 47.

career progression and lead to lower lifetime earnings, impacting pensions. In attempting to understand why occupational sex segregation exists, Estevez-Abe negates some of the more common explanations, such as statistical discrimination, skill-atrophy, and human capital theory.¹⁹ Statistical discrimination, according to Estevez-Abe, 'makes simplified assumptions about employers' behavior', to explain occupational sex segregation through employers avoidance of hiring women for reasons related to motherhood or the potential for family responsibilities to arise.²⁰ Employers attitudes towards motherhood and family responsibility will be addressed further at the end of this chapter. Skill-atrophy suggests women avoid careers which require regular training for highly skilled employment. As Estevez-Abe notes, Claudia Goldin's work on the topic has shown employer attitudes still play a significant role.²¹

Human capital theory attributes the differential to a lack of investment in women based on assumptions that women will be more likely to engage in unpaid or low paid labour.

Similarly, statistical discrimination theory assumes employers are less likely to hire women based on employers' assumptions that women will leave – or take multiple periods of leave from – employment for family reasons. Neither economic explanation demonstrates a sufficient understanding of the complexities and variations of women's experiences in the labour market. Estevez-Abe argues that the high level of educational attainment and high level of occupational segregation shows the inapplicability of the human capital theory.

Further, countries where women are involved in the labour market at higher levels but still

¹⁹ Estevez-Abe, M., 'Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism', *World Politics*, 59:1 (2006), p.143

²⁰ Estevez-Abe, 'Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism', p. 144.

²¹ Goldin, C., 'A Pollution Theory of Discrimination: Male and Female Differences in Occupations and Earnings,' NBER Working Paper 8985 (2002).

face comparatively large amounts of occupational segregation, show that the latter theory does not fit.²²

Estevez-Abe argues that cultural stereotypes as an explanation leave more questions than answers, particularly when comparing attainment in manual and non-manual sectors.²³

Institutional explanations often fall short as well. The idea that women- and family-friendly policies can reduce vertical but not horizontal sex segregation, is disputed by what Estevez-Abe terms the “Scandinavian conundrum” where such policies have not been shown to reduce vertical occupational sex segregation.²⁴

Problematically these theories tend to look for one or a cluster of related explanatory factors. While it can be a useful exercise to look at the impact of individual variables on occupational sex segregation, even the individual variables with the most explanatory potential tend to fall short on their own. Estevez-Abe’s contribution works to demonstrate this point as discussed above. Rather than focusing on one factor or group of actors (be it employers or segments of the labour market), the argument should be that cultural, economic and institutional factors have all come together to shape a labour market that is often segmented and multi-layered. As a parallel with social history more generally, examining the intersection of multiple variables in a particular historical context can provide valuable insights. This speaks to the core intent of this chapter, the motivation from intersectional feminist approaches to illustrate how structural factors can shape the environment which organisations and individual actors navigate, and at times influence.

²² Estevez-Abe, ‘Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism’, p. 145.

²³ Estevez-Abe, ‘Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism’, p. 146.

²⁴ Estevez-Abe, ‘Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism’, pp. 147-148.

From Governess to Switchboard Operator: Technological and skill changes

approaching the turn of the century

With the gendering of occupations, such as the association of women with clerical work, it is important to understand the historical shifts which took place that made this particular profession fall under the category of women's work. While other occupations such as nursing, teaching and paid domestic work have been gendered, clerical work provides the most relevant example for understanding changes in state – particularly intelligence – employment. Silverstone notes that 'In the mid-nineteenth century, the office was an exclusively male preserve.'²⁵ Formal, paid employment for women was limited. Stigma against middle-class women working left them with few options, while women from the lower classes were primarily restricted to domestic or factory work. Educated women could work as governesses, though supply outstripped demand and led to a significant devaluation of their pay.

Clerical work slowly opened up to women in the 1850s and 1860s and the Post Office soon began employing female telegraphists. Gender stereotypes influenced the type of employment that women were offered. The perception that women could sit for long periods of time and operate "delicate" machinery, whilst engaging in repetitive work led to generally favourable perceptions of women's use in such jobs. However, as Silverstone notes, women's lower labour costs to employers was the main factor in their employment.²⁶ Gendered associations between profession and class led to female telegraphists generally being of a higher social class than male telegraphists. In other words, already limited

²⁵ Silverstone, R., 'Office Work for Women: An Historical Review', *Business History*, 18, no. 1, (1976), p. 98.

²⁶ Silverstone, 'Office Work for Women', p. 101.

employment opportunities for women were further mediated by class assumptions about appropriate working environments for women from upper, and to some extent, middle class backgrounds. Men of upper classes could also command higher pay than women of similar status. These women were more likely to have higher than average levels education and training, but had fewer opportunities than men of similar socio-economic status, which also resulted in many women being underemployed. Though this began to change in the 1880s with the implementation of merit based hiring decisions.²⁷ However, Silverstone notes that amongst these women employed in office work from higher classes, ‘the low pay and, consequently, low standard of living, were an embarrassment to them.’²⁸

Women’s employment in the Post Office was noteworthy in that it led to the first women being employed in the Civil Service. As telegraph services began to be nationalised following The Telegraph Act in 1868, several hundred women who were already employed as telegraphists then found themselves employees of the Civil Service.²⁹ However, one of the largest changes to impact women’s opportunities in office work was technological. In the 1870s a more affordable typewriter became available which led to the widespread adoption of typewriters both in the private and public sectors over the following decades.³⁰ Similar to telegraph work, this new occupational category of typists was easier for women to enter as it lacked a gendered precedent.³¹ This was not limited to typewriter or telegraph work, as shorthand and comptometry (the operation of mechanical calculators, known as comptometers from the late 1880s) were also seen as viable fields to employ women; these

²⁷ Silverstone, ‘Office Work for Women’, p. 104.

²⁸ Silverstone, ‘Office Work for Women’, p. 108.

²⁹ Hede, A., ‘Women Managers in the Civil Service: The long road towards equity in Britain’, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 61, no. 4, (1995), p. 588.

³⁰ Silverstone, ‘Office Work for Women’, p. 104.

³¹ Silverstone, ‘Office Work for Women’, p. 105. It should be noted that other names were in use at the time, notably “type-writers” to describe those engaged in typing work.

were again areas of work lacking a substantial history of male employment.³² Though women gained ground in office work in the late 19th century, it was in the first half of the 20th century that women made the largest gains. As Silverstone notes, 'It was not until the Census of 1951, however, that official statistics showed women clerical workers to outnumber men.'³³

What did she do during the war?: Women's Wartime and Peacetime Employment Fluctuations

In the mid-1990s, historian Andrew Hede wrote that 'Women in Britain have come a long way since they were first admitted into the Civil Service more than a century ago, but the road to full equality of representation will, on present trends, be a long one still.'³⁴ The state employment of the women telegraphists, and later, that of women typists, presents useful parallels for understanding changes in women's formal, paid employment, in terms of new fields, the feminisation of certain occupations, and restrictions on and attitudes towards working women over the following century, particularly their wartime employment.

In her research on the Civil Service and London County Council, Helen Glew makes an important argument for understanding the role of public sector employment as both acting on and reflecting societal norms. She states that 'Women's work in public service employment was affected by many of the debates about women's work and women's roles in society more widely – such as discourses around femininity, motherhood and accepted gender roles – whilst at the same time acting as a barometer of government and wider

³² Zimmeck, M., 'Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919–1939*' *The Historical Journal*, 27, no. 4, (1984), p. 903.

³³ Silverstone, 'Office Work for Women', p. 108.

³⁴ Hede, 'Women Managers in the Civil Service', p.587

social attitudes towards women's paid work.³⁵ In line with this argument, this section addresses women's war and peacetime employment conditions and experiences in the public sector, while asking what forces acted to shape women's employment in this industry.

It is important to note here the power of the Treasury – particularly in their control of the Civil Service and departmental budgets – in influencing Civil Service hiring, promotion and other employment practices which led to long-term structurally entrenched restrictions on the employment of women. In essence, as Meta Zimmeck clearly states, 'The Treasury took ideas on the place of women in society (the separation of spheres and the marriage bar) current in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and elevated them into a rigid code which it continued to apply long after the social context of their formulation had changed.'³⁶

Overall, Glew appears to agree with Zimmeck's assertions about the power and influence of the Treasury in women's employment, progression and compensation within the Civil Service. However, Glew also notes the principal role of the Chancellor and current governments in shaping these attitudes and resulting policies. Treasury influence over budgets and policies along with later challenges from individual departments to such control characterise much the overarching forces guiding the British state's employment of women.

Women's early employment in the Civil Service was limited by marriage bars and physical segregation from men working in the same building or even on the same tasks, both limitations which persisted well into the 20th century.³⁷ The first administrative posts open

³⁵ Glew, H., *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: Women's work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900-55*, (Oxford, OUP: 2016), p. 236.

³⁶ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 924.

³⁷ Hede, 'Women Managers in the Civil Service', p. 589, and Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 903.

to women in the Civil Service – or quasi-administrative posts, as Meta Zimmeck aptly labels them – were for women supervising other women.³⁸ The Lady Superintendent post was the first of such quasi-administrative posts.³⁹ The women in these posts were often educated to a similar, if not higher level than men in similar posts, and socially were of an equal, if not higher class. This led to the Treasury using re-grading to make these women a distinct employment group, one that was less threatening to, lower ranked and less well compensated than the men performing similar tasks.⁴⁰

Women's success in these posts posed a problem for the gendered hierarchy of employment during and after WWI. Zimmeck argues that the Treasury had to choose between hiring women who would work at lower grades for lower compensation, or choose to continue employing men in clerical work to stave off the increasing percentage of women entering the field.⁴¹ During the First World War the gender shift in the Civil Service proved inevitable, though it was somewhat reversed in the postwar period. Women comprised 16 percent of the Civil Service in 1914, yet four years later they comprised 51 percent of the Civil Service.⁴² Both Hede and Zimmeck identify 1914 as the cusp of this transition to the feminisation of clerical work in the Civil Service. The aforementioned re-grading of women in quasi-administrative posts, along with an interwar reworking of employment grades forced women further down the Civil Service employment ladder, often placing them in

³⁸ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 903.

³⁹ Hede, 'Women Managers in the Civil Service', pp. 588-589. A parallel can be drawn here to the status of Lady Superintendents during MI5's first fifty years.

⁴⁰ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p.905.

⁴¹ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 903.

⁴² Hede, 'Women Managers in the Civil Service', p. 591.

competition for jobs which they had previously held. Male clerks, on the other hand, were, with few exceptions, moved up to the executive grade.⁴³

Calls for equality of opportunity in the Civil Service occurred with varying, though altogether limited, amounts of success over the first half of the 20th century. For example, Hede highlights the 1914 MacDonnell Commission for the surprisingly modern language in the calls for equal pay and progression that were placed before it. However, the author adds that despite multiple attempts to secure equal pay for women it was not approved until the creation of the Royal Commission on Equal Pay (1944-1946). Further, equal pay was not adopted until 1955, and was not fully implemented until 1962.⁴⁴ While some women were allowed upward progression in the Civil Service, their numbers were small. As depicted by Zimmeck, 'The Treasury had to walk a tightrope between giving women no opportunity, which would have caused difficulties outside the civil service, and giving them too many opportunities which would have caused difficulties within the civil service.'⁴⁵

Zimmeck argues that throughout this time period many of the restrictions on women in the Civil Service can be attributed to attitudes within the Treasury towards women's role – not just in the workplace but as wives and mothers. She argues that the Treasury, 'did not so much have a consistent policy as an attitude or series of attitudes with it projected on to administrative eventualities.'⁴⁶ In enforcing a gendered division within the Civil Service, the marriage bar served the purposes of the Treasury particularly well. It presented economic efficiency through the creation of a high turnover environment with a steady supply of new

⁴³ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', pp. 918-919.

⁴⁴ Hede, 'Women Managers in the Civil Service', pp. 591-592.

⁴⁵ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 921.

⁴⁶ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 902. This argument – about a series of attitudes governing employment decisions – is one that applies to MI5 as well.

labourers, ones unlikely to command higher pay. Additionally, it reinforced the notion that women in Civil Service work were only there temporarily – thus advancement could be “justifiably” limited along with pay, as women’s priorities were assumed to place family above work. Just as they were assumed to have economic support from their family when single or unmarried, employment for married women was assumed to be unnecessary.⁴⁷ While this served short-term wartime economic efficiency goals for the Treasury, it also served Treasury attitudes about women in employment by preventing women from gaining a greater foothold in the Civil Service.

Indeed, young women’s commitment to family has been demonstrated in research on the interwar years, though perhaps not in the way Treasury officials of the time imagined. One such study, based on survey data from working class families in Interwar London found that young unmarried women’s labour decisions were often made with consideration of household need. Young women, in particular represented an important source of secondary income to their families.⁴⁸ Rather than wages as pocket money, women’s labour and wages formed a key component of household income that influenced overall household quality of life.

The number of women in employment rose with wartime hiring, and generally fell in peacetime, though numbers were mediated by class, as women who worked out of economic necessity were often sought some form of employment or informal income during peacetime. As Zimmeck writes regarding women’s employment at the end of the First World War, ‘Within a short time after the armistice women were sacked and dumped on to

⁴⁷ Zimmeck, ‘Strategies and Stratagems’, pp. 903-904.

⁴⁸ Bean, J. S., “‘To help keep the home going’: Female labour supply in Interwar London’, *Economic History Review*, 68, no. 2, (2015), p. 445.

an increasingly restricted labour market.⁴⁹ Not only did this have an immediate economic impact on women, it also influenced attitudes of many of the women employed during the Second World War. The labour shortages, and women's role in filling them, echoed the previous war, while at the same time reminding women of the precarious status of their employment.

Reserve Army of Labour Theories

One series of arguments to have emerged concerning women's wartime employment centres around the idea of an "industrial reserve army" or often used interchangeably a "reserve army of labour" (RAL). This concept was a popular explanation for patterns in women's employment and factored heavily into the 1970s debate over the role of domestic labour.⁵⁰ RAL is significant here particularly because it has been used as an explanation for the World War rises in women's employment along with the interwar and postwar decreases in women's employment. Though the concept originated with Karl Marx and refers to a reserve supply of labour to be called upon when needed, it has been used frequently by Marxist feminists as a way to discuss increases in women's underemployment and unemployment in both the interwar and postwar periods.⁵¹

One advocate of RAL as an explanation for the war and peacetime fluctuations in the employment of women, Veronica Beechey, argues that women held a unique position in the labour market as both disposable and reserve sources of labour, as employees who would be more willing to work for limited timeframes and endure longer periods of

⁴⁹ Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems', p. 902.

⁵⁰ Anthias, F., 'Women and the reserve army of labour: a critique of Veronica Beechey', *Capital & Class*, 4 (1980).

⁵¹ Beechey, *Unequal Work*, (Verso, London, 1987), p. 46.

unemployment. She linked this argument to sex-based domestic divisions, stating that women were 'dependant on the family economy' for their labour production, yet this argument was widely critiqued.⁵² Floya Anthias, for example, counters Beechey's statements on an industrial reserve army, arguing instead that this method 'marginalises the importance of women's *employment* for advanced capitalism – their role as cheap labour and as a relatively unorganised and passive element in the work-force'.⁵³ Anthias goes further, arguing that the reserve army of labour cannot explain women's situation as it was originally designed as sex blind and thus cannot incorporate women's status into its framework.⁵⁴ It should be noted that while Beechey later agreed with some of Anthias' critique, she did not agree with Anthias' alternate formation.⁵⁵ Similarly, Shirley Dex notes nearly a decade later, that 'it became clear that British women in the post Second World War period did not fit into any of the commonly understood meanings of "a reserve army"'.⁵⁶

Much of the focus of RAL has remained on the postwar decreases in women's paid employment and not on increased demand for women at times when preferred groups of men were occupied by other wartime work. While some theorisations of RAL have proven inapplicable, particularly regarding the focus on peacetime employment decreases superseding that on wartime increases, it is still important to ask why women's employment levels fluctuated so significantly. It is equally important to ask what specific factors as relating to wartime labour needs impacted women's employment the most. What can be

⁵² Beechey, *Unequal Work*, p. 9.

⁵³ Anthias, 'Women and the reserve army of labour', p. 61.

⁵⁴ Anthias, 'Women and the reserve army of labour', pp. 61-62.

⁵⁵ Beechey, *Unequal Work*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Dex, S., 'Issues of Gender and Employment' *Social History* 13, no. 2 (1988), p. 143.

gained from this debate is the understanding that as a result of wartime needs, these labour shortages increased demanded which caused women to engage in work and economic activity that they would likely not otherwise have had the opportunity and/or desire to participate in. Wartime labour shortages created opportunities for women, but not all of these opportunities lasted into peacetime. RAL addresses more the conditions of peacetime decline, however, it opens up questions of women's wartime employment increases and experiences.

From Wartime to Postwar Employment

Though women were employed in significantly greater numbers during the war, their employment was often mediated by educational level, region and class. In the case of wartime secrets work, Tammy M. Proctor argues that when the preferred pool of candidates, men, were unavailable or otherwise occupied by other types war work, the Security Service (MI5) had to compensate by looking to the next best group of potential candidates.⁵⁷ In this case, one could argue, as Proctor does, that women – more specifically upper class, often well educated women – were the next best choice for new recruits, especially as the work of the organisation was rapidly intensifying.

The importance of wartime labour needs outweighed long held restrictions on women's employment in other government branches. This had a notable impact on the policies of the Post Office towards its female employees which overall had few substantial changes from their employment in the late 1800s. One major change worth noting came in the Interwar era, as telephone services fell under the Post Office's remit. By 1938 total Post Office

⁵⁷ Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence' *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 2 (2005). This topic will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.

employment had expanded to 283,000, and was composed of 23 percent women. Crowley, in his study of Second World War Post Office employment notes the pervasive role of the Treasury in pressuring individual departments to economise, particularly through a 10 percent cut of staffing which was demanded of all departments in 1940.⁵⁸ However, the concurrent suspension of the marriage bar in 1940, along with the Treasury conceding power over policies on married women's employment to individual Civil Service departments demonstrated a breakdown of Treasury influence in some areas of women's employment.⁵⁹ At the same time, departments such as the Post Office were under still pressure to economise, and as Crowley notes, 'management believed its first aim should be to reduce expenditure on staffing, whilst not implementing the huge swathe of workforce cuts proposed by the Treasury, which it believed would detrimentally affect services.'⁶⁰

The Foreign Office had faced pressures from women's groups prior to and throughout the Second World War. This, together with a slowly building pressure from within the Foreign Office to identify what positions could be open to women, particularly in the Diplomatic Service, led to a somewhat grudging change in policy. Though women had been employed in the Diplomatic Service during and prior to the war, they were still technically barred from the administrative grades which would allow them to progress in their careers. Instead, women's war work advancements were in the form of 'temporary administrative grade

⁵⁸ Crowley, M. J., 'Reducing, Re-defining and Retaining: The Struggle to maintain a stable workforce and service in the British Post Office during the Second World War', *Essays in Economic & Business History*, 31 (2013), pp. 53-54.

⁵⁹ Crowley, 'Reducing, Re-defining and Retaining', p. 61. Crowley notes that this process took place from late 1940 but was not fully implemented until 1943.

⁶⁰ Crowley, 'Reducing, Re-defining and Retaining', p. 62.

posts'.⁶¹ Their employment is significant because it opened the door and showed that women were capable of holding these posts.

During, and particularly towards the end of the war pressures over women's employment increased, most notably from women's associations. The Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, was active from the end of the First World War, and continued its work after merging with a trade union, the National Association of Women Civil Servants (NAWCS) in 1932.⁶² Crowley notes that in the case of the Post Office, the NAWCS posed a viable alternative for women's employment advocacy as the Union of Post Office Workers had shown little in the way of focusing on women's employment issues.⁶³ Another organisation was the Council of Women Civil Servants (CWCS). As McCarthy notes, 'the CWCS was open to all women employed in the administrative, professional and executive classes of the Civil Service' however NAWCS 'represented all women employed in the Civil Service.'⁶⁴

The CWCS, advocated for a decision to be made on women's postwar employment and related policies before the end of the war. Women who were employed during the Second World War feared a repetition of the events at the end of the First World War, where many found themselves in precarious employment, often in competition with ex-servicemen for positions which women had held in the war. Though waiting would likely disadvantage female candidates, the decision was not made until 1946, again influenced by negative perceptions within the Treasury towards women's work commitment and the pressures to employ ex-servicemen. Women would be allowed to progress to administrative grades, but

⁶¹ McCarthy, H., *Women of the World: The rise of the Female Diplomat*, (Bloomsbury, London, 2014), pp. 230-231.

⁶² Crowley, 'Reducing, Re-defining and Retaining', p. 56.

⁶³ Crowley, 'Reducing, Re-defining and Retaining', pp. 56-57.

⁶⁴ McCarthy, H., 'Petticoat Diplomacy: The Admission of Women to the British Foreign Service, c.1919-1946' *Twentieth Century Brit History*, 20, no. 3, p. 292, fn. 26.

following the attitudes evidenced towards women's employment by the Treasury in the Interwar years, their progression was limited. In this way, their progression could present less of a threat to male employment. Women could not exceed ten percent of recruits for any year and a marriage bar was to be applied.⁶⁵

In a similar example, Smith writes of the idea that war created lasting social change for women, arguing that such change was actually not as permanent as has been commonly thought. While women's employment prospects and economic opportunities increased during the war, he argues that despite efforts of women's groups to maintain these changes, some were shortlived. Smith emphasises the wartime confrontations over women's employment, noting that they 'in some important respects actually intensified' concluding that women's groups and government attitudes towards continued sex discrimination resulted in increased clashes between the two parties throughout this time.⁶⁶ Smith notes that previous experiences heightened resolve to create changes in women's employment, stating that 'During the Second World War women were acutely aware of the way women workers in the First World War had been dismissed en masse from their jobs at the end of the war, and sought to avoid a repetition of this when the Second World War was over.'⁶⁷

Despite the efforts of women's groups and their allies, setbacks in state employment occurred, which continued these previous struggles over pay, marriage and work, and post-

⁶⁵ McCarthy, *Women of the World*, pp. 244-245. It should be noted that the marriage bar lapsed for some positions in the Diplomatic Service, but not all during WWII. The cap on women's recruitment may have been unnecessary as numbers did not exceed ten percent during the following decade. An official date for the abolition of this policy is not given – though it likely changed during the mid-1960s.

⁶⁶ Smith, H. L., 'The Womanpower Problem in Britain during the Second World War', *The Historical Journal*, 27, no. 4, (1984), p. 945.

⁶⁷ Smith, 'The Womanpower Problem', p.937.

war employment opportunities. One key example is the elimination of a surprisingly egalitarian bonus scheme in 1935. Prior to this, from 1920 to 1934, bonuses for men and women were equal. Afterwards, women's bonuses were lower than men.⁶⁸

Helen Glew, in her recent research on the Civil Service and the London County Council in the first half of the 20th century, notes the longer term impact of Civil Service attitudes and policies towards women. She states that, 'After the Second World War the consensus amongst high-ranking officials in each institution was that it had done enough to open higher posts to women because there remained few formal restrictions on their employment: it would take until the 1970s and 1980s for issues surrounding indirect discrimination to come to the fore.'⁶⁹ Her description highlights the attitudes which slowed but did not altogether halt women's upward progression in the decades following the Second World War. At the same time, Glew identifies how women's equality in public sector employment was measured by the number and type of formal restrictions placed on their employment.⁷⁰

Glew argues that pervasive problems have continued within the Civil Service despite the official abolition of the marriage bar in 1946. For example, she notes that women are still concentrated in greater numbers at the lower levels of the Civil Service and that 'all available evidence suggest that women are more negatively affected in the workplace by the decision to have children.'⁷¹

⁶⁸ Smith, 'The Womanpower Problem', pp. 936-7.

⁶⁹ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, p. 237.

⁷⁰ The distinction between formal and informal employment policies and practices is an important one which will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

⁷¹ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, p. 240.

Economic Theories on Postwar Employment

Determining the impact of WWII in particular on the labour supply of women in both short and long term employment remains a topic of ongoing debate amongst economic historians. Claudia Goldin separates the prevailing theories about the impact of WWII into two general categories. One, which she identifies the “watershed event” and the other with she depicts as revisionist.⁷² The former depicts WWII as a cause of significant and lasting changes to women’s participation in the labour market while the latter scales back those claims, suggesting that change was not attributable to the war but instead to other factors such as longer term shifts in family patterns and attitudes about women’s work. Goldin’s work on the United States seeks a compromise between these theories, and argues that while separating the impact of the war from other variables is difficult, ‘the war had far less direct influence on female labour supply than was believed.’⁷³ Goldin and co-author Olivetti revisit this topic in greater detail in an attempt to determine how WWII impacted the paid employment trajectories of certain groups of women. Among white women whose husbands were away for war work, Goldin and Olivetti found a statistically significant increase in work and overall labour force participation.⁷⁴

Speaking to bimodal theories of women’s employment patterns, women who were married without children experienced a significant increase in employment in 1950. They continued working at higher rates than average into 1960, despite a drop in labour force participation. Married women with children in 1950 also experienced higher labour force participation

⁷² Goldin, C. D., ‘The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women’s Employment’, *The American Economic Review*, 81, no. 4 (1991), p. 743.

⁷³ Goldin, ‘The Role of World War II’, p. 755.

⁷⁴ Goldin, C. D., and C. Olivetti, ‘Shocking Labor Supply: A Reassessment of the Role of World War II on U.S. Women’s Labor Supply’, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 18676, (2013), p. 260.

rates, though at lower levels than those without children. However, in 1960, more married women of this latter category entered (or for some, re-entered) the labour supply. What may be most relevant from Goldin and Olivetti's findings is that education influenced the extent and financial impact of these labour market changes. As Goldin and Olivetti note, 'Among those with at least a high school diploma, almost 80 percent were in white-collar jobs. But for those with less than a high school diploma just 25 percent were in white-collar positions.'⁷⁵ Women with higher levels of education benefitted more by entering non-manual employment, which was generally better paid and more resilient in withstanding postwar employment cutbacks.

Another potential contribution that emerges from this discussion is the delineation of wartime and postwar employment in the UK. In other words, the employment landscape for women shifted in the decades following the Second World War. To illustrate this point, full and part time employment numbers must be looked at separately and in relation to gender. The overall number of women employed, including both those who classified their work as full or as part time, rose from 6,826,000 in 1951 to 9,146,000 in 1981. However, women's full time employment stayed relatively steady (6,041,000 in 1951 and 5,602,000 in 1981) while women's part time employment rose considerably (784,000 in 1951 to 3,543,000 in 1981). In contrast, men's full time employment decreased (15,262,000 in 1951 to 13,174,000 in 1981) while men's part time employment increased only slightly (47,000 in

⁷⁵ Goldin and Olivetti, 'Shocking Labor Supply', p. 261.

1951 to 362,000 in 1981).⁷⁶ Though the percentage of women working full time amongst the total of working age women hovered around 30 percent from the 1950s to early 1980s, the percentage of women working full time out of all working age women began increasing in the mid-1980s. Having established a broad timeline of women's employment increases, this leaves the question of what factors influenced this growth, a topic that will be addressed in the following section.

Changing Demographics and Rising Social Mobility: Education, women in work, family responsibilities and household sizes in the 1950s and 1960s

Gradual shifts in the types of work women undertook had already been taking place throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Changes in access to education, working patterns for women, and in social mobility throughout the 1950s and 1960s had longer term impacts for the following decades. This can be seen in the overall percentage of working age women in full time employment in the 1970s and 1980s. Increasing numbers of women were reaching higher levels of education, prompting a demographic shift in British society, and increasingly, taboos towards married women engaging in paid employment outside the home were breaking down. This section will address some of the impacts of these wider social changes on women's employment opportunities and experiences.

Voila Klein's *Britain's Married Women Workers*, published in 1965, shows that the debates on domestic work and gendered vocational divisions were longer term concerns which

⁷⁶ Population Census Data cited in Hakim, 'Explaining Trends in Occupational Segregation: the measurement, causes, and consequences of the sexual division of labour', *European Sociological Review*, 8:2 (1992), p. 140. Though the jump in real numbers for men's part time employment seems large from 1951 to 1981, the part time numbers represented a shift of less than .5% of total men working in 1951 to that of three percent of men working part time in 1981. It should be noted that some estimates put the number slightly higher, to six percent of men in 1981, see Hakim's explanation of variations in employment and census data for additional clarity.

existed prior to the rise of the term occupational segregation. Klein's surveys were conducted in 1956, and she draws upon employment data to add to her analysis.⁷⁷ Her work is worth noting here due to the original research the author conducted. Interview responses help form her primary argument in support of working married women, which as debates with public sector employment have shown, was still controversial. Though she sought to analyse their experiences and opinions, Klein also sought responses from family members and employers.

Even with Klein's focus on married women, the data presented and conclusions drawn are also relevant for single women in Britain. Within this scope, the women's work that is analysed is implicitly defined as work outside the home in gainful employment. Yet Klein acknowledges that the priorities women have and the areas where they work the most may not mimic this. She continues on to argue that industrialisation and smaller family sizes have contributed to greater numbers of women working outside the home.⁷⁸

Klein ties the issue of women and work to both national economic labour needs and personal desire to work, incorporating and critiquing labour projections.⁷⁹ In doing so she also works to identify and break down some of the key arguments against women working. For example, she notes that more of the feedback from the husbands of gainfully employed women is positive than negative, using her findings to argue that married women returning to work can be of benefit to the marriage financially and socially.⁸⁰ She tackles this "problem" of married women working in paid employment, noting that high numbers of

⁷⁷ Klein, V., *Britain's Married Women Workers*, (London: Routledge, 1965).

⁷⁸ Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁹ Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, p. xi.

⁸⁰ Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, pp. 75-76.

married women working merely continued an employment trend that had been under-investigated.

Klein's other conclusions from her research have implications for understanding women's varying and changing attitudes towards work. She writes, 'There is no trace of feminist egalitarianism – militant or otherwise – in any of the women's answers to our questionnaire; nor is it even implicitly assumed that women have a "right to work".'⁸¹ She returns to her argument that changing, smaller family structures influenced this.

Importantly, Klein finds that women with higher educational attainment are more likely to want to continue working.⁸²

Education and its ties to social mobility were beneficial to university educated women, often independent of whether they entered paid full time work upon graduation.⁸³ The importance of education as an influence in women's career and life choices has been demonstrated in the literature on working women. Two related topics are of significance to understanding the impact of education on women's employment patterns. The first is the role of the Education Act, 1944 which changed primary and secondary education and provided more opportunities for high achieving girls. The implementation of the 11 plus test allowed greater opportunities for advancement for girls. The second is the increase in women's university attendance which continued to grow into the 1960s. The remainder of this section focuses primarily on the women who were set for post-university recruitment into the labour market in the 1960s and to the social impact of these changes.

⁸¹ Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, p. 77.

⁸² Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers*, p. 77.

⁸³ Marriage, and the emphasis of determining a woman's social status through her male family members is an important aspect of this.

This link between education and women's increased expectation that they will work is echoed in Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport's study of graduates from 1960. In 1971, their book *Sex, Career and Family* asked why more women had not reached higher ranking jobs within Britain. The authors considered trends in other Western countries comparatively but focused their investigation on the British cohort. Looking beyond employment statistics, the authors examined attitudes and realities of family and career balance. As part of their research, they sent out a longer questionnaire to a subsample of the 1960 graduate cohort. Their survey results reflect a changing demographic of women, with changing expectations. In particular, they note that female graduates in 1960 are more likely than previous generations to expect that they will work, while married, with children and for longer than those women without degrees.⁸⁴ At the same time, the authors acknowledge that women's employment patterns are negatively impacted by factors such as sexed vocational divisions, the devaluing of women in employment and a lack of training opportunities.

Industry demands and specificities, such as those within the Civil Service, are highlighted by the authors. Examining vertical occupational segregation - without explicitly terming it so - one of Fogarty et al's central questions is why more women have not reached top posts. Relevant to the discussion of women in government employ, the authors use senior civil servants as one of their primary case studies. For example, they concluded that women comprised 11 percent of the category "senior civil servants, MPs, etc." in 1966. From 1961 to 1966 they noted that women increased in this group by 3 percent, while men increased by 10 percent.⁸⁵ Further, the main increase was in the 25 to 34 age group.⁸⁶ This age based

⁸⁴ Fogarty, M., R. Rapoport and R. Rapoport, *Sex, Career and Family: Including an International Review of Women's Roles*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 485.

⁸⁵ Fogarty, et al., *Sex Career and Family*, p. 23.

⁸⁶ Fogarty, et al., *Sex Career and Family*, p. 24.

analysis is important to note because it suggests not only a change in expectation, but a resulting change in advancement.

The study's overarching argument is clearly in favour of the inclusion of women in competition for higher level jobs.⁸⁷ They argue their study proves their hypothesis that women's work advancement is not just a women's organising issue, but instead is a wider trade organising concern.⁸⁸ Further the argument made in *Sex, Career and Family* for understanding specific situations in different employment sectors is particularly useful. The authors acknowledge that work is impacted by the industry in which it takes place. Public sector work, for example, differs from that of the private sector. At the same time, while the needs of specific sectors must be accounted for, the larger changes brought about by second-wave feminist women's liberation efforts must also be acknowledged.

Similar to Fogarty et al's study, Kelsall, Poole, and Kuhn are the authors of two books that used data from the surveys of 1960 graduates to analyse the social mobility, careers, family formation along with other aspects of this cohort. This could easily be considered the most important information on education, gender and class during this time period. *Six Years After*, the first of these two books, deviates from then prevalent sociological trends by not only including woman as subjects of research and analysis, but also by devoting a significant portion of the book to their post-graduation experiences.⁸⁹ Further, this trend is continued with a focus on marriage and family in their subsequent book, *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*. Both books contain invaluable data on women potentially entering the labour

⁸⁷ Fogarty, et al., *Sex, Career and Family*, pp. 483-484.

⁸⁸ Fogarty, et al., *Sex, Career and Family*, p. 492.

⁸⁹ Kelsall, R. K., A. Poole, and A. Kuhn, *Six Years After: First Report on a National Follow-up Survey of Ten Thousand Graduates of British Universities in 1960*, (Sheffield University, Higher Education Research Unit, Department of Sociological Studies, 1970).

market in 1960, yet the authors have been criticised for focusing more on data and tables than analysis and substantial claims. Though this is somewhat true, the authors do draw out some not unsurprising but highly relevant conclusions.

Though in personal narratives education is often depicted as a life-status changing experience, the conclusions from the graduate survey are somewhat more bleak in terms of social mobility. Kelsall et al. argue that the exclusivity of higher professions is often maintained by the system itself, with few children of unskilled or manual labourers reaching university.⁹⁰ In their analysis they noted that occupation, 'is the main operational criterion by which people's social positions are judged, both by the sociologist and the layman.'⁹¹ They write further that 'it is a significant attribute in all the dimensions of stratification, possesses connotations of both power and prestige relationships, and is centrally related to many other class, status and power attributes.'⁹²

Though termed elite, the authors characterise the graduates' position as "relatively elite" In this, education is once again acknowledged as a path to social mobility, though the authors later question how effective that social mobility is.⁹³ Based on market demand, the authors identify manual working-class or professional middle-class people in clerical white collar jobs as an area of growth. Despite this, more graduates tended to work higher up in top level jobs than non-graduates, as would be expected.⁹⁴ At the same time, this social movement is moderate, as argued by the authors, 'sharp upward mobility is something

⁹⁰ Kelsall, et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, p. 16.

⁹¹ Kelsall, et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, p. 19.

⁹² Though it is important to ask how much of a role occupational prestige might play in those with secret careers. Those in MI5 taking the cover of a civil servant may have benefitted from some form of associated occupational prestige.

⁹³ Kelsall et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, pp. 22-25.

⁹⁴ Kelsall et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, pp. 25-26.

which occurs extremely rarely.⁹⁵ More specifically, they conclude that ‘elites are even more closed to women than they are to men of non-elite backgrounds’, that the women who make it to the elite social groups generally come from higher classes than their male counterparts.⁹⁶ This is an important point to note for Chapter Four, as MI5’s preferred women employees were of higher social classes and better educated than average women in the workforce. At the same time, women employed by MI5, especially during the first half of the century, were as equally, if not better connected socially. These trends tie in to later practices in the preferred recruitment of university educated women, even when recruitment of university educated men was less of a priority.

In terms of employment patterns, many women graduates retired from work after their first child, though the authors noted that female graduates were less likely than average to have children. However, if they did have children, they were more likely to have fewer children and delay the birth of their first child.⁹⁷ The authors do note that the more education, for example to the post-graduate level, ‘that a woman receives the more likely she is to engage in paid activities.’⁹⁸ Also, women with children tended to seek more family friendly employment.

In writing one of the key studies on women’s employment in the 1970s, E. M. Byrne noted the significance of the Education Act on women educated in the postwar era stating, ‘My particular generation of women owe their secondary education to the Education Act, 1944 of which we were the very first post-war beneficiaries in 1945. But less than 1 percent of us

⁹⁵ Kelsall et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, p. 58.

⁹⁶ Kelsall et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, p. 59.

⁹⁷ Kelsall et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, pp. 134-135.

⁹⁸ Kelsall et al., *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite*, p. 157.

reached higher education.’⁹⁹ In this, Byrne speaks to the assumption that state education, which increased as a result of the Education Act, would bring about educational equality for boys and girls. While it did open up more opportunities to girls, Byrne argued that this only applied to the best and brightest. Though the Education Act had a notable impact on many girls, this impact did not filter down to those of middle or average ability.¹⁰⁰ She argued further that ‘A century of priority of investment in the upper classes, in the intellectually able, and in the “future leadership of our country” has not in fact produced more top women than fifty years ago; nor fundamental reforms of discriminatory practices or inequalities affecting the average woman.’¹⁰¹

Byrne noted a ‘greater investment in boys than in girls’ with more boys progressing to costlier educational stages.¹⁰² In her argument, she speaks to a ‘compound interest of inequality’ suggesting that five factors have been most relevant to understanding or predicting advancement. The first three, sex, social class and educational aptitude have already been discussed in this chapter. Byrne adds two more factors: history of regional underachievement and location, be it rural or urban.¹⁰³ An important distinction is made by Byrne between inequality and discrimination, asking which are innate inequalities and which are socially constructed. She notes the point of addressing discrimination rather than inequality in educational reforms is that there can be identifiable actions, actors and remedies for cases of discrimination.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Byrne, *Women and Education*, (London, Tavistock, 1978), p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ Byrne, *Women and Education*, pp.14-15.

¹⁰¹ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p. 17.

¹⁰² Byrne, *Women and Education*, p. 32-33.

¹⁰³ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p. 34.

In explaining women's pay and employment prospects, it is important to understand the role of education, not just at the university level, but in terms of skilled work and vocational training. Byrne subscribes to the skills based argument as an explanatory factor, suggesting that a lack of access to training is a significant factor in unequal pay.¹⁰⁵ This is important to note as it is an area of disagreement in the literature, with some arguing that skills are not as significant a factor as structural discrimination against women in paid employment. Such arguments try to demonstrate that the work women do tends to be devalued because it is women who are doing that work. While these arguments may have relevance to unskilled or manual labour, other evidence has suggested that pay gaps decrease in more highly skilled work. Human capital-based arguments suggest either an underinvestment in and/or from women in certain skills along with a lack of desire on the part of women to commit to certain economic activity are instead the pivotal factors which determine unequal labour market share and status. As discussed earlier, human capital might play a role in explaining the gap, but cannot be the sole explanatory factor.

While educational attainment can have clear implications for an individual's working life, particularly in terms of career status and lifetime pay, it should be noted that this was particularly relevant for the women of this era. Education has been repeatedly described as a game changer amongst the women who passed the 11 plus, continued their studies and eventually attended university in the 1950s and 1960s.

¹⁰⁵ Byrne, *Women and Education*, p. 22.

Dissatisfaction, Activism, and the Path to Legal Protections

The 1960s and 1970s represented a time of change for the Home Civil Service for both men and women employees, though some changes were slower in reaching women employees. In 1968 the Fulton Committee Report on the Civil Service was commissioned as an overview of Civil Service policies, management and employment, such as recruitment, training and promotion practices.¹⁰⁶ When it was published two years later, the report found that the service was in need of a shakeup. In announcing the report's publication and findings, then PM Harold Wilson stated that, 'the Fulton Report, while reaffirming the continuation of independence in recruitment, finds that insufficient attention has been paid to management in the Service, and calls for a new system of training, organisation and career management'.¹⁰⁷

The Fulton Report was the first truly comprehensive study of the Civil Service conducted since the Tomlin Royal Commission of 1929-1931. However, for women, an arguably more important study was commissioned in 1970 and published a year later. Often referred to as the Kemp-Jones Report, *The Employment of Women in the Civil Service* attempted to identify factors which discouraged women from working for the Civil Service. The Kemp-Jones Report is particularly useful here as it is a snapshot of women's public sector employment in the UK through the Civil Service.

The investigating committee sought voluntary informal feedback through letters, rather than carrying out a systematic survey of women in the service. The key findings of the study

¹⁰⁶ Civil Service Commission, and John Scott Baron Fulton of Fulmer, 'The Civil Service. Vol. 1 Report of the Committee 1966-68', (London: HMSO, 1968).

¹⁰⁷ HC Deb, 26 June 1968, vol 767, cols 454-455.

noted continued problems of discrimination, along with problems in leave and reinstatement policies.¹⁰⁸ However, the report separates discrimination from equality, and in finding few cases of direct discrimination, the authors instead focus on overarching systemic and structural issues of gender-based inequality within the Civil Service. This focus has a clear impact on the extended list of recommendations in the report that focus primarily on the issues relating to maternity and other domestic emergency leave, marriage and postings, flexibility of working hours, training and recruitment.¹⁰⁹

The Kemp-Jones Report was issued at an opportune time for the Civil Service. Upward mobility through the grades of the Civil Service had slowed to a pace similar to that of the Foreign Office. In 1950, the composition of the Administrative Class was 6.6% female, and in 1970, 8.8% female.¹¹⁰ Similarly, horizontal occupational segregation remained a feature of Civil Service employment in the 1970s. Mimicking outside employment trends, the clerical class of the service contained a disproportionately high percentage of women. Women in 1971 comprised 76 percent of the Clerical Assistant level, but towards the upper echelons (principal and higher) of the administrative group, they did not exceed 10 percent of those individual job classification levels.¹¹¹ Chappell and Waylen have noted that researchers on women in the upper levels of the Civil Service can face difficulties in maintaining anonymity for their participants, due to the small numbers of women to progress. From 1945 to 1997

¹⁰⁸ The Employment of Women in the Civil Service: The Report of a Departmental Committee, (London: H.M. Stationery Off, 1971), p. 8

¹⁰⁹ The Employment of Women in the Civil Service, pp. 35-38.

¹¹⁰ The Employment of Women in the Civil Service, p. 39.

¹¹¹ The Employment of Women in the Civil Service, p. 45.

there were only five female permanent secretaries in the Civil Service, though from 1968 to 1981 all of the permanent secretaries were male.¹¹²

One hinderance to women's progression in some areas of public sector work in the UK was the marriage bar. Despite the abolition of the marriage bar for most of the Civil Service in 1946, the so-called practice of "marriage gratuities" – granted to a woman upon leaving her post after marriage in lieu of a pension – continued. Though the authors received conflicting feedback, the report rightly terms the practice 'something of an anachronism' reflecting on both the then changing pension structures and the way that the practice of women leaving work upon marriage had generally shifted to women staying on until the birth of their first child.¹¹³ Another key emphasis within the report was in the area of employee retention, particularly in wastage rates and reinstatement for women, particularly at higher levels. Women, continuing patterns established prior to and during the World Wars, have left the Civil Service at higher rates than men. For example, approximately 70 percent of those leaving non-industrial posts voluntarily were women.¹¹⁴ Wastage rates can be attributed to a variety of factors and as a result the Kemp-Jones report attempted to address some of the potential causes in their recommendations. Some of the report's aforementioned recommendations – such as calls for more flexible, part-time work, along with greater provisions for child care and family leave – spoke to addressing this wastage problem.

¹¹² Chappell, L., and G. Waylen, 'Gender and the Hidden Life of Institutions', *Public Administration*, 91:3. (2013) pp. 609-611. Their methodological concerns have particular relevancy for research on women in upper levels of various intelligence services, but in particular MI5, where, for example, there have only been two female Director-Generals.

¹¹³ *The Employment of Women in the Civil Service*, p. 13. It should be noted that instead of calling for the abolishment of the practice altogether, the recommendation was that women should have a choice between a marriage gratuity or the new pension structure.

¹¹⁴ Civil Service Department data cited in Brimelow, E., 'Women in the Civil Service' *Public Administration*, 59 (1981), p. 318.

In the 1981 critique of the Civil Service, Elizabeth Brimelow notes that, 'In considering the women who joined at the AP [Assistant Principal] level between the end of the war and the early 1960s, it is difficult to draw any detailed conclusions from the figures because the absolute numbers are so low.'¹¹⁵ Brimelow also notes the impact of recruitment on shaping the future of the Civil Service. Between 1959 and 1969, women did not exceed 29 percent of total recruits to the AP grade. However, Brimelow points out that it was not until the mid-1960s that recruitment to higher levels neared percentages of women graduating from university. A recruitment peak happened in 1970 where 41.5 percent of total recruits to the AP grade were women. ¹¹⁶

Brimelow remained sceptical about the Kemp-Jones report, despite praising the initiative. She states that, 'ten years on, the results have been negligible.'¹¹⁷ Brimelow attributes this to the phrasing of the report's recommendations, stating that they, 'were for the most part permissive rather than mandatory.'¹¹⁸ Her critique of the Civil Service notes that many of the problems identified in the Kemp-Jones report – in particular trends of vertical segregation – have continued through the 1970s.

However, legal employment protections of the 1970s have had some impact on public sector employment. Brimelow notes that, 'The Sex Discrimination Act altered the legal framework for the employment of women in Britain, and as a result areas of civil service practice which were outside the scope of Kemp-Jones have come under scrutiny and been found wanting.'¹¹⁹ One particular example, as Brimelow also identifies, was a 1977 case

¹¹⁵ Brimelow, E., 'Women in the Civil Service' *Public Administration*, 59 (1981), p. 317.

¹¹⁶ Brimelow, 'Women in the Civil Service', pp. 316-317.

¹¹⁷ Brimelow, 'Women in the Civil Service', p. 322.

¹¹⁸ Brimelow, 'Women in the Civil Service', p. 323.

¹¹⁹ Brimelow, 'Women in the Civil Service', p. 332.

brought forward to the Industrial Tribunal about age requirements in the Civil Service. An age limit of 28 was placed on recruitment to the Executive Officer grade. Belinda Price, who was 35 at the time of application to the EO, was rejected on the basis of her age, and subsequently argued in court that this was a form of indirect discrimination against women who might take time out of work to have children. Though the age limit was the same for both men and women it was found to unfairly limit women's employment prospects and was struck down.¹²⁰

Union membership also began to experience changes in the late 1960s. It should be noted that members of some branches of the intelligence service – MI5 for example – were banned from joining unions. In contrast, some members of GCHQ were not prevented from union membership, generally if they were officially working in Civil Service posts. During this time period, the membership of public sector employees in the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) increased at a greater rate than the national average for unions. NUPE's 1970s female membership increased by 236 percent.¹²¹ This is a point that will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Four and Five in relation to organisational attitudes towards union membership and with respect to employee experiences without union representation.

[The Longer-term Effects of Women's Labour Activism and Recession in Britain](#)

It is likely that multiple variables contributed to the rise of women in paid employment outside the home and, more specifically, women in full time employment in the 1980s. An

¹²⁰ Overell, S., 'Act One in the play for equality', in *Financial Times*, Jan 4 2006.

¹²¹ Sandbrook, D., *State of Emergency: The Way We Were, Britain 1970-1974*, (ebook version), chapter 10.

economy in recession, combined with changing employment demands and a changing labour supply led to shifts in employment prospects for both men and women. At the same time, this decade saw a decrease in the wage gap between men and women and a decline in occupational segregation.

The 1980s brought about a shift from industrial and manual labour to a more service sector oriented economy. Due to the gendered vocational distribution of manual and service sector employment, this shift had some positive effects on women's employment but also had a negative impact on men's full time employment throughout the decade.¹²² As previously noted, the mid-1980s also saw the first signs of increases in the percentage of women working in full time employment. In this way, women generally fared somewhat better in the recessionary economy of the 1980s, particularly as manufacturing declined.

Countering the perception that the 1970s were most beneficial to women in employment due to women's employment protections being enacted, Hakim argues that the 1980s shows a decrease in occupational segregation, more so than the previous decade. She writes that, 'Only in the 1980s have we seen a real rise in full-time working among women, including married women, that could drive substantive changes in the level and pattern of occupational segregation and, in turn, a decline in the earnings gap between men and women.'¹²³ Accompanying this, Hakim notes a rise in women's expectation and desire to engage in paid employment in the mid to late 1980s.¹²⁴ Furthering her argument she adds

¹²² Hakim, 'Explaining Trends in Occupational Segregation', *European Sociological Review*, 8:2 (1992), pp. 129-130.

¹²³ Hakim, 'Explaining Trends in Occupational Segregation', p. 141.

¹²⁴ Hakim, 'Explaining Trends in Occupational Segregation', p. 142.

that workplace legal protections for women are ineffective in creating sustained change unless they are accompanied by other social and cultural changes.¹²⁵

Rights, Privileges or Perks?: Women in paid employment and work-life balance

This section will discuss some of the issues which mothers in paid employment face, looking at how the employers have responded to working mothers and how attitudes towards childrearing while in paid employment have changed. One of the key reflective themes which will emerge from the experience of women working in intelligence – highlighted in Chapters Five and Six – is the balance, or lack thereof, between family and work related responsibilities. However, concepts relating to work-life balance and motherhood are present throughout each chapter of this thesis in different but interconnected ways. In this sense, discussing family and caring responsibilities through work-life balance is a good bridge to Chapter Four, as societal attitudes towards working mothers influence organisational practices and policies, and in turn, the experiences of women in intelligence work.

Work-life balance in a broader sense considers how employees are able to combine responsibilities in and outside of work, how employers facilitate (or hinder) this balance, and what wider structural forces mediate employee and organisational practices (such as leave requirements, worker protections, and gendered assumptions regarding leave policies).¹²⁶ While much of the material in this section and in later chapters focuses on the roles and experiences of working mothers, it is important to acknowledge here that caring

¹²⁵ Hakim, 'Explaining Trends in Occupational Segregation', p. 145.

¹²⁶ For a useful overview of organizational psychology and sociologies of work and family literature see: Gatrell, C. J., S. B. Burnett, C. L. Cooper, and P. Sparrow, 'Work-Life Balance and Parenthood: A comparative Review of Definitions Equity and Enrichment', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15:3 (2013), pp. 300-316.

and family responsibilities are not limited to this one area. As Gatrell and Cooper note that fathers are often missing from discussions of work-life balance and family friendly policies. Though they are not the first to note the gaps in the literature but summarise the issue well, stating that, 'Since the 1970s, work-life balance research in the arenas of sociology, organisational psychology and management has focused primarily on the work-life balance of mothers within heterosexual (and often, by implication, affluent) dual earner couples.'¹²⁷

Work-life balance, prior to the wider usage of the term in business and public sector environments, permeates the experiences and discussions of women working in intelligence. Work-life balance related pressures influence the lives of those with and without children, and in different ways. It is also a good example of the interconnections between macro, organisational (meso), and experiential (micro) levels. Maxwell and McDougall's article is situated within these interconnected levels, looking at concepts and implementation of work-life balance at the macro, organisational and individual levels in the British public sector.¹²⁸ They note that, 'Inevitably there is some fusion between these levels though each can be considered in turn.'¹²⁹ At the macro level, they identify the emergence of flexible work within the 1980s as political and economic, emerging from industrial rather than employee needs. Increasing numbers of women in the British labour market has also contributed to this shift.¹³⁰ Part of this can also be attributed to recruitment needs and for the public sector, competition with private sector recruitment.

¹²⁷ Gatrell, C., and C. L. Cooper, 'A sense of entitlement? Fathers, mothers and organizational support for family and career', *Community, Work & Family*, 19:2 (2016), p. 136.

¹²⁸ Maxwell, G. A., and M. McDougall, 'Work-Life Balance: Exploring the connections between levels of influence in the UK public sector', *Public Management Review*, 6:3 (2004), pp. 377-393.

¹²⁹ Maxwell and McDougall, 'Work-Life Balance', p. 378.

¹³⁰ Maxwell and McDougall, 'Work-Life Balance', p. 379.

The emergence of work-life balance discussion in to public and private sector policies is relatively recent. The continued rise in family friendly workplace policies through the 1990s is another indicator of this shift.¹³¹ As Lewis defines it, 'These formal policies include assistance with childcare and eldercare, which, it can be argued, help employees to conform to normative working hours.'¹³² Lewis also argues that this emergence of family friendly policies is intended to suit the needs of the organisation rather than being family friendly simply for the sake of it. She notes, however, that for the public sector, some organisations 'have developed family friendly policies in response to political pressures and equal opportunities ideologies and many more have developed these policies in response to a business case.'¹³³

Public sector discussions on the topic of work-life balance were also present within the Civil Service. The aforementioned Kemp-Jones Report of 1971 brought attention to issues of childcare, breaks in employment, and women's progress in the Civil Service.¹³⁴ Though the Civil Service was comparatively progressive in employment opportunities for women, horizontal and vertical occupational segregation was still common practice. A 2015 report on the history of women in the Civil Service notes, 'Our interviewees recalled flexible working practices developing in the late 1970s and, to a greater extent, throughout the

¹³¹ Lewis, S., "Family Friendly" Employment Policies: A Route to Changing Organizational Culture or Playing About at the Margins?', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 4/1 (1997), pp. 13-23.

¹³² Lewis, "Family Friendly" Employment Policies', p. 13.

¹³³ Lewis, "Family Friendly" Employment Policies', p. 13.

¹³⁴ Kemp-Jones, E. M., 'Employment of Women in the Civil Service: Report of a departmental committee', HMSO, (1971), available at: [https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/1971_kemp_jones_report.pdf].

1980s.’¹³⁵ It should be noted, however, that such endeavours were accompanied by hesitancy and scepticism.¹³⁶

Socio-cultural assumptions and norms regarding the employment of women and, in particular, the employment of working mothers, can influence the opportunities available to employees along with how these opportunities are actually used. A historical lack of options or family friendly policies was noted above, however even as more flexible and part-time opportunities were offered, some employees were hesitant to engage in these options. Employer and management attitudes towards career and family friendly opportunities influenced employee uptake of and access to such opportunities.

As noted in the Women in Whitehall report, one woman recalled not taking up a part time work option after childbirth for fear it would hinder her career, after seeing the experiences of a colleague in a similar situation, “‘I had seen that they had put her in a backwater although she was very able and I didn’t want that to happen to me.”’¹³⁷ The authors found similar hesitancies from other employees in their report. A common theme that can be seen from such examples is fear, either in being delayed in one’s career, or held back entirely, stalling out in career progress altogether. This can be seen later in Chapter Six of this thesis, where women recall manipulating the system to retain important or desired posts, or choosing to return to work earlier than they would have preferred in order to maintain job security and career progression. Even where structural and organisational levels align to

¹³⁵ Devanny, J., and C. Haddon, ‘Women in Whitehall: Gender and the Civil Service since 1979’ report, (London: HMSO, 2015) p. 24.

¹³⁶ Devanny, J., and C. Haddon, ‘Women in Whitehall’, pp.24-25.

¹³⁷ Devanny, J., and C. Haddon, ‘Women in Whitehall’, p. 25.

allow for family friendly and flexible working policies, past employee experiences of more retaliatory environments lead to hesitancy in taking part in such programs.

Gendered assumptions about the potential for motherhood are also prevalent in women's employment experiences. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, assumptions about future children can influence and hinder promotion and progression prospects for women. Vertical occupational sex segregation is amplified when actual or potential motherhood and senior positions are not seen as compatible. Among heterosexual couples both in management positions, there are cultural assumptions that women's careers will take lower priority, and that the responsibility for family and, children in particular, remains with women. Burnett et al. note that, 'Such assumptions are indicative of deeply ingrained social beliefs that women are commonly responsible for the family.'¹³⁸ They also note how many of the work-life balance and family friendly practices which have been developed by organisations have been created with women in mind, and not necessarily the needs and shifting responsibilities of both women and men.¹³⁹ These developments and policies are influenced by management assumptions about women's responsibilities.

As stated above, cultural attitudes towards women and paid employment influenced organisational policies, management practices, and employee experiences. As will be discussed in the following chapters, these wider trends in employment, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, influenced the everyday lives and careers of women

¹³⁸ Burnett, S. B., C. J. Gatrell, C. L. Cooper, and P. Sparrow, 'Well-balanced families? A gendered analysis of work-life balance policies and work family practices', *Gender in Management*, 25:7 (2010), p. 535.

¹³⁹ Burnett et al., 'Well-balanced families?', p. 540.

working in intelligence. At the same time, unique aspects of intelligence work presented additional challenges and hurdles for the work-life balance of women and men.

Conclusion

The first goal of this chapter was to provide a broader overview of the socio-cultural structural factors which influenced women's employment in the twentieth century in the UK. As such, it was necessarily selective, with an emphasis on government employment and themes relevant to intelligence sector employment. This chapter is intended to set the stage for the following chapters, particularly Chapter Four which will examine MI5 as an organisation, considering it in the context of other, similar intelligence and government organisations.

The second goal of this chapter was to introduce some of the key theories and concepts relevant to employment in intelligence history. Occupational sex segregation (or the more recent usage of occupational gender segregation) is a useful tool in highlighting differences in women's and men's experiences in this occupational sector. In the following chapters, policies, practices and experiences of both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation will be shown and discussed.

Also, it is important to understand changing norms and opportunities in women's employment and how this impacted the labour market for women. These changes also filtered into patterns of government employment and relates to how MI5 mirrored and rejected such practices. As secretarial and clerical work shifted to acceptability for (white, middle and upper class) women, increasing numbers of office jobs opened up to them. Examples include the adoption of shorthand and the creation of telephone switchboard work for women. Additionally, the impact of WWI and WWII British women's employment

and opportunity cannot be ignored. Goldin's analysis of postwar employment for women is particularly useful here – as her insights into women postwar relate well to MI5's preferred hiring demographics and postwar employment patterns.

As a broader, more sweeping overview of the historical and cultural context in which women's employment in the public sector existed, this chapter has discussed the changing nature of women's work, women's roles in the workplace, and highlighted public sector trends in women's employment. It has discussed the gendered impact of nationality, class, and family on women's opportunities in the UK. How these networks persisted in MI5 will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four.

Women's labour activism has also shaped opportunities, compensation and workforce participation. As a legal basis for equal rights claims was established and increasingly legislated, and the Sex Discrimination Act implemented, employers were under pressure to change certain aspects of women's employment. Overall, change took time and progress in certain areas (such as vertical occupational segregation) remains slower than in others. Acknowledgement of which can be seen the ISC's 2015 and 2018 reports on women, and diversity and inclusion, respectively.

Finally, the importance of education in women's lives should not be overlooked, a point that is particularly critical for Chapter Four, as MI5's hiring preferences for women are analysed. Educational opportunities opened more doors for women, as seen with rising university attendance in the 1960s for example, more women were obtaining degrees, and the socio-economic backgrounds of these women varied significantly more than in previous decades. This cohort of women were also more likely to continue work after marriage than past generations. The rise of working mothers amongst more financially secure families began to

challenge attitudes towards mothers working in paid employment outside the home. This is an important point for Chapters Five and Six. An understanding of changing education patterns for women, including the increases in numbers of women obtaining university degrees, is critical for understanding the rising tensions over opportunity and career progression in MI5 from the 1960s through to the 1980s.

Chapter Four

Understanding the development of MI5 and Women's Employment in at the Organisational Level

Introduction

In recent years, various intelligence agencies and oversight bodies have turned their attention to the subject of diversity within their workforces. The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) commissioned a report looking at its own gender diversity, which was published in 2013. The report was accompanied by significant archival releases related to women's work in the agency, labelled the "Typist to Trailblazer" collection. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) issued a report on the status of women in the three major intelligence agencies (MI5, SIS, GCHQ) in March of 2015.¹ This was the first report of its kind on British intelligence. However, unlike the American report, the British report lacked supporting archival releases on the history of women in British intelligence work. This comparative lack of archival information highlights the gap in British intelligence literature on women. Since its release, the "Typist to Trailblazer" collection has inspired additional scholarly work in the US on the history of women in the CIA.²

¹ See: Central Intelligence Agency, "Director's Advisory Group on Women in Leadership Unclassified Report", March 2013, [<https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/>] and Intelligence and Security Committee, "Report on Women in the UK Intelligence Community", March 2015, [<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>]

² The best example is: Martin, A. J., 'America's Evolution of Women and Their Roles in the Intelligence Community,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 8/5 (2015), pp. 99-109.

Diversity and organisational studies have not been well combined in the literature on intelligence. Rather, in the literature on intelligence, studies of organisation and organisational culture often take precedence over any discussion of diversity, though the issues are often highly interconnected. The best exception is Robert Callum's 2001 article which preceded both government studies.³ Callum argues that diversity – along the lines of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality – is necessary for effective intelligence collection and analysis. By not reflecting the society in which it represents, an intelligence organisation is more vulnerable to intelligence oversights, missed opportunities and intelligence failures. Further, a lack of diversity can present knowledge gaps within intelligence organisations.

In the more recent post-9/11 literature on intelligence failures, one of the key topics that has emerged is that of “organisational cultures”, often employed to discuss general attitudes of intelligence organisations towards sharing and cooperation. However, this literature does not incorporate other aspects of organisational culture such as diversity.

Bridging these two areas are the aforementioned CIA and ISC reports. For the ISC report, the authors address both diversity (on the very limited topic of gender) and an organisational culture within the UK Intelligence Community that has been resistant to change. The report represents a good start – if the promised reports on racial and ethnic diversity follow as promised – but the report itself lacks a longer-term historical comprehension and understanding of how this particular organisational culture has developed into its current state. As a result, this chapter speaks to the need for a greater understanding of gender in the context of intelligence organisations in 20th century history. By discussing employment practices and conditions at the organisational level, along with how and why these

³ Robert Callum, 'The Case for Cultural Diversity in the Intelligence Community', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence* 14/1 (2001).

practices/conditions have changed, one can gain a clearer understanding of how the modern intelligence services came about and how they currently function.

This chapter contains four primary arguments. First, MI5's total employment levels were influenced by outside factors, such as wartime intelligence gathering needs and Cold War intelligence escalation, but understanding who was employed by the Security Service is more complex. Recruitment and hiring were subject to a measure of trustworthiness which was determined and influenced by class, family connections, nationality, and gender. This, as argued by Tammy Proctor in her history of MI5's WWI years, led to increased hiring of upper-class British women when the preferred group of male candidates were unavailable (due to involvement in other war-related work).⁴

Second, employment conditions for the majority of women and men employed in MI5 were substantially different throughout most of the organization's history. This difference reflected external societal attitudes and employment practices, including gendered assumptions about "women's work" and tasks only appropriate for men. These long-term employment trends within MI5 served to hinder the progress of women in the Security Service's hierarchy and limited the areas and vocational tasks which women were allowed to perform. This vertical and horizontal occupational sex segregation effectively created a sex segregated/differentiated internal labour market that impacted the careers of both women and men in the Security Service.

Third, the "glass ceiling" of officer status began to crack in the 1970s and 1980s, as women within the organisation began to challenge the status quo. Though women had been

⁴ Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence' *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 2 (2005).

employed by the Security Service for the majority of its history, they rarely reached the upper echelons of the organisation's hierarchy or the full rank of officer until the mid-1970s. In a large part, this change was instigated by a group of women employees who put their complaints in writing in the early 1970s. Without this so-called "women's revolt" such change would have likely happened at a much slower pace. It should also be noted that changes to women's employment in the Security Service did not happen overnight, nor did they have an immediate impact on the majority of women employed. For the writers of the letter the focus was on hierarchical/vertical limitations for women, rather than vocational/horizontal limitations. This focus somewhat limited the horizontal impact of the letter, excluding clerical and registry staff, while at the same time bringing about vertical movement. Despite this contradiction, this action still led to sustained change in employment conditions and helped to break down the segregated labour market.

As a final argument, women in MI5 faced a double issue of invisibility. As women in employment they faced greater hurdles than their male counterparts, particularly in terms of compensation and status. As employees of MI5, they had to maintain a level of secrecy regarding their work. In this regard they were invisible to the general public – officially unaware of the Security Service's existence. However, the internal challenge from some of the women in MI5 did not entirely exist in isolation. As MI5 reflected wider gendered employment patterns, women's grievances with MI5's policies mirrored wider employment activism. It was also influenced by outside shifts in women's employment, including a larger shift in attitudes towards women's work, which in turn was influenced by the Women's Liberation Movement and employment activism. Legal changes also took place in the 1970s which impacted women's employment in other branches of government. However,

organisational secrecy placed some limits on employment activism within MI5, the most notable restrictions were the lack of unionisation or formal representation and recourse outside the organisation. In this way, organisational secrecy limited and mediated the pace and direction of organisational change.

This chapter is primarily organised through a chronological focus on the history of women in MI5. First, however, key concepts used in this chapter will be discussed. These concepts include: definitions and types of MI5 employment, formal (policies) and informal (practices) within organisations, organisational culture, and gendered organisations. In the remainder of this chapter, which discusses women's employment throughout MI5's history, these concepts are combined with elements from Chapter Three, such as women's employment theories and changing education patterns. In doing so, the origins of women's employment in MI5 are examined, along with wartime increases, interwar decreases and postwar fluctuations in staff. The Cold War continued years of growth for MI5, particularly as greater responsibilities regarding vetting of individuals in sensitive secrets work are placed on the Security Service. However, signs of employment change begin in the 1960s with reforms impacting some – but not all – of MI5's staff. This process left women out in the cold, with a separate career structure which remained a barrier to women's vertical advancement and vocational diversity. Following this, the changes of the 1970s and 1980s are examined with their long ranging aftereffects for women in contemporary British intelligence employment. The final section diverges to look more closely at comparative intelligence and government organisations, drawing comparisons to MI5's development.

Key Concepts

Employment patterns in MI5 echoed gendered norms within British employment, particularly in terms of horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation. Despite this grouping of women into certain job types within the organisation, women did serve in a variety of capacities. Gendered employment patterns and the exceptions to these frequently unwritten rules had a long term impact on the Security Service, evidenced well into the 1990s, and arguably, the contemporary MI5. It is important to make a distinction here between the different categories of MI5 employment. Women's historical employment roles can be summarised generally into three categories. Secretarial and clerical roles were the earliest to be filled, primarily by women located within the Registry. Aside from the brief inclusion of men in MI5's early years, the Registry staff remained all female until 1976. With a few notable exceptions, the Registry appears as a career track unto itself; women working in this area primarily stayed there until retirement, redundancy or marriage. Not only did this fit into assumptions about work tasks appropriate for women and shifts in those assumptions, it was also work that many of the women recruited had already been qualified for. The size and impact of the Registry on MI5 has been significant, as the bureaucratic and information centre of the organisation its work was essential to MI5's operation.

A second grouping of women employed in MI5 is formed of the exceptional cases, most notably, women progressed to officer status. The numbers of women reaching places higher up in MI5 predictably increased over the 20th century, primarily since the mid-1970s. However, women's progress did not happen at a steady or continual pace. Restrictions were added and removed throughout MI5's history. It was not uncommon, as this chapter will

show, for women to do the same job tasks as their male colleagues but without the same title, officer status or pay.

The final category of women's employment that needs to be addressed could be considered an "other" category. This comprises of two areas, one being non-officer women engaging in non-traditional work within formal employment while the other exists outside of formal, structured employment within the Security Service. Many women worked as agents, particularly during the World Wars. It will be argued that attitudes towards women as agents have certainly had impact upon some of the attitudes towards them within other roles in MI5. Formal employment, however, also remained under the influence of assumptions about women's capabilities and usefulness. As assumptions about women changed over time and women fought for more opportunities, they made progress in breaking down some of the vertical and horizontal occupational sex segregation engrained within the Security Service.

A distinction must also be made between formal and informal employment practices. Formal employment practices are ones sanctioned and clearly part of Security Service policy, such as the written rules of an employee handbook or employment contract. Informal practices are often less clear, encompassing the actions of individuals such as middle managers or the unwritten rules that are part of MI5's organisational culture. Both categories embark on significant changes over the 20th century. The effects of these shifting employment practices on hiring and employment for women and men in the service will be discussed throughout this chapter.

In addition to differentiating between formal and informal practices, a clearer understanding of what is meant by employment conditions, employment policies and

organisational culture is needed here. Employment conditions broadly addresses working environment. Employment policies speak to the formal recruitment, hiring, training, and promotion practices along with other formal conditions of employment.

Organisational culture, on the other hand, refers to the informal attitudes, often within middle and upper management about who is employed and in what capacity, along with attitudes towards and reacting to changes in employment policies. While overlapping with informal employment practices, organisational culture additionally speaks to the attitudes and actions of employees at all levels. Much has been written about organisational cultures, but first it must be noted that general opinion is not monolithic – when referring to organisational cultures general or majority opinions are often not total opinions. (Further in that line of reasoning, the loudest opinions may not be representative of the whole.) To illustrate this point, middle and upper management can disagree with one another on the method of, or even the need for change, an issue identified by the ISC in their assessment of incorporation and support for diversity initiatives.⁵ Organisational culture has had an impact on MI5, not just in attitudes and experiences, but in helping to influence employment policy and its implementation and is a clear avenue for further exploration.

In the area of post-9/11 intelligence studies, organisational culture has taken on a life of its own, and as mentioned above, it has often been used to explain the origins of intelligence failures in the US and UK. Much of these discussions have centred around calls for greater inter and intra-agency intelligence sharing, a less territorial approach to intelligence

⁵ Intelligence and Security Committee, “Report on Women in the UK Intelligence Community”, March 2015, <http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>, p. 39.

community cooperation.⁶ Organisational culture – despite the limited way in which it has been co-opted by intelligence studies – has a wider background in industrial/organisational psychology, management and business studies. The discussion of MI5's organisational culture – and organisational culture in intelligence studies – needs to be broader than an intelligence product focused approach. In creating sustained change for employees, some studies have found that efforts of upper management alone are not enough to further a change in organisational culture, and that a hierarchical, more traditional focus still exists in the public (government) sector even when substantial managerial change takes place.⁷ This broader understanding of organisational culture addressed here is more relevant to understanding MI5's employment history as it speaks to MI5 as an employer, not just producer of intelligence.

The Gendering of Organisations

As discussed in Chapter Three, the literature on occupational segregation has developed since the 1970s, but many of the central questions that it seeks to answer have remained the same, for example: why do occupations tend to cluster by sex and why is career progression so often correlated with masculinity? Similarly, overall patterns in women's employment have been examined by researchers, including trends of increases and decreases in real numbers and proportions of women working. Examples involving wartime work, changing labour markets, and the impact of employment protections on women in paid employment will be discussed further on in this chapter in relation to intelligence

⁶ See, for one example: Davies, P. H. J. (2004) 'Intelligence culture and intelligence failure in Britain and the United States'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17 (3), pp. 495 - 520.

⁷ For example: Parker, R. and Bradley, L., (2000), "Organisational culture in the public sector: evidence from six organisations", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 13 (2), pp. 125-141.

sector employment. While larger trends are important for understanding women's employment, gender within individual structures and organisations can also provide valuable insights, particularly when considered in the context of these larger trends. For the purposes of examining MI5 and other intelligence agencies in this chapter, this section will discuss the concept of gendered organisations and why default assumptions are relevant to understanding women's and men's employment.

While major differences in gender within employment and within organisations have been discussed, gendered organisations refers to the concept that organisations can not be seen as exclusively gender neutral entities. The idea that organisations operate as gender neutral entities has been questioned by feminist scholars. Joan Acker argues that prior to the 1990s, the concept of gender neutral organisations was not accurately challenged. Though she highlights some exceptions to this, Acker notes the lack of a 'systematic feminist theory of organisations'.⁸ Acker ties the gender segregation of work to gendered organisational structures which she identifies as historically masculine. This represents a broader understanding of the relationship between gender and organisations in which 'gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine.'⁹ In this respect, concepts of leadership, success, active job tasks are associated with masculinity. Such structures are created and maintained both through overt practices such as policies targeting women, and covert methods, such as concepts of ideal workers which are directly masculine or serve to devalue traits considered

⁸ Acker, J., 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations', *Gender & Society*, 4, no. 2 (1990), p. 140.

⁹ Acker, 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies', p. 146.

feminine.¹⁰ Acker further ties this to vertical occupational sex segregation by arguing that the gendering of organisations and the gendering of vocations results in a system that devalues the work that women do, one where disproportionate numbers of women are in lower paid and lower valued work which maintains a hierarchical progression that benefits men's promotion rates.¹¹

In a similar line of research though feminist communicology, Lucas, D'Enbeau and Heiden examine changes in workplace discourses stemming from generational shifts in expectations and attitudes relating to gendered organisation and management. They note 'the distinction between gender in organizations and gendered organizations in an applied realm' and in doing so have found distinct and identifiable changes in gendered organising.¹² For example, in the employment/employee management discourses of the 1970s, Lucas et al. observe that women's employment was seen as rare enough to mostly be a non-issue by employment management professionals. Rather than being particularly controversial, it was viewed within the profession as rare enough to not pose widespread problems. Whereas, in the 1990s women's growing involvement in the workforce necessitated a change in management approach and language more in line with contemporary concepts of inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. The most recent cohort they discuss is viewed negatively through this generational discourse, which writes of millennials as self-absorbed and demanding. Lucas et al. suggest that these generational differences are tied more closely to a gendered style of management and employee expectations which has shifted from what they view as overtly masculine to more feminine. The authors note a shift in employee

¹⁰ Acker, 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies', p. 142.

¹¹ Acker, 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies', pp. 153-154.

¹² Lucas, K., D'Enbeau, S., and E., Heiden, 'Generational Growing Pains as Resistance to Feminine Gendering of Organization? An Archival Analysis of Human Resource Management Discourses', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 25:3 (2016), pp.333-334.

expectations, indicative of changing career patterns. In an environment where employees are less likely to be employed by a company for decades they are more likely to search for greater satisfaction and personal fulfilment from their employment, often by switching employers if unsatisfied with working conditions, job tasks or work-life balance.¹³

MI5's Early Employment of Women

Many of the aforementioned trends can be traced back to the origins of the first women employed within MI5, prior to the start of the First World War. For example, different criteria existed for establishing the trustworthiness of female and male candidates. As Tammy M. Proctor has shown, for men, their loyalty was determined by their personal history, including service to the state, nationality, and as a key aspect of MI5's recruitment practices, connections to those already in positions of trust willing to recommend or vouch for them. On the other hand, women's loyalty was assumed to be to their families, so their loyalty could be determined primarily by their family, particularly their male connections.¹⁴ In other words, the judgement of men's trustworthiness was based more on their own actions than it was for women, though factors such as family background and nationality were not entirely ignored. Judgements of women's trustworthiness were based more on the men in their lives and their family background (class and nationality), more so than their own education or personal achievements. This point is particularly important for Chapter Five, women's experiences with recruitment change over time as this system of recruitment changes, but this process of change is not fully realised until the 1980s and 1990s.

¹³ Though it should be noted that such attitudes have been historically gendered by attitudes about women's work force or employment commitment, and that these arguments are, as a result, somewhat more applicable to men.

¹⁴ Proctor, 'Family Ties', p. 452.

These practices were in line with British state hiring preferences and practices of the time, as men were preferable candidates for sensitive or secrets work. However, this preference for men could be ignored in times of high demand for workers. With this in mind, certain types of women were preferred, primarily upper-class women who were from good families, many of whom were well educated. As a result, class, age and nationality were key factors in the hiring of women throughout the First World War.¹⁵

The start of the First World War significantly changed MI5's employment levels and hiring profile. From just four women employed in 1914 – three secretaries and a typist – to 296 women employed in 1918, MI5 experienced a drastic increase. Men employed by the organisation increased during this time as well, albeit at a slower pace. The majority of women in MI5 worked within the Registry, a department that became the clerical and record-keeping heart of the organisation. For example, in the spring of 1917, there were 130 women just working as clerks in MI5's Central Registry, out of the 245 women employed. While the increase can largely be attributed to wartime growth, the question of which women were hired speaks to the importance placed on class and as a related factor, education at this time. At the same time, the tasks women were hired for speak to norms about women's education, expected roles and abilities. Separate career structures and policies, both formal and informal, were in place for women.

Typists and secretaries were the earliest additions of women to MI5. This reflected the growing numbers of women employed in office work. MI5's secretaries engaged in correspondence, while search clerks, added later during the First World War, looked up, recorded, and sorted information. Individual suspects had their own files and the number of

¹⁵ Proctor, 'Family Ties', pp. 454-6.

suspects – together with the number of files - grew sharply with the war, ‘Well over 1,000 new “Personal Files” were opened every month for the reception of dossiers of suspects, and these numbers doubled as time went on.’¹⁶ Creating, maintaining, and disseminating the information in these files was primarily the responsibility of the women staff. The organisation grew along with its record keeping responsibilities necessitating a sub-section devoted to these efforts. As one MI5 reports states, ‘This sub-section was known as the Registry, and on 2nd November 1914 a Lady Superintendent was placed at its head, and from that time forward the Registry was entirely staffed by women.’¹⁷

The origins of female employment within MI5 are highlighted in the 1920 Report on the Work of Women in MI5. The report focuses on the work of women, particularly the Registry during WWI. While registry processes and functions are discussed in detail, some information about the female employees is provided. The authors noted that many of the women employed were not there for financial gain, but they do add that, ‘it was among those whom salary was a consideration that the trained and experienced workers were generally found who did so much for the organisation.’¹⁸

In addition to social status, Christopher Andrew writes that many of these women were not only from good families, but also well educated. In fact at that time, many of these women were generally better educated than their male colleagues, with MI5 at the time containing, ‘more upper-class female recruits than any other wartime British government department or agency.’¹⁹ MI5’s preference for educated women clearly intersected with class and access

¹⁶ TNA KV 1/50, ‘Report on Women’s Work’ p. 5.

¹⁷ TNA KV 1/50, ‘Report on Women’s Work’ p. 7.

¹⁸ TNA KV 1/50, ‘Report on Women’s Work’ p. 9.

¹⁹ Andrew, C., *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*, (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 60.

to education. Women from families who could afford higher education had the double advantage in being preferred candidates in terms of qualifications and training, and by more easily fitting the standards of loyalty and trustworthiness, often through existing family ties to state employment.

Some of the women hired, like D. B. G. Line, were well educated and offered places at Oxford but could not attend. In Line's case, she had been offered a place, but no scholarship. As was standard for most of MI5's history, she did not actively seek employment in Security Service, she was recommended. Line writes of her recruitment to MI5 that she was surprised to receive a letter, through a family friend, Miss Lomax, then head of the 'clerical staff'.²⁰ Line (née Dimmock) was related to Lieutenant Colonel H L F Dimmock. As a person in a position of trust, his service record and family connections may have both influenced her selection.

Line also noted that the women who were qualified worked as secretaries or typists, along with 'untrained women who were search clerks' suggesting a task division within the Registry based on education, experience and vocational training.²¹ Throughout her time in MI5 Line worked in the Registry and mentions being tasked by an officer with care of "the museum", a collection of MI5 history shown to guests. Line also participated in the recruitment of other female employees through recommendation. She left in 1917 after marriage, though had she stayed she would have likely been let go in 1918 at the end of the war when large numbers of MI5's staff were dismissed from service.

²⁰ Lomax was likely head of the Registry at this time, along with being the then Lady Superintendent.

²¹ IWM 92/22/1 'Mrs. D. B. G. Line (née Dimmock)'

With organisational structures and policies specific to women, it should be noted that there was also a head of female personnel. Highlighting the longevity of these gendered management structures, the Lady Superintendent post existed until 1963 when its last occupant retired and was not replaced. The women who held this post were often tasked with other duties. For example, one of the more notable holders was Mary Dicker, who was also in charge of the Registry. Interestingly, most references to Dicker, and others who have held the post use words such as “formidable” or “intimidating”.²² The recollections of from women who worked in MI5 during the First World War and Interwar years were generally positive.

The Registry serves as a related example that demonstrates the primarily gendered division of career paths. The Registry provided the majority of women’s employment in MI5 throughout its history, with no men working in the section until 1976.²³ Writing after the Second World War, MI5 internal historian John Curry noted that women were at a three to one ratio to men. He adds that women worked as secretaries and as registry clerks.

Women’s work in the agency, while generally routine, allowed occasionally for opportunities to take on tasks, ‘requiring initiative, powers of organisation and administrative ability’.²⁴ However, Curry does not specify exactly what these tasks are.

However, the Report on Women’s Work illuminates the range of women’s responsibilities and roles further. As part of its argument for the suitability of women to work in MI5, the report summarises the non-Registry work women took part in, highlighting their successes.

²² Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 127-132.

²³ No mention has yet been found regarding a formal restriction of male employment in the Registry.

²⁴ Curry, J. C., *The Security Service 1908-1945: The Official History*, (Kew: Public Record Office, c1999), p. 374.

Of women who were employed in sections outside the Registry, many went on to take up important roles, notably in the photographic and finance sections where women took over duties of men once held upon the departure of their male supervisors. Women with outside specialist training were recruited to fill specific organisational needs. The best example was that of women printers, brought in to maintain and operate a printing press. Tasked at first with copying the “grey list” of suspect individuals, the printers were noted for their efforts to increase their printmaking knowledge, responsibilities, and productivity while operating MI5’s in-house printing functions.²⁵

During the later years of WWI additional women were employed, often to fill roles held by men called to other war work. Female drivers were brought in to replace male drivers, and a female physician was hired to replace a male one in 1918. Similarly, a canteen for women had been provided earlier on in the war, and this was later expanded for all staff. This required the hiring of a cook and assistants, along with a housekeeper not long after.²⁶

At the end of the First World War there was a significant reduction of MI5, primarily attributed to budget constraints.²⁷ The organisation’s continued existence was in question with a large number of its staff let go, including the majority of the female staff who had made it function as clerks, typists, secretaries and agents during the war. According to postwar correspondence, thirty-five women were not dismissed and stayed on into the Interwar period. It should be noted that this number included many of the women who

²⁵ TNA KV 1/50.

²⁶ While not strictly intelligence employees, women employed in non-intelligence functions were presumably under similar levels of secrecy about their work. Further, a number of these women are mentioned in post-war correspondence, and appear to have been accepted as colleagues by the women employees.

²⁷ Claimed by both Curry and Andrew.

were crucial to the functioning of the Registry.²⁸ Though it began rebuilding its numbers during the interwar years, it was at a slower than wartime pace.

While the Registry was significantly impacted by the reduction in staff, the overall reductions in MI5 employment should not be overlooked. Interwar recruitment continued slowly and on the basis of personal recommendations.²⁹ In 1929, MI5 only had 13 officers on record, including one female officer, Jane Archer, who would remain in this position through part of the Second World War.³⁰ The Interwar years were difficult for the organisation, its status and funding were precarious. Those who remained in the MI5 (both men and women) experienced a pay cut in 1931, though pay reached pre-1931 levels by 1934.³¹ At the same time, those who were employed in MI5 during the First World War sought to maintain connections to their former colleagues after the war.

Interwar Exclusion: Formation of the Nameless Club

The experiences of MI5's former WWI era employees differed greatly. Notably, MI5 Director General Vernon Kell along with other remaining and former employees created the I.P. Club, reportedly in 1919.³² In academic literature on the subject, IP has been interpreted in various forms such as: Important Persons, Intelligence Persons/People, Intelligent Persons, or Intelligence and Police.³³

²⁸ Nameless Magazine, Further, this number may have not included women who were employed as secretaries in sections outside the Registry.

²⁹ Curry, *The Security Service 1908-1945*, p. 373.

³⁰ Archer, nee Sissmore, is an interesting figure in MI5 and SIS's history. During WWI she was employed in the Registry. She continued working for MI5 during the Interwar years. Archer became a member, and later committee member of the Nameless Club, while seeking legal qualifications to become a Barrister.

³¹ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 132.

³² West, N., and O. Tsarev, *The Crown Jewels: the British Secrets Exposed by the KGB Archives* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), p. 211.

³³ Various accounts suggest the club lasted through to the Second World War, at least to 1939, while others have suggested as late as 1961. See West and Tsarev, *The Crown Jewels*, for example.

The club's membership was limited to men, including some who were still working for MI5, but the women were not invited to join.³⁴ In response some of the women staff created a separate group, not long after the official – but not unexpected – announcement of staff reductions was made. The Nameless Club was formed amongst the departing female staff, but also included remaining staff in its membership and leadership committee.³⁵ This subscription based club continued to have social gatherings and correspondence through their magazine which was published until 1923.³⁶ It serves as an early example of organisation of female (former) employees outside of the constraints of MI5. Both Line and Lomax were both participants in this organisation with the latter serving as president.³⁷ The Nameless Club was primarily social in nature, created to keep former colleagues in touch with one another. Submissions included personal updates, recollections, poetry, and vignettes of post-war life.

The I.P. Club, and to a lesser extent its female counterpart, have made brief appearances in the scholarly literature on MI5. However, primary sources for the Nameless Club are available, including personal statements and the aforementioned club magazine (from 1920 to 1923).³⁸ The Nameless Club magazine provides a glimpse into the lives of these women, both during and after the war, along with how these lives were depicted in print by the women themselves.³⁹ The Nameless Club is also useful for understanding the sense of

³⁴ With a few exceptions, this seems to be a sharp contrast to the jovial and familial natures in which both WWI and WWII era MI5 have been depicted as.

³⁵ Proctor, T. M., *Female Intelligence: Women and espionage in the First World War* (New York, New York University, 2003), p. 71. And Nameless Magazine, 1920, along with rules book (for leadership info)

³⁶ IWM 92/22/1, 'Mrs. D. B. G. Line (née Dimmock)'

³⁷ IWM 92/22/1

³⁸ The material is primarily held by the Imperial War Museum's archives. This may be one of the few cases on MI5 where more written information is available on women than men.

³⁹ The content will be discussed later in Chapter Five on representations.

community many of these women felt, as demonstrated through the organisation and the correspondence in its magazine, as will be explored further in Chapter Five.

Women as Observers and Camouflage

Another area of note is the B.6 section which originated in the First World War. Tasked with covertly observing the movements and actions of suspect individuals, this section sought information at the behest of other MI5 sections or to fill requests from other state entities. The section continued through the interwar period, albeit drastically reduced and into the Second World War. The one member of this section who remained employed throughout this time wrote a summary of the section and its activities for MI5. The author notes that the staff from the beginning of the section were carefully selected. Men are clearly the preferred candidates, ideally of average height and the 'nondescript type'. The author also mentions an attempt to recruit from all classes by placing an advertisement in a newspaper, but stresses that many of the candidates through this recruitment strategy and others like it were not suited for the type of work carried out and the patience that it required. Of those employed during the First World War, many had other professions which they returned to at the war's conclusion.⁴⁰ Examples include professional, managerial and administrative work, commonly in employment that required travel such as writing or journalism.

It appears that an attempt was made to employ women, as, 'At times female assistants have been used' but that in these attempts women were in secondary roles. The preferred use of 'female assistants' was 'as screens for our male assistants' suggesting that women could not, and did not work alone or without men. In other words, a male officer following a

⁴⁰ TNA KV4/443 'Report on the operations of B6 in connection with Security Service enquiries and observations during the war 1939-1945'

suspect would sometimes be accompanied by a woman who would act as cover to prevent their detection. Pairs of women following were not preferred. The author offers one explanation for this, stating that 'when watching alone or in pairs they are handicapped by unpleasant attention paid them by the opposite sex.'⁴¹ The fear was that women on their own would be unable to discreetly follow a suspect as they would attract too much attention or unwanted advances from men. This practice of using women as camouflage for men conducting observations continued well into the 1940s and 1950s. Yet at the same time, MI5 demonstrated a willingness, particularly through the Second World War, for employing women as agents.

[Returning to War: Re-establishing MI5 and Women's Employment](#)

The precarious status of MI5 changed with the Second World War as demand for its counter-espionage services increased. As a result, hiring increased throughout the war. Following in line with First World War preferences, the number of employment opportunities for women increased within MI5, particularly as the preferred pool of male candidates were called to other war work. For example, 1939 saw a swift rebound to First World War levels of employment, with 133 women employed in Secretarial or Registry roles. By 1943 the Secretarial and Registry staff reached 939, compared to 332 male officers, maintaining the previously mentioned approximate three to one ratio of women to men throughout the war.⁴² It should be noted that in times of sharp increases in labour demands for the Security Service, more women are hired. This suggests that Proctor's argument regarding the practice of hiring women during the First World War based on shortages of

⁴¹ TNA KV4/443 "Report on the operations of B6"

⁴² Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 220.

highly preferred candidates continued through to the Second World War. This can also be tied to the process of promotion within the Security Service, by the end of the war it was noted that there were 59 women serving in officer's positions, but without the formal title, or, presumably, pay.⁴³ This is in line with the vertical occupational segregation that characterises MI5's employment at the time – while very capable women could take on tasks or positions above their employment level, they were rarely promoted to the level of that position.

Jane Archer, who was mentioned in the previous section, was only woman to formally reach the rank of officer. Archer stands out as one of the exceptions to the rules (unwritten, and later written) which governed women's employment in the Security Service. She trained as a Barrister while remaining employed by MI5.⁴⁴ Called to the bar in 1924, only two years after the first woman was called to the English bar, Archer defied expectations.⁴⁵ She parted ways with the agency in 1941, moving on to SIS and later returned to MI5. Archer previously worked as head of the Registry and was later one of six officers in the B Division. Though Archer was described as a highly capable intelligence officer, it is suggested by Andrew that interoffice politics may have led to her firing during the Second World War. Despite this conflict, Archer went to work for the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS/MI6) during the Second World War. After this, no female officers were added during the war. Andrew notes that the remaining evidence in the Security Service's archives is 'fragmentary' but shows that in 1941 a change was made to stop women from becoming officers.⁴⁶ This policy likely contributed

⁴³ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 325.

⁴⁴ The news of her success was published in an issue of *The Nameless Magazine*, IWM E. J. 2710.

⁴⁵ For more on the difficulties women faced in entering the legal profession see also: Auchmuty, R., 'Early Women Law Students at Cambridge and Oxford' *The Journal of Legal History*, 29/1 (2008), pp. 63-97; and Polden, P., 'Portia's Progress: Women at the Bar in England, 1919-1939,' *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, pp. 293-338.

⁴⁶ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 121 and 220.

to the position of the abovementioned 59 non-officers – reflecting a formal block on women’s vertical progression.

Compared to the First World War, less is known about the everyday working lives of the women in MI5 during the Second World War, particularly those in the Registry. Of those who served in WWI, some, like Miss Line, report not being recalled or invited to resume previous work.⁴⁷ Much of the focus on women’s wartime intelligence work has centred on the bravery of the women in the Special Operations Executive. Though women were actively used by the Security Service as agents during the World Wars, the majority of women’s formal employment within the organisation continued to be restricted to certain tasks and roles, notably clerical or secretarial, primarily within the Registry, reflecting both support for both horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation in practice and policy. Of materials created by women depicting their work in MI5, there is more information on individual agents than on the Registry staff. Collections of accounts similar to the Nameless Club Magazine seem to not have been published following WWII. (This may reflect changes in attitudes towards organisational secrecy, preventing publications like The Nameless Magazine from existing after WWII.)

However, some information about their working conditions and environment is available through other sources. Notably, the environment and internal culture of the Security Service began to change during the war. One statement from the Security Service archives (quoted in Andrew’s authorised history) speaks to a shift in relations between men and women in the 1930’s, “The Colonel [Kell] did not approve of familiarity between officers and staff. The

⁴⁷ IWM E. J. 2710

officers were known by their rank and surname and, of course, they called us Miss So-and-so.' Though this prescribed formality by Kell eventually broke down during the Second World War, it speaks to the informal controls implemented by those in positions of leadership. The use of surnames discourages a sense of familiarity between officers and female staff; and discouraging this practice reinforced the division between the two groups. However, the restriction was relaxed later on in the war.⁴⁸

The war also led to a relaxation of other formal restrictions for female staff. One notable area that was challenged during the war was the requirement that female staff wear skirts or dresses instead of trousers. The wartime move of MI5 to Wormwood Scrubs prison, and its open grate staircases, necessitated this change.⁴⁹ Wartime restrictions also had an impact on secretarial work, conservation of paper, for example, became a high priority. Single spacing and the reuse of materials (such as blotter paper) were key changes.⁵⁰

Another aspect of employment for both men and women should be noted is the change in the pension scheme towards the end of the war. This impacted permanent staff, both male and female. The new pension scheme, approved by the Treasury, more closely resembled that of the Civil Service.⁵¹ Though Curry writes that 'this scheme was equally applicable to both men and women', that may not be entirely accurate.⁵² Depending on service definitions of permanent staff and the number of women working in non-officer, clerical

⁴⁸ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 133.

⁴⁹ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 218.

⁵⁰ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 217-218. Notably, Andrew cites the Security Service Archives as the source of this information.

⁵¹ Though it should be noted that the scheme, if truly parallel to the Civil Service scheme, faced considerable scrutiny for disadvantaging women later on in the Kent-Jones report: Kemp-Jones, E. M., *The Employment of Women in the Civil Service: The Report of a Departmental Committee*, (London: H.M.S.O., 1971), also available at:

[https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/1971_kemp_jones_report.pdf].

⁵² Curry, *The Security Service 1908-1945*, p. 373.

positions, pension eligibility and amount may have likely been different. Further, this system exhibited some of the same problems the Civil Service scheme had. Women who took time off for marriage and returned were outliers, and their pensions were in most cases negatively impacted by any breaks in work.

[Agent-running in WWII: Femme fatales and ingénues](#)

One notable division from the Second World War is the M Section, also commonly referred to as M.S. In October 1931 Maxwell Knight moved from SIS (MI6) to MI5 to head an agent running section within the organisation.⁵³ This section was tasked with agent running in political movements and for the investigation of individuals.⁵⁴ Knight wrote a report at the end of the war on the activities of his section for MI5 internal historian John Curry. The report overviewed the activities of the M Section throughout the war, and included Knight's opinions on the operation of his section. Notably Knight's writing discusses his use of and opinions on female agents, in addition to discussing male agents. Though he wrote that all agents recruited should be "balanced" he pays particular attention to the influence of sex in relation to women as agents. Despite justifying women's potential usefulness as agents, Knight argued that 'It is difficult to imagine anything more terrifying than for an officer to become landed with a woman-agent who suffers from an overdose of Sex' and that someone like that would not be recruited.⁵⁵ Yet after, Knight states 'that a clever woman who can use her personal attractions wisely has in her armoury a very formidable weapon.'

⁵³ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 131.

⁵⁴ TNA KV4/227, 'Report on the work of MS (recruitment and operation of agents) during the Second World War'

⁵⁵ TNA KV4/227, p. 20.

It should also be noted that prior to discussing the topic of women agents, Knight wrote about the ideal qualities in an agent differently. Further, Knight's writing demonstrated that his default view of an agent was male. In this section he emphasised the idea of an agent whose 'personal honesty and motives were above reproach'.⁵⁶ For Knight, sex and emotion were not the central considerations for men that they were for women.

Despite having discussed the usefulness of male agents earlier in the report, it is only when discussing female agents that sex becomes a topic. Knight sets out a specific image of a woman agent, in this sense a balance between the archetypal femme fatale and ingénue. She must not be too over or too little sexualised, and must be capable of manipulation to gather information. Knight's report serves as a contradictory defence and critique of women as agents, going so far as to note the 'long-standing and ill-founded prejudice against the employment of women as agents'.⁵⁷

Such contradictory views seem to be in line with Knight's views and treatment of women. This can be seen in Joan Miller's notes of her interactions with Knight in her memoir. Miller, who will be discussed in more detail in the next section, originally had a positive view of MI5 and Knight. Her departure from MI5 and Knight's later treatment of her, leaving her, as an agent working in his section, feeling betrayed and used.

In contrast to MI5, the Special Operations Executive made extensive use of female agents during WWII, particularly in the F Section. SIS (MI6) also has historically made use of female agents. It can be argued that Knight's SIS background influenced his use of women agents, but his experiences and views of women agents led to his underutilisation of them. Knight's

⁵⁶ TNA KV4/227, p. 2.

⁵⁷ TNA KV4/227, p. 19.

views are especially important for women in MI5 because of his role as a gatekeeper to these operational roles. An interesting parallel exists between Knight's report and the 1920 Report on Women as both make an argument not for inclusion, but for the usefulness of women in their respective remits.

The Women Otherwise Known As "Miss X"

Maxwell Knight's confusing and somewhat contradictory approach to female agents did not stop his division from running a number of successful operations in which agents that happened to be women were key to their successes. In the following two cases, Olga Gray and Joan Miller, serve as examples of women as successful agents, in part due to facing less suspicion in longer term operations where they were able to build trust with their targets.

To spy on the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), Knight recruited a woman named Olga Gray as an agent. Though she is described as hesitant at first, Gray spied for Knight throughout the 1930s. Appearing as a communist sympathiser, Gray spent years gaining the trust of contacts made through the CPGB. In 1937 this operation saw success when Gray was asked to participate in a covert operation. Blueprints and important documents were photographed which took place in a safe house which Gray arranged. She would notify Knight when the safe house was to be used for photography sessions.⁵⁸ In early 1938 the individuals smuggling documents and blueprints to be photographed were arrested as part of this operation, and others in this spy ring were also charged. Gray's name was kept from

⁵⁸ West, N., *MI5: British Security Service Operations, 1909–1945*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), pp.66-69.

the public, and she was later relocated after the trial to Canada.⁵⁹ Referred to as “Miss X” by the judge, she was complimented for her ‘extraordinary courage’.⁶⁰

The second woman to have gained the moniker is the aforementioned Joan Miller who was tasked by Knight with infiltrating the Right Club in the 1940s. Founded in 1939, the Right Club was an antisemitic and fascist organisation which was opposed to war with Germany.⁶¹ Tasked with compiling a members list of the organisation, Miller made contact with Anna Wolkoff and gained her trust. In doing so, Miller unintentionally discovered part of a significant leak from the US Embassy’s cypher room. Secret telegrams containing high level discussions were smuggled out by a cypher clerk, and Wolkoff was involved in orchestrating their transmission to the Italian Security Service.⁶² Also referred to as a “Miss X” during the trials of Wolkoff and the American cypher clerk, Miller was the lesser known “Miss X”. Both, however, serve as examples of female agents working for Knight in the 1930s and 1940s working on operations considered successful.

Agents form a grey area in MI5 employment. Though often not formally employed female agents engaged in intelligence work, particularly information gathering and spy craft on behalf of the Security Service. The experiences of these agents exist on the margins of MI5’s employment history, yet influenced future implementation of women in spy craft. In this respect, Miller’s story is somewhat unique in that she was formally employed within MI5 prior to her recruitment by Knight.

⁵⁹ Some accounts state that upon her relocation, Gray was given £500, a sum that she was not happy with, and felt abandoned by MI5.

⁶⁰ West, N., *MI5*, pp. 70-71; and Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 181-182.

⁶¹ For more information on the Right Club see: Griffiths, R., *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism 1939–40*, (London: Constable, 1998).

⁶² West, N., *MI5*, pp. 124-125.

Women as the next best source of labour?

As the above section shows, there were different, though often overlapping standards for women and men in MI5. However, women and men continued to operate in different, occasionally overlapping labour markets, separated by vocational opportunities. Women's employment patterns during the World Wars demonstrate an increased demand for women at times when preferred groups of men were occupied by other wartime work. As Proctor has argued, this demand for women employees was mediated by preferences based on perceived trust. In the same line of reasoning, MI5's Interwar employment reductions, when greater numbers of men re-entered the labour market, can be seen in both the context of larger British employment trends during this time and gender specific employment theories.

While It is important to question what factors or influences may have had impact on MI5's employment of both women and men, it is equally important to acknowledge that a combination of factors (not all cohesive) influenced MI5's practices. For example, wartime employment increases and decreases might at first appear to fit neatly within theories about women's labour such as the Reserve Army of Labour theory, yet the applicability of such theories is chronologically limited. If, as RAL suggests, women served as a wartime labour pool to fill need when it arose and during peacetime returned to a position outside the labour market, then women's continued employment after WWII raises many questions. At the end of the Second World War, MI5 did not face the same drastic reductions in employment numbers. Cold War threats, combined with an increasing professionalization and bureaucratisation of intelligence led to MI5 remaining an established force in British intelligence. While women continued to leave and join the Security Service, the ups and

downs of employment during the World Wars began to level out. This set the stage overall for steadier and sustained increases in staff for the remainder of the century.

Yet, RAL is helpful in its potential framing of interwar staff reductions. The sharp reduction in staff during the interwar period as followed by a rapid recruitment of women at the start of the Second World War suggests that during this time woman partially existed as a reserve labour pool. This aligns with some of the opinions expressed by former WWI Registry staff, who expected they might be called up again upon the outbreak of war.⁶³ Despite, this, as the above section noted, many of these women were not called back.

However, RAL implies that this reserve was comprised of all women, ignoring the impact of class on employment. Since MI5's practices were enacted along the lines of class, education, nationality, situation is considerably more complex. Age and marital status seem to have been important limiting factors on recruitment as well. As upper class women were less likely to be engaged in paid (government) work, for the case of upper class women's employment in MI5, this theory may have some validity, but cannot be so broadly applied to British women. Proctor's examination of class in relation to gender, nationality and other factors influencing perceptions of trust, helps to narrow down the potential applicability of the Reserve Army of Labour theory for MI5. The resulting argument that the Reserve Army of Labour theory can make here must be narrowed down to an explicitly class and race specific approach.⁶⁴

⁶³ Miss Line for example expresses such an opinion in her letter accompanying her donation of Nameless Magazine copies to the Imperial War Museum. She notes, however, that she was not recalled and suggests that the reason was her age. It seems few women from the WWI staff returned for WWII.

⁶⁴ Such a specific and intersectional application of this theory may have standing in other areas of government or wartime hiring practices – partly speaking to the myth here that most women gained employment with the wars.

Another key argument as discussed by Proctor, is that the rules which governed wartime recruitment continued into the postwar years.⁶⁵ Who was hired, and the methods used to ascertain their trustworthiness changed slowly over the following decades. The “Old Boy” network instituted by early hiring practices for men based on family, connections, and education created an environment vulnerable to espionage.⁶⁶ These hiring practices when combined in the following decades with an environment resistant to internal searches for Communist subversion contributed to breaches of security within MI5 and other government branches. Despite problems with the system of recruitment and vetting, policies and practices were slow to change even after being identified. Changing these systems also increased MI5’s workload significantly in the postwar period.

MI5’s entrenched practices regarding class and concepts of trust in hiring had a profound impact on the Security Service in following postwar decades. It can be argued that this organisational culture which favoured and implicitly trusted well-educated British men from good families, contributed to an environment in which the so-called Cambridge Spies were able to betray MI5. This ties in to the concept of gendered organisations, and default concepts of the preferred or ideal employee, but also interwoven with concepts of and attitudes regarding social class.

[Slow Postwar Progression: Operational shifts and employment increases](#)

The 1950s were a time of stagnation for women in MI5 employment as the immediate postwar years represented slow progress for women. A few notable women, such as

⁶⁵ Proctor, “Family Ties”, pp. 461-463.

⁶⁶ Though the term has been used elsewhere, Roderick Bailey links it to infiltration and security oversights in WWII well, particularly in SOE-MI5 vetting communication. See: Bailey, R., ‘Communist in SOE: Explaining James Klugmann’s Recruitment and Retention’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 20:1 (2005), p. 93.

Millicent Bagot rose through the ranks to become officers in the post-World War II era, but overall, progression was limited.⁶⁷ Arguments were also made for the overall greater inclusion of women in 1946, but recruitment was capped at 10%.⁶⁸ By 1952, three women reached officer rank, representing just over five percent of Security Service officers.⁶⁹ The total pool of officers tripled by 1955, yet the percentage of women remained just under six percent, with 10 female officers. Women were listed separately as “female officers”.⁷⁰

Personal connections were still the preferred recruitment method. Family relations remained a key source of new hiring, as Andrew notes, ‘In the immediate post-war years the daughters of former officers and debutantes were a major source of recruits.’⁷¹ The class balance of the Registry was influenced by the notion that this was acceptable work for women – until marriage. Over the following decades, the number of women hired from upper class backgrounds decreases, as an increasing proportion of well-educated women from other social backgrounds are hired. This speaks to the point about education and social mobility raised in Chapter Three. Non-upper class women who obtained higher levels of education were increasingly able to move in to higher paying and/or higher prestige employment than they would have had access to in previous decades. In this way, employment in MI5 begins to reflect wider shifts in women’s employment, though this shifting demographic causes tension within the organisation throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

⁶⁷ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 131

⁶⁸ Helen, McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury 2014), p. 245.

⁶⁹ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 325.

⁷⁰ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 325-330.

⁷¹ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 336.

Women did work as transcribers and language specialists though they were a small percentage of the women working for the Security Service. The Registry experienced high turnover during 1950s. Andrew's authorised history attributes this to women leaving upon marriage.⁷² This is consistent with wider employment trends for women during that and previous decades. It is also internally consistent with MI5's own employment history, as even in wartime, women generally left upon marriage. These are trends in line with other areas of public sector work, and such trends and assumptions were reflected in women's compensation and pension options more widely. Additionally, some women may have left due to a lack of opportunities available to them within the service. Socially acceptable tasks for women did grow during 1950s and 1960s, in part attributable to Cold War focus on the Soviet Union. Recording and transcription were areas of growth for women in the 1950s and 1960s, and the transcribers employed were mostly female.⁷³ Similarly women were hired as linguists, suggesting that women who specialised in certain areas may have had greater opportunities.⁷⁴

It should be noted that there were practices in observation which carried over from the Second World War into the late 1940s and 1950s. Small numbers of women were allowed in the surveillance division, A₄, which was housed separately from main operations. The women in this section were required to move on to other divisions at the end of five years of service. One of their key roles was to provide cover for male officers - acting as camouflage. It was noted that the women in this division were often of a higher social class than the men they worked with, who were primarily working class. Even as camouflage and

⁷² Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 337.

⁷³ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 334.

⁷⁴ Similar to the Jane Archer's expertise on the Soviet Union which was highly praised.

their work limited, the women who have spoken about their work, enjoyed it and had not wanted to transfer out at the end of their allotted time.⁷⁵ While the time limit for women might be based on practical concerns about detection, it seems unlikely as no such limit was placed on men. However, it is possible, since women were not encouraged to establish themselves in this section, that gendered norms about appropriate or safe work for women played the largest role. (This can certainly be seen in later decades, such as the 1970s and 1980s where women were discouraged from agent-running and other work perceived to be risky.)

In addition to horizontal work placement, some information is available on vertical progression of men and women. Appointments board meetings had become routine for MI5 heads in the 1950s. For example, Guy Liddell's 1953 diary makes multiple mentions of appointments board meetings. These meetings were not limited to promotions as they also included decisions on hiring and overseas appointments. For overseas appointments, the Security Service faced a potential problem. Liddell notes a "stagnation" as many of the men considered eligible were otherwise disqualified, either for having already served in such posts, for family reasons, or a lack of physical fitness for such duty.⁷⁶ Women were considered eligible for some overseas postings, but often lacked the necessary rank for leadership positions.⁷⁷ In some cases eligible men were asked to serve longer in certain posts or volunteer for another posting abroad. In other cases, lower level posts could be filled by the wives of diplomats or MI5 officers. The use of "contract wives" as termed by the

⁷⁵ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 337-338.

⁷⁶ TNA KV4/475, 'Diary of Guy Liddell, Deputy Director General of the Security Service, January to May 1953', p. 18.

⁷⁷ SIS faced a similar problem with the Foreign Office rejecting certain appointments in locations they determined were unsuitable for women.

CIA, occurred in both that agency and in MI5. This point will be explored further in Chapters Five and Six, particularly for those women who got their start in intelligence work from this type of employment. These restrictions persisted through the 1970s and 1980s, when they began to be challenged with some success by women employees, and were present across multiple intelligence agencies (SIS, CIA for example).

For hiring, Liddell's notes are often brief. For example, one March 1953 appointment board record simply states, 'We have decided to take him on and he will be posted to C.

Division.'⁷⁸ In contrast, higher level promotions seemed to cause some disagreement within MI5's top levels. In April the Director General requests his staff to compile a list of officers for the promotion to senior officer. Liddell notes that the 4 names proposed are not well received. This is an example of a clear difference in opinion between the two men: Liddell appeared to favour a more holistic approach, looking both at service time and accomplishments, while the Director General placed more emphasis on seniority.⁷⁹ An emphasis on rank and seniority disadvantaged women applicants to higher posts, though Liddell's method was not entirely favourable either. Similar trends existed within the Civil Service where women who had taken time off for marriage or childbirth often found themselves starting over in terms of seniority upon return.⁸⁰

The role of the Security Service began to change in the 1950s and 1960s, reflecting a change in the threats which MI5 prioritised. This also reflected increasing pressures on MI5 as vetting service for employees in sensitive government related work. MI5's work in vetting those with access to sensitive information continued from WWII, expanding in the postwar

⁷⁸ TNA KV4/475, 'Diary of Guy Liddell' p. 61.

⁷⁹ Still have a few journals left to go through but at this point no female promotions are mentioned.

⁸⁰ A problem heavily criticized in the 1970s review of women in the Civil Service.

years. The 1950s were a transition period from wartime vetting, which was often focused more of threats from fascism, to a greater focus on detecting potential communist subversion. Filling this increased demand for vetting of employees in sensitive work in other branches of government fell primarily on MI5. However, it should be noted that even as changes were made to vetting procedures, MI5 was slower to turn the examination lens on its own employees. When deemed necessary, vetting practices extended to key civilian businesses, including both those already employed and potential candidates. For one example, Liddell noted that De Havilland, at the time (20 March 1953) held no secret contracts but was continuing its aircraft design work. Due to this, MI5 sought to vet their employees. Liddell writes, 'We have, therefore, after considerable difficulty got them to agree to accept a vet of their employees.'⁸¹ He then implies that over 60 communists were employed there, though he does not say what percentage of employees this is. These additional vetting subjects placed an increased strain on the Security Service.

The vetting systems which had become a key component of MI5's work were also under review during the 1950s. The form of vetting in place, "negative vetting" was considered acceptable for some sensitive tasks, but discussions were underway to incorporate a more in depth vetting procedure, "positive vetting".⁸² Liddell's writing shows that he supported positive vetting, but remained cautious about its implementation. He wrote, 'I told the Committee that the matter of positive vetting for all top secret categories was under discussion, and that while we were in general agreement that something of the kind was necessary, it would be essential to exercise far greater control for what really was top

⁸¹ TNA KV4/475, p. 57.

⁸² Will need to expand more on negative/positive vetting systems here and how this transition impacted the work of MI5's various branches.

secret.⁸³ This appears to be an attempt to limit the increased workload that positive vetting requests would place on the Security Service. The incorporation of widespread positive vetting would create an unmanageable burden for the Security Service, but pressures from the Klaus Fuchs spy case led to the urgency of this issue arising in 1950.⁸⁴ The serious security breach involved in the sharing of atomic weapons secrets by Fuchs was a motivating factor in increasing overall security.⁸⁵ Much of this added vetting burden, logging and researching individuals, including cross referencing with existing material, fell on the Registry, and the women workers in it.⁸⁶

Least is known about employment numbers and conditions about the late 1950s and 1960s, only that a growing dissatisfaction amongst MI5 officers with career structure and pay led to an internal inquiry and changes in the mid-1960s, though this seems to have had little effect on women employees.⁸⁷ It appears that women were essentially doing the same types of work as their male colleagues while still stuck in an outdated pay and promotion hierarchy (likely in departments such as the Registry facing increased demands). The Fulton Report on the Civil Service in 1968 highlighted some of the key issues in Whitehall, but had no tangible impact on MI5. The subsequent 1974 Report on Women in the Civil Service highlighted many issues women in the Civil Service faced, which also happened to be relevant for MI5, but similarly this report had no impact on MI5. Instead, a separate shift began to take place for women in the Security Service.

⁸³ TNA KV4/475, p. 72.

⁸⁴ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 387.

⁸⁵ See: Goodman, M. S., 'Who is trying to keep what secret from whom and why? MI5-FBI relations and the Klaus Fuchs case', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 7:3 (2005), pp. 124-146; and, Hennessy, P., and G. Brownfeld, 'Britain's cold war security purge: the origins of positive vetting', *The Historical Journal*, 25:4 (1982), pp. 965-974.

⁸⁶ The pre-computer organization of the Registry was card/paper based.

⁸⁷ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 331.

By the late 1960s there is a growing dissatisfaction amongst the younger and often more educated female recruits. What can be concluded is that over this time, the socio-economic makeup of MI5's female recruits was slowly changing. With increasing recruitment of more experienced, trained, and educated women, these newer employees had an increased focus on longer term employment and opportunity. However, this change cannot be solely attributed to an increase in university educated women. Wider opportunities and increased expectations amongst women workers contributed significantly to this shift.

Unions and Intelligence Service Employees

Formal employment in MI5 (and SIS) differed from other branches of British government in a key way. Those employed by either organization were crown servants – not civil servants. One of the most noticeable effects of this difference was in unionisation: civil servants were allowed to participate in and be members of unions while MI5's employees were not. The same restriction generally applied to individuals employed by SIS. GCHQ, on the other hand, was a unique case within the British intelligence community. In certain situations, GCHQ employees were allowed trade union participation, for example in the Civil Service Union or in more specific trade centric organisations. As Richard Aldrich writes, 'Paradoxically, GCHQ has always had trade unions because it was even more secret than its sister services, MI5 and SIS, which did not.'⁸⁸ Individuals secretly employed by GCHQ but working in other units could be members of and participate in their relevant trade unions.

Union membership, even the potential of it, raised issues for the intelligence services.

Aldrich argues that in GCHQ's primary work – which he compares to a factory setting with

⁸⁸ Aldrich, R. J., *GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency*, (London, Harper Press, 2010), p. 417.

shift based work – ‘union issues had raged beneath the surface of British sigint [Signals Intelligence] since the 1950s.’⁸⁹ Membership in unions also had a history of being perceived as a security risk. Fears of communist infiltration and subversion had permeated the attitudes of the intelligence services, particularly MI5 since prior to the Second World War. This can be seen in MI5’s strong focus on trade unions and communist organisations. With the Cold War in full swing, fears only continued to grow into the 1950s.

Alternatives to outside representation were considered, such as an internal and secret union or no formal representation at all. In GCHQ’s case, a non-TUC affiliated in house representation was proposed as a possible alternative. In house representation could be argued to be a viable alternative for the intelligence community, but it did not catch on for GCHQ. However, it is potentially problematic for two reasons. First, there would likely be no outside oversight and second, this would limit or weaken the “unions” bargaining power.

The lack of union representation is significant for the employment history of the big three agencies (GCHQ, SIS, and MI5) and arguably, this lack of representation or formal collective bargaining helped to preserve the status quo for most of the 20th century. For women looking for progress, in MI5 or the other organisations, there was little oversight and no formal group recourse to address the sex discrimination they faced. Additionally, Aldrich argues that labour relations are an important issue within GCHQ and SIS, placing this issue above fears of communist threats.⁹⁰

Had MI5 employees faced a similar setup to those in GCHQ employment, the outcome of the vertical sex discrimination complaint might have had a very different outcome.

⁸⁹ Aldrich, *GCHQ*, p. 417.

⁹⁰ Aldrich, *GCHQ*, p. 418.

However, given MI5's focus on communism, and attitudes towards it, such union arrangements seem less likely. Fears of communist penetration were only reinforced by a 1962 'Security Service briefing paper which reported that in the major civil service unions one-third of the permanent and one-quarter of the elected officials were Communists or sympathizers.'⁹¹ At this time the increase in positive vetting requests for other branches of government and those with contracts for sensitive work remained a concern for the Security Service.

Signs of Change and Revolt in the 1970s

Going into the 1970s the career structure was still divided by sex. Recruitment practices of past decades remained strong, officer recruitment by recommendation was still at 36 percent in 1970, and at 30 percent in 1978.⁹² One of the best examples of the insights into women's employment in intelligence can be found in the autobiography for former MI5 Director-general Stella Rimington. As with the division between women officers and officer as noted in the 1950s, "Assistant Officer" and "Officer" were the titles used when Stella Rimington was hired as a "Junior Assistant Officer" in 1969.⁹³

Though the Lady Superintendent post ceased to exist in 1963 when its last holder retired, Rimington notes that little had changed for the women of MI5 since then.⁹⁴ However, Rimington observed that women's backgrounds were more mixed than in previous decades. Though there were still the "debs", more university educated and experienced women were

⁹¹ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 395.

⁹² Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 553-554.

⁹³ Rimington, *Open Secret*, *Open Secret: The Autobiography of the Former Director-General of MI5*, (London: Arrow, 2002), pp. 90-91.

⁹⁴ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 90.

entering MI5.⁹⁵ She depicts an organisational culture that was slow to catch up to a changing world. She notes that, 'In those days, recruitment to MI5 was still broadly by a tap on the shoulder from a friend or contact, the method by which I had been recruited.'⁹⁶ As the number of ex-Colonial Servicemen fell (comprised of men who had once worked within British overseas territories) the agency once again had to broaden its recruitment pool.⁹⁷

Regarding the recruitment of men, in 1949 the Security Service made contact with Cambridge and Oxford. Even with this incorporation of university connections, the recruitment field was not broad and notably focused on Oxbridge men, this led to later critiques (discussed in Chapter Five) of elitism within the Security Service. However, throughout the following decade the majority of recruits came from other areas, and personal recommendations were still given preference.⁹⁸ The ex-Colonial Servicemen that Rimington refers to comprised about 65 percent of mid-1950s to mid-1960s recruits.⁹⁹ This began to change in the 1970s, as some within MI5 made the argument for increased university recruitment.¹⁰⁰ Just as Proctor had argued in relation to the First World War, with the preferred pool of (ex-colonial) candidates shrinking the Security Service had to look elsewhere. This 1970s shift increasingly towards university educated individuals, included women, though to a lesser extent than men.

Attitudes towards women had not yet been questioned openly within the agency, and Rimington adds that she did not question it early on either. It was not seen as an issue

⁹⁵ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 102.

⁹⁶ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 116.

⁹⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 120.

⁹⁸ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 329-330.

⁹⁹ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 331.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 548-549.

within the service, and certainly not an issue of discrimination.¹⁰¹ In this sense it is in line with attitudes of the time, women's employment activism was just beginning to have a more noticeable, public impact in the late 1960s. As of the 1970s, few women had progressed to become full officers in MI5's history. Even with a new influx of university educated recruits (comprising of both men and women) in the 1960s and 1970s, the sex barrier to becoming an officer was still in place. Not only was this an example of vertical sex segregation, it was also an example of a sex based dual labour market operating within the Security Service.¹⁰² Men still had better opportunities to progress in their careers compared to women, despite the overall increase in levels of higher education in MI5.

Rimington writes cautiously of her own promotion, stating that it, 'did not mark the opening of the flood gates; it was not followed immediately by a great surge upwards of female graduates. It took a revolution, albeit a discreetly conducted revolution to achieve that.'¹⁰³ This was so-called "Women's Revolt" letter of the 1970s, also known as the "Women's Charter". In November of 1972, a group of female graduates within the agency held a meeting to discuss their employment and create a petition for reform.

Its reception was varied amongst the men of MI5 and caused some trouble within the female staff. Andrew quotes anonymously one of the women involved as saying, "Our meeting caused some justified ill-feeling amongst the non-graduate women; they should have been included, as the lack of career prospects affected them as much as us. However,

¹⁰¹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 103.

¹⁰² It is likely that the market was more segmented than a dual labour market, continuing the employment trends based on aspects such as nationality or class that were noted by Proctor, but the currently available information speaks far more towards sex segregation as a driving force over other aspects.

¹⁰³ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 124.

we, being young and thoughtless, had not considered this.”¹⁰⁴ In the process of constructing the letter it was the women in the lower officer ranks who took charge, women from other areas, such as the Registry, were excluded. While this was later lamented by one of the letter writers, the exclusion still demonstrates an approach centric to a specific class of women worker. Divided by rank and likely departmental affiliation, the letter writers likely had little knowledge of working and pay conditions for other non-officer women employed by MI5. This omission did not entirely hinder the wider employment changes that happened in MI5 in the late 1970s. While the most noticeable immediate effects were for female officers, and later for female agent runners, the Registry itself began a slower process of change.¹⁰⁵

The efforts of these women, though limited by focusing on female graduates, did have an impact, with the numbers of female officers increasing over the 1970s. Andrew’s authorised history only briefly address the legal changes going on at this time, suggesting that the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act may have “accelerated” this process.¹⁰⁶ The Sex Discrimination Act had other branches of government noticeably concerned in the year leading up to its implementation.¹⁰⁷ However, one notable change from this act on the service was the removal of time limits for women working in the Security Service’s A₄ surveillance division.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous female MI5 employee quoted in Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 550.

¹⁰⁵ While there is more of a balance in the Registry at the time of the 2015 report, this ratio is still skewed towards women.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 551.

¹⁰⁷ The Foreign Office, for example, sought to ensure its codes and policies were compliant by the time the act went into effect.

¹⁰⁸ The Kemp-Jones report on women in the Civil Service mentioned earlier may be a relevant parallel here for the discussions on women.

While more women were able to become officers in the 1970s, they still found certain jobs closed to them, particularly taboo were the ones such as agent-running that were perceived to be more dangerous.¹⁰⁹ As a mother, these jobs were consider doubly taboo for Rimington. More forward thinking individuals such as Cecil Shipp, who had posted Rimington to the agent-running section in the late 1970s, still prevented her from engaging in agent-running work in Northern Ireland. His reasoning was that the work was too dangerous for a mother to do.¹¹⁰

Rimington comments that 'It was not until the early 1990s that women were involved to recruit and run agents against terrorist targets.' Adding that, 'There was also some paternalism left in the Service right through the '80s and the men then in charge sincerely believed that the most dangerous work was not suitable for women.' Key work of the 1970s and 1980s which came from Security Service focal shifts to new threats was still often off-limits to female officers. As a result, work that could potentially build up a female officer's portfolio and lead to top jobs in the agency remained limited.¹¹¹ This is an important point for two reasons: women were hindered in their career opportunities, and this had longer-term impacts on the number of women to make it to middle and upper management positions within the Security Service.

[Establishing a Contemporary Security Service](#)

With the Security Services Act in 1989, MI5 was officially and publicly acknowledged. This led to the "coming out" of MI5 to the general public, though it can be argued that the

¹⁰⁹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 124.

¹¹⁰ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 157-158.

¹¹¹ Regrettably, in the aforementioned ISC report on the UK intelligence community, this historical disparity in portfolio building is not addressed.

Security Service had been viewed as a well-known secret for some time. This act was followed in 1994 by the Intelligence Services Act which authorised GCHQ and SIS in a similar fashion. As MI5 was put in public view, it was accompanied by a public relations campaign. Then Director-General Stella Rimington was the first chief of the Security Service to be publicly acknowledged. Rimington's visibility as the face of MI5 along with her experiences of this will be addressed further in Chapters Five and Six. Rimington was the first woman to hold the directorship in MI5, a fact that was incorporated into MI5's public relations material at the time – perhaps in an attempt to project the image of a progressive, modern intelligence organisation.

Though the official practice of vertical sex segregation had been rejected on paper and additional advancement opportunities had been opened to women, prevailing attitudes within MI5's organisational culture regarding women's roles and capabilities continued to impact women's career paths. Both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation within MI5 continued through less officially sanctioned methods. Remnants and continuations of these informal methods can be seen in the modern-day MI5. However, one significant change has occurred in recent years, as British intelligence organisations have become more willing to look inwards and consider issues of diversity within their workforces. This trend has also occurred in the United States, and could perhaps be termed a "turn to diversity" in the intelligence sector.

To illustrate this "diversity turn" and increased willingness of intelligence to look inwards, the 2015 British Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee report on women in intelligence included contributions (data and analysis) from the three major British intelligence organisations: MI5, SIS, and GCHQ. While upper management appeared largely

supportive of initiatives to address gender imbalance, particularly at higher levels, the ISC report also noted a distinct culture of resistance to diversity initiatives which they termed a middle-management “permafrost”.¹¹² Vertical sex segregation (though not phrased as such) was a continued subject of concern throughout the report, even as the authors noted progress made at highest levels. Despite efforts from upper management, the report clearly identified a rejection of and resistance to goals of diversity and minority advancement within MI5 at this middle management level. This resistance to diversity initiatives at the middle management level – despite support from upper level management – has also been demonstrated in literature about other employment sectors.¹¹³ In this way, British intelligence mirrors other public sector and some private sector organisational trends.

Comparative Intelligence Service Historical Trends in Women’s Employment

Throughout most of MI5’s history women have comprised the majority of its workforce. Despite this, they have held a disproportionate percentage of lower ranked and lower paid jobs, a pattern that followed trends in women’s employment throughout much of the twentieth century. As can be seen, much of the work women have historically done in MI5 was in the Registry, falling in line with gendered assumptions about secretarial and clerical work of the mid-twentieth century. Many of MI5’s former employees both in and out of the Registry have praised the essential work of this section, though it can be argued that this section was historically undervalued and its tasks placed under the remit of women’s work. The ISC report in the above section demonstrates that some attitudes towards women

¹¹² Intelligence and Security Committee, ‘*Report on Women*’, p. 39.

¹¹³ See for example: Dwyer, S., C. Richard, and K. Chadwick, ‘Gender Diversity in Management and Firm Performance: the influence of growth orientation and organizational culture’, *Journal of Business Research*, (2005) 56:12, pp. 1009-1019;

within MI5 and other British intelligence organisations have persisted within contemporary intelligence bureaucracy, even as the organisations themselves have changed and organisational cultures have been challenged. This section will discuss some of the key thematic parallels between MI5 and other organisations: the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also referred to as MI6) and the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Comparable Trends in SIS Employment

Similar historical gendered employment trends existed between MI5 and SIS. In terms of occupational sex segregation, women often filled secretarial roles, and had difficulty reaching higher ranking posts. For example, in his authorised history Jeffery notes that, 'The number of women employed by SIS increased enormously over the war, though almost invariably they were used only in subordinate clerical and office support roles. Even when they were employed, entrenched male attitudes caused problems.'¹¹⁴ Jeffery hints at the problems faced within an organisational culture which encourages both horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation. It was only after the Second World War for example, that a woman was able to be an SIS station head. As with MI5, policy and culture aligned to allow for a slow progression of women into the organisation's higher levels of employment. However, it is important to understand that the policies and cultures of individual organisations were not the only factors at work. For SIS, as with GCHQ, policies in outside branches of government could have an impact on an SIS woman's career. Problematically some SIS postings required Foreign and Commonwealth Office approval, and this could lead to the rejection of women from certain locations or positions.¹¹⁵ SIS employed women who

¹¹⁴ Jeffery, K., *MI6: The history of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London, Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 598.

¹¹⁵ Jeffery, *MI6*, p. 640.

were officially working for the Foreign Office were also subject to the Foreign Office marriage ban which was only struck down in 1972 (the ban on homosexuality was not struck down until the 1990s). Helen McCarthy's history of women in British diplomacy notes that the marriage bar was a hindrance for women seeking Foreign Office postings, forcing women to choose between their own careers and marriage.¹¹⁶ Within SIS, often restrictions on women in certain foreign postings were justified under the argument that the proposed location of the was unsuitable for women, due to local cultural norms and attitudes towards women.

[Comparable Trends in Central Intelligence Agency Employment](#)

One key challenge to organisational attitudes and policies towards women's employment which took place in the CIA, was both legal and external. These two factors represent key differences from the challenge within MI5. However, the CIA challenge did not start out that way, as it began with an internal complaint brought forward through the expected organisational channels. The lawsuit which emerged from this complaint challenged how women were promoted, especially at senior grades within the CIA. In effect, this led to substantial changes to organisational policy.

A well-qualified woman candidate had been passed over for promotion multiple times, with less qualified men being promoted before her. The primary complainant, Harritte Thompson, like many women in the CIA, reached the higher level grade at a similar pace to her male colleagues. However, like many women in the GS-12 to GS-15 grades, her progress stalled considerably. Thompson held positions above her employment grade, and even was placed in assignments which had previously been held by officers at grades above her, for

¹¹⁶ McCarthy, H. *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury 2014).

example, GS-16.¹¹⁷ Notably, Thompson had support from her direct supervisor to file a complaint within the Agency.

The internal CIA investigation into the complaint found that Thompson was well reviewed by supervisors, repeatedly ranked “outstanding” in her annual reviews, and no one had issues with or complaints against her. The complaint was found to be valid, and included a review of promotions of women in the GS-12 through GS-15 levels. As reported in the *Typist to Trailblazer* document on the investigation, ‘The investigator found that attitudes in the DO regarding female operations officers contributed to the disparate representation of females at high grade levels. Interviews of DO officers revealed that the Directorate views itself as an organization of operations generalists. Affidavits that addressed the subject of women in operations overwhelmingly voiced the opinion that women could not run agents.’¹¹⁸

It should be noted here that there is a clear and direct parallel between attitudes towards women’s ability to run agents and their promotion and career prospects which exists between both the CIA and MI5. Because women were limited from agent running opportunities, especially with higher value and higher risk operations, their promotion prospects were limited. Attitudes towards women’s capabilities from middle and senior management had tangible impacts on women’s careers.

Another important aspect of the investigation was examination of conditions and composition of the CIA’s promotion panels. Notably, ‘The panel was composed of men from

¹¹⁷ Ellison, D., ‘One Woman’s Contribution to Social Change at the CIA’ (2008) part of the CIA’s *Typist to Trailblazer* collection [<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/typist-trailblazer>].

¹¹⁸ Ellison, D., “One Woman’s Contribution to Social Change at CIA” part of the *Typist to Trailblazer* series, p. 2

diverse professional backgrounds, but all described themselves as operations officers.’

Employees who specialised, rather than gained extensive operational experience, were at a disadvantage due to the attitudes of these men, with the report adding that, ‘because DO culture considered female operations officers to be of limited value, those women also were handicapped in competing for promotions.’¹¹⁹ In 1978, despite the findings of the investigator, the DDO rejected claims of discrimination on the basis of gender. Thompson appealed and brought these concerns forward to the Director of Central Intelligence. The proposed remedy of retroactive promotion to GS-15 was unsatisfactory, particularly given that she had held posts formerly occupied by GS-16 level officers.

In 1979, just under a year after the DDO decision, Thompson sought outside legal counsel. The attorney had to obtain clearance from the CIA before reviewing the case and meeting with those involved. As the former CIA officer who reviewed this case for the *Typist to Trailblazer* series noted, the Agency’s choice of language and tone in its rebuttals, indicated a bias in promotion practices.¹²⁰

Interestingly, Thompson conducts herself in line with organisation culture attitudes towards secrecy. She instructs her Attorney to not publicise the case, and she continues working at the CIA throughout, with few of her colleagues aware of the lawsuit. Though the CIA had been resistant to a settlement, it later reversed course based on legal direction from within government.¹²¹ The settlement involved retroactive promotion of Thompson to GS-16, and, more importantly, led to changes in how promotions were conducted.

¹¹⁹ Ellison, D., “One Woman’s Contribution to Social Change at CIA” part of the *Typist to Trailblazer* series, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁰ Ellison, D., pp. 3-4.

¹²¹ Ellison, D., p. 5.

Conclusion

The central four arguments of this chapter speak to how the organisation of MI5 changed throughout the twentieth century. Over the course of MI5's history, formal employment policies and (informal) organisational culture have both changed due to external factors, such as societal and legal changes, and internal factors, such as employee initiatives. These changes have had a tangible – though not total – impact on the organisation's hiring, training, promotion and employment practices. However, at the core, MI5's recruitment and hiring preferences were mediated by concepts of trust based on gender, class, and national service.

The second argument spoke to the role of occupational sex segregation. In MI5, women employees whose careers were negatively impacted by occupational segregation were left without formal recourse, such as the external oversight of union protections. As discussed above (and relating to the third argument), some of these women, namely a number of female junior and assistant officers made an organised statement through the form of a letter protesting their employment conditions. This took place at a time when the Security Service, and the British intelligence community as a whole, had already been through substantial changes, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Though some areas of intelligence employment had been opening up to women, higher level and higher risk posts were still largely closed to women. Though MI5 had recently reorganised its officer grades and pay scales, the changes seem to have had little impact on female career structures. Change took place at different paces for the career paths of men and women, both in formal policies and informal attitudes.

In writing a history of women in employment, particularly one in which progress has been made, there is the potential spectre of writing a “triumphalist narrative” in which a group of women band together and are seen to triumph over all odds.¹²² It is important to understand the ways in which women’s employment in MI5 deviates from this narrative. For MI5, multiple factors and variables came coalesced to influence the employment direction of this organisation. By virtue of being an assistant/junior officer led initiative that did not extend beyond those ranks, the writing of the “women’s revolt” letter excluded the majority of MI5’s female staff.

Though many of the key policy changes regarding women’s employment came out of the 1970s, it is also important to acknowledge the continuity of MI5’s history. The process has continued since then and has helped to shape the modern Security Service. Returning to the fourth argument of this chapter, the activities of a number of female MI5 employees helped to trigger these changes and create a profound shift in organisational employment policy. Organisational culture, however, has followed at a slower pace and the middle management “permafrost” that was noted as recently as 2015, has remained a barrier to more substantial changes in MI5’s employment profile. While upper levels are were identified in the report as receptive to the idea of a more diverse workforce, the middle management level was identified as an area still in need of improvement. The authors of the report included ‘compulsory diversity training for all middle managers’ in their recommendations.¹²³

Further, there is an identifiable relationship between organisational culture and policy, the informal attitudes have impact on the formal and vice versa. It is difficult to say which has

¹²² Take, for example, the film depictions of the Dagenham Dispute in 1969.

¹²³ I Intelligence and Security Committee, “Report on Women in the UK Intelligence Community”, (London: HMSO, 2015), available at: [<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>], p. 39.

had the greater impact on the other, and perhaps this is not the right question to be asking. Instead it may be better to ask: how did both policies and attitudes positively or negatively influence the experiences of those employed by MI5? This question will be addressed further in Chapters Five and Six, looking at the experiences of women employees and how they discuss their careers.

The understanding of both formal and informal factors is integral to the discussion of longer term employment trends in MI5. The changes that have been addressed in this chapter can be seen as steps towards progress within the Security Service.¹²⁴ The opening up of previously restricted roles to women helped to break down some of the horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation that had characterised employment in the Security Service for much of the 20th century. At the same time this also helped to break down the dual labour market within the service, an effect of the gendered vocational divisions within the organisation. Men being allowed to work in the Registry in 1976 is one of the clearest examples of this change. It is also important to understand these organisational changes within the wider context of women's employment in Britain. The changes of the 1970s and 1980s mirrored changes in other industries, and the current attention towards diversifying workforces in intelligence illustrates the same principles, albeit at a slower pace than the corporate sector.

However, long-term trends within Security Service employment practices have continued to hold influence over modern-day practices. While some key aspects of women's employment

¹²⁴ Though for anyone against the idea of women working in frontline or higher level roles this might seem like an organizational breakdown. Inherent in this argument is the assertion made by Callum that more diversity in the intelligence community is a positive, both for organizational cohesion and intelligence successes.

within MI5 have changed, others remain in place or are slowly changing. Returning to Proctor's work on WWI intelligence, she concluded that,

'Because the use of nominations, family connections, and class/gender assumptions was embedded in the very founding of intelligence agencies in Britain, they still linger in the decision-making and recruitment strategies used today, despite the availability of advanced surveillance techniques and states policies of equal opportunity hiring.'¹²⁵

Similar trends modern intelligence employment have been discussed by the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), but without historical understanding. The ISC's March, 2015 report on women, showed that horizontal and vertical sex based occupational divisions existed within the three major UK intelligence organizations (GCHQ, SIS, and MI5).

The concept of dual labour markets has faced considerable criticism – however, in the case of MI5, there is an empirical basis to the assertion that a dual labour market existed and has influenced or has been a result of policies and organisational culture. This impacted employment patterns even after official gender barriers were removed. In defence of this argument that dual labour markets, or in more modern terms, segregated labour markets existed within the Security Service, the Registry/non-Registry divide serves as a useful example. As discussed above, 1976 was the first time men worked in as Registry staff. The drift towards secretarial roles for women was socially acceptable and fit with assumptions about women's work. One could try to counter this example by stating that women served in other areas than the Registry. However, the presence of some women in non-traditional roles does not negate this claim of a segregated internal labour market. A segregated labour

¹²⁵ Proctor, "Family Ties", p.453.

market does not need to be exact to exist, the trends identified in this chapter do have exceptions. As studies discussed in the previous chapter have acknowledged, it is the identifiable trends in sex or race based employment patterns that determine market segregation and segmentation. Further, it is often the individuals who are exceptions to the rules, in particular, women, who are written about most. The exceptions and the cases that fit the standard roles combine to form this history of MI5 – without the daring of the women who actively spoke out against the discrimination in their workplace, change likely would have come about at a slower pace.

Chapter Five

The Real James Bond:

Exploring Women's Experiences in Intelligence Employment

Introduction

The previous chapters have addressed the wider structural and organisational historical contexts concerning MI5's employment of women. Though the policies and practices which governed employment in MI5 shifted significantly over the course of the organisation's history (particularly so in the last quarter of the 20th century) common themes and trends can be found in MI5 practice and policy. The policies and practices of MI5, including occupational sex segregation with separate career tracks for men and women, as identified in the Chapter Four, had tangible effects on the structure and functioning of the organisation, which in turn helped shape the contemporary Security Service. At the same time, British intelligence went through a process of increased professionalization and bureaucratisation.

While the two previous chapters focus on the structural and organisational, this chapter addresses the experiential; what working in intelligence was like on the personal level. Central to this chapter is the impact this employment environment has had on the professional and personal lives of its employees. Though employment in the field of intelligence can hold similarities to other employment sectors, there are unique and deeply personal aspects to this work that must also be acknowledged. This is particularly noticeable for those working in areas of human intelligence. For example, personal risk and emotional investment in operations exist in an environment overshadowed by secrecy. Though many

aspects of intelligence work have parallels with other employment sectors, military or police work for example, intelligence is unique for its combination of these factors in a civilian organisation.

While the focus of this chapter is on women's experiences, they cannot be discussed in isolation from those of men in intelligence employment. In some ways, women's experiences are very similar to those of men, such as concern over the safety of agents or worry over making the right call. At the same time, those aspects of intelligence work can be experienced differently by women and men depending on factors such as employment environment, attitudes of colleagues, management practices, and career progression opportunities.

As will be discussed further in this chapter, when female officers who struggled to break through into agent-running operations succeeded, they had to deal with training courses and procedures designed for men. This was an element of gendered organisations which had tangible impact on the lives of women employees, particularly those who progressed in their careers. Often, successful women found themselves to be the only woman in the room, or one of only a few. In case assignments, women agent-runners might be at a disadvantage in comparison with their male colleagues, facing additional restriction to work or locations of operation that were deemed safer. Yet, in the field, some women found their gender an advantage. Overlooked and less likely to be perceived as a threat, they could pass unnoticed and could gain access to desired contacts.

The previous two chapters centre on official sources. This chapter, and the one following focus more on individual experiences, those voices more likely to be left out of the official

record. However, personal narratives contribute far more to this thesis than just filling in blanks or corroborating existing information. These sources allow for critical reflection, incorporation of emotion and thought processes, along with a multifaceted and comprehensive understanding of how women navigated the structural and organisational forces in intelligence work, (including their perceptions of their work). As Chapter Six will discuss, these sources also provide insight into how women represent their experiences and wish to be perceived publicly.

At the same time, personal experiences allow for comparison, not just between individual women and men in MI5, but also to the wider field of intelligence. Where applicable, parallel and relevant experiences from other intelligence organisations are included. Most notably is the United States Central Intelligence Agency, which likely has had the largest number of former employees speak publicly about their work of any intelligence agency. Also of note is SIS, which held certain parallels to MI5's policies, but also provides contrast to experiences in MI5. These comparisons present opportunity to examine and discuss intelligence work from wider perspectives and in different contexts, given the variation in each organisational structure, their operational remit, and organisational culture. Themes identified in this chapter, including similarities in women's workplace experiences will be carried over to Chapter Six.

Within scholarly work on intelligence history, women's voices have rarely been foregrounded in the literature on British intelligence. This chapter, by looking at the lived and everyday experiences of women in intelligence seeks to redress that imbalance, by arguing that the everyday and personal experiences of employees are critical to shaping our

understandings of intelligence organisations, and these organisations as employers within the broader structural context of women's employment.

This chapter will address different aspects of working in intelligence. In doing so, this chapter will foreground the role of the employee – the individual – within the context of structural and organisational environments. Due to this focus, this chapter is organised with emphasis on the concept of an employee “life cycle” comprised of four key stages: hiring and recruitment, everyday job experiences, promotion and progression, and departure. Though employment experiences and patterns can vary considerably within intelligence work, these stages are identified as ways to compare and contrast individual experiences. The acceptance of a more typical career pattern and progression goes hand in hand with the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of intelligence organisations throughout the twentieth century.

Examples employed throughout these four stages are drawn from a variety of intelligence organisations, but the focus is on MI5 and the CIA. The wealth of information on women's experiences in the CIA provides a useful comparison for the women's experiences in MI5, with remarkable similarity in experience in a number of areas. These selected narratives are also used to demonstrate changing patterns of employment over time, to illustrate how structural and organisational changes impact directly on employee career paths and experiences.

The first section begins with recruitment and hiring experiences. This section also includes a discussion of training practices and procedures which have developed through MI5's history from nearly non-existent and informal to structured and formalised practices. As the process has shifted from a “tap on the shoulder” to more advertised and formalised

approaches, the demographics of successful candidates have also shifted. A key part of this process is examining who is considered as trustworthy, why, and how that has shifted with organisational changes. Vetting processes, for example, have become more rigorous and complex as new procedures have replaced old. In understanding contemporary intelligence employment practices, it is also essential to understand what influences and assumptions remain from previous practices.

The second section addressing everyday employment experiences and job tasks is split in to two parts. The *first part* of section two is more focused on job tasks, examining the different roles women have performed in intelligence employment. This also looks at the impact of horizontal occupational sex segregation on the opportunities for individual women, and how prescriptive gender roles in employment were, at time, challenged or defied. In doing so emphasis is placed on the ways in which those barriers were skirted, subverted, or broken down. Technological and organisational changes impacted how intelligence was conducted. For example, the 1950s to 1980s shift from widespread use of typists to a drawn out implementation of computerised records in MI5 had a clear impact on women's career opportunities and everyday experiences within the Security Service.

The second part of section two discusses involvement of family and personal matters in the lives of intelligence employees. This part addresses the impact of family and childcare responsibilities and how employees managed these in the workplace. Additionally, the unique social challenges of intelligence careers are discussed, including the recurring themes of social withdrawal and insular organisational cultures.

The third section addresses experiences of promotion and progression within MI5, comparing it to that of other intelligence organisations. Emphasis is placed here on how

vertical occupational sex segregation has been experienced within intelligence organisations and how individual employees or groups of employees have dealt with the problems this issue creates. This section also looks at some of the assumptions which have influenced or hindered women's progression in their careers.

The fourth and final section addresses departure, including motivations and reasons for leaving intelligence work. Reasons for leaving employment can play a significant role in the way one speaks about their employment experiences. How an individual left employment and why can also influence their opportunities to share their work experiences, including organisational responses to attempts to write memoirs or engage in public speaking. In this respect, this section also forms a bridge to Chapter Six which will analyse how women reflect on their intelligence work.

Experiences in Intelligence Work

More Than Just a Letter in the Post: Recruitment and hiring

As noted in Chapter Four, recruitment practices and policies have had a profound impact on the organisational culture of MI5. Due to the tradition of informal recommendation in MI5's hiring processes, recruitment experiences for women varied based on who they knew and how they were recommended. This is particularly relevant for women recruited from MI5's inception through to the 1960s as hiring practices shifted for women.

As the Security Service rapidly expanded during the First World War, employment for both men and women increased, though it should be noted the numbers of women quickly surpassed those of men employed. Some women were brought in to handle specialised tasks within MI5, such as printing to reduce costs and increase efficiency. The operation of a

printing press reduced the need to retype documents for internal distribution.¹ Though these other specialised skills could influence recruitment, the agency largely employed women in secretarial, clerical and typist roles.

As discussed in Chapter Four, wartime recruitment levels, particularly in the latter years of WWII, were influenced by a dwindling supply of men. At the same time, women's desire to serve must be acknowledged. As former MI5 employee Joan Miller wrote, she had not considered (in 1938) what war work related role she might serve in. She notes that her mother's pressure also spoke to class expectations of war service, stating,

'Her friend's daughters, she told me, were all enlisting in the Women's Services, becoming trainee nurses and VADs, or preparing to work in Service canteens. Where did that leave me? Behaving selfishly as usual, she supposed. She was sure I was deficient in patriotic instincts.'²

These more common war service routes did not appeal to Miller. Spurred on by the pressure from her mother, she met up with a friend from her school days who worked in the War Office to gain assistance with employment. This social connection was what led to her recruitment into MI5. For Miller, her social status helped her application, which she acknowledged in her memoirs. It is important to note that her application was supported by three references: two by Service members (one a family member, the other a friend) and an additional reference from the Dame of Sark.³

¹ TNA KV 1/50, 'Organisation and Administration 1920: first supplement on Women's Work'.

² Miller, J., *One Girl's War*, (Brandon: Dublin, 1987), p.10.

³ Miller, *One Girl's War*, p. 11. At the time of this reference from the Dame of Sark, it could be assumed that it came from the presumptive heir of Sark, a woman known for defying class and gendered standards, in part, due to her father raising her unconventionally, due to the lack of a male heir.

Miller's recruitment experience was typical of the WWII era women MI5 recruited, and echoes official reporting. These practices of personal recommendation were implemented from the hiring of the first woman in MI5 prior to WWI and became a standard practice for both men and women recruits. Returning to Proctor's discussion of gendered concepts of trust, Miller's experience, and that discussed in the previous chapter of Line (née Dimmock) both fit this pattern of relatives and family connections being used to determine a woman's suitability and trustworthiness.

Bletchley Park had a similar "privileged daughters and debs" image to that of MI5 during the Second World War. As Tessa Dunlop notes in *Bletchley Girls*, 'Inevitably perhaps, Establishment Britain began recruiting from their own sort for their most secret operations centre.'⁴

Recruitment Contact Methods

Like Miller and Line, other MI5 recruits in later decades fell into intelligence work, rather than intentionally seeking it out. While employment opportunities for university educated women increased in the 1950s and 1960s, career options remained limited in comparison to those of men. As discussed in Chapter Three, increasing numbers of women were accessing university level education, however, their labour market opportunities remained limited. Expectations of resignation upon marriage were still common in public sector work, either socially expected (informal) or mandated by policy (formal). These mechanisms contributed to limited options for women in government work – particularly for the Foreign Office, were

⁴ Dunlop, T., *The Bletchley Girls*, (Hodder & Stoughton: London, 2015), p. 65.

a marriage bar was in effect until abolished in 1972.⁵ (For the Civil Service, the bar was lifted in 1946.)

Cathy Massiter and Stella Rimington joined MI5 within a few years of one another. Though they had similar educational and post-university employment backgrounds, their recruitment occurred through different means. Both cases illustrate common recruitment practices in the late 1960s. Rimington, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, with a Master of Arts in English Language and Literature, found herself uncertain of what to do after finishing her degree. Rimington sought out a year long course in archival studies at the University of Liverpool and shortly after found herself a librarian.⁶ Cathy Massiter worked as a librarian after completing her degree. Neither woman recalls much enthusiasm for their librarian work. Massiter found herself dissatisfied enough to want a career change and sought assistance from her university's appointments board.⁷

Rimington, on the other hand, married and left her librarian work to become a diplomat's wife. Her husband was posted to India and Rimington put her career plans aside, expecting to take on the role of wife and mother. She was approached in 1967 by one of the First Secretaries – a rank her husband also held – and was asked if she had the time to help out in the office. When she went to the office the following day she was told that this First Secretary was the MI5 representative in India, and that she would be brought on as a temporary clerk-typist. The small office – which she worked in for approximately a year –

⁵ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 'Women and the Foreign Office: A History' *History Notes*, Issue 20, available at: [https://issuu.com/fcohistorians/docs/women_in_diplomacy_history_note__5b], pp. 18-21.

⁶ Rimington, talk at the University of Edinburgh General Council, February 2012, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3BEO9GSFQo> [following references: EdinTalkSR]

⁷ "MI5's Official Secrets" 20/20 Vision, 8 March 1985, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRuAzSDhZXk> [following references: 20/20]

consisted of the MI5 representative, a secretary and herself.⁸ Though Rimington could not type, a fact acknowledged by her recruiter, she believes she was hired because, as the wife of a British official, she was someone who could be trusted. It should be added that this trend fits with the abovementioned patterns of women's recruitment and family connections dating back to the World Wars. Deciding she liked the work, Rimington applied to MI5 again, for a more permanent position not long after her return to London in 1969.⁹

Massiter's MI5 recruitment proved to be a more direct process. Through the university's appointments board, she found a Ministry of Defence posting for an information processing position. Though she applied for this position, she received a letter in the post inviting her to apply for a different position. After a successful application, Massiter began her MI5 career in 1970.¹⁰ The letter in the post method was also used for the recruitment of Annie Machon decades later in 1990. Both methods – the tap on the shoulder and letter in the post – have been preferred methods of contact for MI5.

Though a letter in the mail was less common in the United States, the Central Intelligence Agency recruited women from similar backgrounds, increasing in numbers during the 1950s and 1960s as well. As with MI5, some women entered intelligence work due to a lack of other desirable options. Intelligence employment held the possibility for interesting or adventurous work for ambitious women in a limited opportunity environment. Sandy Grimes, for example, was hired by the CIA in the late 1960s. She recalls crossing a picket line at her university to attend a CIA recruitment session in 1966.¹¹ Direct from university

⁸ Rimington, S., *Open Secret*, pp. 67-71

⁹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 80-82.

¹⁰ 20/20

¹¹ Grimes, S. and J. Vertefeuille, *Circle of Treason*, (Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2013), p. 11.

recruitment of women was more common in the United States at the time than it was for the United Kingdom.

For another CIA recruit, Kay Shaw Nelson, there are parallels to the university recruitment undertaken by MI5 in the post-WWII years. Nelson, who was in the middle of her university education at the end of WWII, was directed towards the CIA by one of her university professors. Though she had originally planned to go into journalism, working as a local newspaper reporter during her summer holidays, she soon decided to change her career path. With the end of the war, she felt her opportunities in that field would be limited.

Nelson writes, 'adding excitement to our campus routine and dominating the journalism programs, diminishing, I thought, my hopes for future newspaper employment as a reporter. Thus, I switched career roles, deciding to take an innovative two-year program in Russian studies that began in September 1946.'¹² The change in educational focus was what led to her eventual CIA recruitment. When a professor of Russian history recommended she meet with a contact in Washington D.C. regarding an employment opportunity, Nelson simply added it to the list of contacts she had been planning to seek out in D.C. Nelson was given a name, with no mention of CIA employment. After the interview, she only knew the organisation and grade she would be hired at, but accepted a job based only on these details.¹³

Though hired, the process to employment had some delay for Nelson. She was given little information, even the date of the start of her CIA employment was unclear. She returned home for the summer and awaited news. Three months after her interview, she made an

¹² Nelson, K. S., *The Cloak and Dagger Cook: A CIA memoir*, (Gretna, LA, Pelican, 2009), p.25.

¹³ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, pp. 22-25.

inquiry via her senator's office. The unusual nature of the inquiry led to a quick reply and rather cordial greeting once she finally arrived to begin her employment.¹⁴ The unusual circumstances highlight the less formal employment procedures that can take place with this tap on the shoulder method.

Shifting Recruitment Demographics

Both the CIA and MI5 experienced increasing formalisation of recruitment practices over the following decades, though some recruitment practices, like the letter in the post for MI5, held on. In the 1960s and 1970s recruitment processes changed for MI5 and increasingly, university graduates were recruited through their universities. With this shift also came an increasing number of university educated women. As the flow of ex-colonial servicemen dwindled, MI5's recruitment pools needed to expand once again.

Though university recruitment had increased for MI5, opportunities within the Security Service varied. One's alma mater still held influence over career trajectories. In the early 1990s, a new officer grade was incorporated into MI5, GI6 (General Intelligence). This was in addition to GI5, the grade Machon was hired at. Machon notes that, 'regardless of age and experience' one's hiring grade appeared to be based on the university they attended. Those from Oxbridge and redbrick universities were more likely to begin their employment in the higher of the two grades.¹⁵ Arguably, this is an improvement upon previous university recruitment which focused more on privileging Oxbridge connections.

Lindsay Moran's experience takes place in the CIA not long after Annie Machon's time in MI5 and provides a good parallel for understanding how both agencies changed in

¹⁴ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, pp.29-30.

¹⁵ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers: MI5, MI6 and the Shayler Affair*, (Sussex: The Book Guild, 2005), p. 26.

recruitment practices and employment demographics. Moran's CIA class was wider in composition than previous CIA cohorts, consisting of, 'some former cops, a lot of ex-military people, hardly any academics.'¹⁶ This represented a shift in CIA hiring demographics, as Moran noted, 'The agency certainly no longer was the natural extension of the Ivy league, as it had been in its earlier era.'¹⁷ As the number of Ivy League graduates fell, this brought about organisational culture shifts within the CIA.¹⁸

Moran was discouraged by family from applying to the CIA, most notably by her father, a former government employee who felt she was "not the type" to join the CIA.¹⁹ Moran, however, had a fascination with espionage that had remained with her since her childhood. She writes, though, that 'I wasn't naïve enough to think that the life of a CIA agent was all Hollywood glamour, but I was pretty sure I'd be good at it.'²⁰

Moran had originally planned to join the CIA immediately after completing her university studies. She filled in the application but never sent it in, saying that she "got spooked". Five years later, after travelling and spending time in the Peace Corps, Moran applied again and was eventually successful.²¹ For Moran, the process moved fairly quickly – the delays in her case were due to candidate hesitancy and the Fullbright scholarship she received which led to her postponing her start date.²² A further concern for her, closer to her start date was her foreign-born boyfriend.

¹⁶ Moran, L. *Blowing My Cover: My life as a CIA spy*, (New York, Penguin, 2005), p. 51.

¹⁷ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 51.

¹⁸ The role of education and class in the CIA – particularly in relation to Ivy League university graduates – will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

¹⁹ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 2-3.

²⁰ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 4.

²¹ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, pp. 7-9.

²² Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, pp. 24-25.

Prospective employees operate on limited information, an aspect of recruitment that does not change towards the end stages of the recruitment process. Though recruitment processes have become more formalised and bureaucratised for intelligence work, the recruitment approach to giving prospective new-hires information remains centred on this need-to-know approach. This practice is common across organisations and remains a common practice in contemporary intelligence recruitment. While this approach is useful for organisational secrecy and security, one result is that much of the recruitment process relies on candidates' motivation to seek employment, their perseverance in continuing in the recruitment process is a test in and of itself.

Motivations and Expectations

Though the motivations and ambitions of female recruits varied greatly, one common thread is that few actively sought out intelligence work. The exceptions, like Lindsay Moran in the above section, typically had a lifelong fascination with, or at least interest in, espionage. However, most had never considered intelligence work as an option for themselves prior to recruitment; it simply had not occurred to them that this line of work might be a possibility. At the prospect of a job offer in intelligence, another common theme is excitement. In fact, "exciting" is perhaps the most common descriptor used in autobiographical writing and talks years later.

This feeling was not limited to those in higher positions, such as assistant officers. An anonymous clerk's statement (which appeared in the 1985 episode of 20/20 alongside Cathy Massiter) highlighted the excitement she felt at working for MI5. Massiter, when asked by the interviewer if she thought MI5 employment to be exciting, stated that it had,

and that it had a “flavour of the unusual.”²³ For female recruits, MI5 represented more than just an employment opportunity, it presented a change from current options and held an allure often associated with secrets work. Others recall excitement during their recruitment and/or early work in MI5, but then comment on the drudgery of the work, or in some cases, specific tasks. Rimington, for example, writes specifically of her clerical post, ‘My MI5 job did not turn out to be particularly exciting.’²⁴

By the 1990s, the recruitment tone of MI5 had shifted. With parliamentary status and the whistleblowing of the 1980s still relevant, the Security Service shifted in tone for recruitment pitches. Since candidates receive most of their employment information from their recruiter, the recruiter plays a role in shaping the prospective employee’s views on the organisations. Machon writes of the optimistic tone in her recruitment process, ‘When I was being recruited in 1990 as part of a new generation of officers, I was told repeatedly that MI5 must work within the law.’²⁵ Machon was motivated by the idea of serving her country, doing ‘important work in defence of democratic values and human life.’ She describes her recruiter as a woman in her 30s and a bit of a hippy, noting, ‘I found that reassuring’. Machon does not explicitly say why she found this reassuring but spends time on describing how this recruiter was considerably different to what she would have expected. Though Machon’s experience may be somewhat unique, as after her arrival in MI5 Machon discovered that her recruiter was somewhat unusual amongst MI5 officers, known for recruiting “mavericks”.²⁶

²³ 20/20

²⁴ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 69.

²⁵ Machon, Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 6.

²⁶ Machon, Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 20.

Literary depictions of espionage and spies were most likely to influence first impressions of the opportunity for these new recruits. Rimington, who had been reading Kipling's *Kim* just prior to her India recruitment, remarked that she 'didn't know anything about MI5.'²⁷ Though she recalls in her memoir having read the Denning Report, acknowledging the Profumo affair coloured her knowledge of the organization.²⁸ For Machon, her view was influenced more by Le Carre's novels, resultantly characterised as "bleak".²⁹ Interestingly, Rimington has also commented on Le Carre's work, saying that his books are "quite reminiscent" of the MI5 she joined in the late 1960s.³⁰ Miranda Ingram writes in 1984 on the danger of this perception, 'that officers are tempted to enjoy the secrecy surrounding their work and to live the John Le Carre legend. This hinders independent thinking and critical self-questioning.'³¹ As can be seen from some of the above quotes, employed and former intelligence professionals also touch on fictional versions of intelligence in their references to intelligence work. The tone of the fictional material has some influence over their expectations of intelligence work, even if the work itself does not entirely match up to those expectations.

Money, however, was not necessarily a consistent motivation for recruits. Though paid employment held appeal, particularly for women during the first half of the 20th century, opportunities in the private sector and other areas of government meant that competition grew for MI5, especially after the Foreign & Commonwealth Office marriage bar was struck down in the early 1970s. Rimington, speaking more generally on the motivations of those

²⁷ EdinTalkSR

²⁸ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 67.

²⁹ Machon, A., talk at the University of Aberdeen, 2014, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmObwmUHq7I&t=1457s> [following references: AberdeenTalkAM]

³⁰ ABC, '7.30 Report', "The World of Espionage with Stella Rimington" 2 March 2009, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJuAYB4_Uyk [following references: ABC, '7:30 Report']

³¹ Ingram, M., 'Trouble with Security' *New Society*, 31 May 1984, p. 349.

who worked in MI5, describes it as complex. Compensation was not a key factor with no bonuses or extra pay to incentivise recruitment or longer term employment.³²

Culture of Secrecy and Concepts of Trust in Recruitment/Hiring

Though fears of German subversion were prevalent during the world wars and interwar years, perceived threats had shifted in the postwar era to focus more on Soviet and/or communist subversion. According to Rimington, the Security Service in the late 1960s reflected this attitude, which governed international and even domestic contacts. ‘This fear of infiltration which governed everything’ not only influenced the security and vetting practices of MI5 (as mentioned in the above relevant section) but also influenced how individuals felt about their work. The closing of ranks and the prevailing culture of secrecy that dominated Security Service life at the height of the Cold War was not all that divergent from previous conflicts. New recruits of the 1960s and 1970s found themselves in an organisation rocked by the revelations of Soviet moles amongst their ranks. At the same time, Rimington characterises the relationship between MI5 and the government as a “mutual avoidance pact” in the early 1970s with limited laws and government oversight, along with limited contact with the Civil Service, all governed by a fear that looking too closely at the Security Service would cause issues.³³

As discussed in Chapter Four, concepts of trust and who could be trusted were central to MI5’s hiring processes. Revelations about the Cambridge spies provided a shock to MI5’s sense of internal security. The Wright case, as cited by Rimington, also impacted the morale of MI5.³⁴ However, the effects of breaches of secrecy and fears of infiltration were certainly

³² Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 179.

³³ EdinTalkSR

³⁴ EdinTalkSR

not unique to MI5. Other organisations, including SIS or the American CIA were not immune –such fears comprised an essential element of intelligence work during this time. Further, such fears may have contributed to organisational resistance to change, particularly when it came to allowing new people to enter this select, elite and insular group.

Miranda Ingram, the former MI5 officer who first wrote in 1984 to *New Society* magazine about the Bettaney case, noted the impact of the Labour Party's 1976 decision to include state and working class background men into the Security Service.³⁵ Bettaney was an MI5 officer who had been caught attempting to pass secret information to the Soviet officials.

Though Oxford educated, Bettaney came from a working class background. Ingram argued the benefits of opening up MI5's ranks to greater class diversity and educational backgrounds, however, Bettaney's betrayal counteracted those calls for greater inclusion in recruitment. At the same time, Ingram praises Bettaney for having 'remained true to his working class origins' something, which according to Ingram was at the time, especially difficult to do. Ingram argues that there is a problem with this insular culture, stating, 'What is wrong, surely, is that these people, and others who are not seduced by the glamour of it all still feel uncomfortable within the service.' Her critique of the service is not unwarranted.

With a separate career structure for women in place until the mid-1970s (which was slow to break down even once chipped away at), and recruitment practices which favoured men from higher class backgrounds and elite educations, the Security Service was still too slow to change for many of those employees who chose to speak out during the 1980s and even into the 1990s. Ingram's article highlights the cultural divide that took place within MI5 as recruitment backgrounds diversified (by class and education). Her critique of the service is

³⁵ Ingram, 'Trouble with Security', p. 349.

sharpest when referring to its cultural divide, saying that ‘Glamour and secrecy make for a very elite club. Some accept membership as a birthright. To those of the new broader intake, who were not born to expect easy superiority, membership is a privilege.’³⁶

Cathy Massiter took a similar view to Ingram, instead of blaming Bettaney alone – though she certainly did not condone his choice to attempt to divulge classified information – Massiter also blamed the Security Service, saying that Bettaney was, ‘to a large extent a product of the security service itself’ implying that the resistance of the service to critique and change helped to create this problem.³⁷

Secrecy, Vetting, Testing

Intelligence work remains apart from other government public sector work in the sense that secrecy and mystery that shrouds it. Cold war fears, the Cambridge spies and fears of further infiltration were viewed as legitimising factors for both the sense of danger and culture of secrecy. As Rimington remarks upon here formal entry to the Security Service, ‘MI5 at the time was very closed, inward-looking.’³⁸ This impacted everyday life, friendships and family relationships for those who worked for MI5. The process of secrecy began with recruitment and was expected to last after employment ended with the organisation. This was enforced through policy (via the Official Secrets Act) and through an organisational culture which negatively viewed those who spoke about their work. As Rimington recalls, ‘We weren’t allowed to talk about what we did or where we did it really. There were all kind

³⁶ Ingram, ‘Trouble with Security’, p. 349.

³⁷ Massiter, C., Letter to the Editor, New Society, 14 June 1984, p. 445.

³⁸ EdinTalkSR

of rules about what you could say to whom, and as far as I could remember, it really consisted mostly of saying nothing to nobody about nothing.³⁹

Positive Vetting (PV) was introduced to MI5's responsibilities in the postwar years. A behemoth task which threatened to overwhelm the Security Service, PV became standard procedure for new hires by the late 1950s.⁴⁰ When Rimington was first hired as a local employee in India in 1967, she had to engage in this process, 'Before I could work for him [the MI5 representative who recruited her], he explained, I had to be positively vetted. I filled in a form, which asked me all about myself and my family.' As Rimington recalls, the process was not taken all that seriously by the recruiter and even less so by her husband. She wrote her parents to explain cursory details about a new job opportunity, letting them know some questions might be asked. Later, Rimington discovered how thorough the checks had been, finding out that references had been sought from her school, including her headmistress.⁴¹ This example illustrates the more increasingly formalised vetting processes MI5 employed during this time period, however vetting continued to increase in terms of rigour in the following decades. As noted in Chapter Four, vetting processes went through multiple changes during the twentieth century, each time more in depth than the last. The positive vetting of Rimington's entry in to MI5, became developed vetting when Machon entered the Security Service.

At its core, the developed vetting process remains similar to past experiences, simply with added layers of checks. Applying in 1990, Machon faced similar checks, though much had been added to the application process in the intervening years. The process of positive

³⁹ EdinTalkSR

⁴⁰ Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, ch. 4.

⁴¹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 67. Interestingly, Rimington only notes references taken from her earlier schooling, making no reference to either of the universities she attended.

vetting had shifted to developed vetting, a more in depth look into applicants lives and histories. Having received a letter inviting her to an interview, Machon was unaware that the organisation was MI5, until about half way through her first interview. She was asked to and signed the Official Secrets Act in order to continue with the interview and hiring process. It should be noted that Machon is not highly critical of her own overall recruitment process, and she appears to hold a very positive impression of her recruiter. Machon notes however that her recruiter was outside the norm for MI5, something she realised only after she began her employment. Yet, when it comes to the OSA, Machon is critical. She refers to the document and on signing it during her first interview as a “piece of theatre”.⁴² Machon was limited on who she could tell about the process to her immediate family and her boyfriend.⁴³ For vetting purposes, she was required⁴³ to provide the names of four people who knew her, and they each in turn would be required to provide the names of four more people.⁴⁴

Vetting and testing processes added elements over time, both for protecting organisational security and finding suitable candidates. This also increased the length of time which the hiring process took. For Machon, it was ten months. Interviews and vetting involved in depth questions about work, family and relationships. As part of Machon’s hiring process for MI5, the Enhanced Positive Vetting (EPV) she went through included interviews about her sex life.⁴⁵ Similarly, the CIA included questioning about sexuality in their interviews. In the

⁴² Machon, *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*,, p. 22.

⁴³ Machon, talk at Cambridge University, 28 January 2011, [following references: CambTalkAM]

⁴⁴ AberdeenTalkAM

⁴⁵ Machon, *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 25.

CIA's psychological evaluation for prospective candidates, Moran notes there were specific questions regarding her sexuality.⁴⁶

The number of people an MI5 employee, or potential recruit can tell about their employment is necessarily limited. Though some defied these rules, trusted individuals were typically limited to immediate family, including spouses. Policy on romantic partners changed over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting shifting attitudes towards women and relationships. More recent policy, such as in Machon's case, allowed recruits to tell their boyfriends or girlfriends, earlier policy mandated stricter limits. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, female employees and recruits of MI5 could still tell immediate family, but were prevented from telling a boyfriend. Only if he were to become her fiancé, would an MI5 employee be allowed to inform him of the real identity of her employer.⁴⁷ From Rimington's description, it seems a specific parallel, however, did not exist for men.

Aside from interviews, signing the Official Secrets Act, and vetting processes, the process included sitting the CSSB. A two-day process of testing included role-play exercises, a paper, and peer evaluations on exercises. Machon notes that the CSSB required a different skill-set than that needed by MI5, she writes, 'In fact, the two days of tests were gruelling – far harder than the actual desk work of an MI5 officer.'⁴⁸ The conclusion of the 10 months for a successful candidate would mean making it through to the final selection board.⁴⁹ Machon says very little about this final selection board compared to her descriptions of other aspects of the recruitment process. However, Machon does note that after the final selection board

⁴⁶ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, pp. 12-14.

⁴⁷ EdinTalkSR

⁴⁸ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ AberdeenTalkAM

she was phoned the same day and offered a job.⁵⁰ This again suggests that for candidates who have succeeded in the recruitment interviews and tests, that this final selection board might be a formality. The lengthy recruitment process also challenged a candidates' determination and resolve, and was, perhaps, a test in and of itself.

Unlike MI5, the CIA relied more on lie detector testing as part of its array of candidate tests. However, much of the other CIA recruitment tests contained similarities to MI5. Lindsay Moran's recruitment and hiring experiences represent the more common contemporary route for CIA agents. Moran underwent a drug test, hearing test and vision test.⁵¹

Moran notes that she found her polygraph testing to be very stressful. On her second polygraph test, she was informed by her interviewer that she would not be hired by the agency. The polygrapher left the room and then later returned to say she would actually be hired, apologising for "yanking her chain". Moran also notes that a common practice in the polygraph interviews is for the interviewer to make up an incident of deception in order to get the interviewee to admit things they might not have otherwise revealed. Regarding the interviewers admitted deception in her case, Moran writes, 'I had never – and to this day, have never – heard of another occasion on which an Agency polygrapher showed his cards in such a way.'⁵²

This recruitment stage section, more so than the following stages, has discussed the early historical aspects of this area. The reason is twofold, as discussed in Chapter Four, Proctor has argued that who was hired was influenced by who could be trusted, along the lines of

⁵⁰ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 24.

⁵¹ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 2.

⁵² Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, pp. 25-27.

gender, class, nationality, and family service to the state.⁵³ In that chapter, her argument was expanded upon, to include education and show how prevalent these factors were in organisational preferences. Importantly, in the conclusion of her article, Proctor argued that who was recruited and why had impacts which were still visible in the modern Security Service. As such, this section carries both arguments forward by showing longer term trends in the individual recruitment and hiring experiences of women, both in how these experiences compared to those of men and how women's experiences gradually changed over time. The goal is to show the continuity from past hiring preferences and how these historical trends, for MI5, were more persistent than other policies and practices which changed as the organisation grew. This resistance to change shaped how women were hired and where they began their employment within the organisation. This in turn, had lasting impacts on their career experiences and opportunities.

Working in Intelligence

Initial Employment and Training

Training practices at MI5 varied greatly, but became increasingly formalised as the organisation grew. Training for clerks, transcribers, assistant officers and officers remained separate. Women hired directly in MI5 offices within Commonwealth typically received the least training – usually on the job. By the 1950s, women coming in as clerical workers, typists or transcribers were generally expected to have had training in skills such as typing or shorthand prior to joining the organisation. However, as more jobs opened to women in

⁵³ Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence' *Journal of Social History*, 39:2 (2005), p. 452.

the 1970s, university degrees were common amongst recruits. Once on the job, women often found their degrees were less beneficial to their careers.

Similar expectations existed within the CIA. Jeanne Vertefeuille began her CIA career in the 1950s. Despite a university degree and language training, her options were limited.

Secretarial skills were necessary for female candidates, including typing and shorthand. At the university job fair where she learned about CIA opportunities for women, she was advised to gain these skills as the only openings for women were clerical. As Vertefeuille recalled, 'In those days, a woman's educational background and linguistic accomplishments meant nothing.'⁵⁴ While it can be argued that her education influenced her employment prospects, it did little to influence her career progression until later in her career.

A decade later, when Sandy Grimes joined the CIA she was grouped with other female candidates: 6 other Intelligence Assistants amongst a 100-plus pool of secretarial candidates. Grimes' first few months with the agency consisted of busywork – dealing with unclassified or less sensitive material while she was interviewed, vetted and cleared her polygraph.⁵⁵ Recalling the experience of her first few months in the CIA, Grimes writes, 'It was during this period we learned that college degrees, foreign languages, and professional testing aside, we were clerical employees of the Directorate of Operations.'⁵⁶ She also noted that some women stayed on in the CIA and the situation for women improved, but not before the CIA lost qualified and skilled recruits.

Initial employment in the CIA continued to involve holding patterns for new employees.

Placed in agency pools, their work was of a less sensitive nature, and often took place

⁵⁴ Vertefeuille, *Circle of Treason*, pp.1-2.

⁵⁵ Grimes, *Circle of Treason*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Grimes, *Circle of Treason*, p. 11.

concurrently with further background checks on the new employees. For some, this was a chance to adjust to agency culture, while others, who took the pools less seriously, opted to goof off.

Nelson was placed in an agency pool while with other prospective employees while her clearance checks took place. After three months in the pool, she was finally brought in to her section.⁵⁷ She received an apology from her division chief, who cited a long list of background checks for the FBI to conduct causing the delay in her case.⁵⁸

Regarding her experiences in the pool, Nelson writes, 'I would spend three bewildering months in a personnel pool, a holding area for prospective employees who had not yet received their final security clearances.'⁵⁹ However, the experiences would not prove to be entirely terrible, 'Our CIA pool would prove to be as amusing as it was clandestine.' Though at times frustrated with the conduct of her training pool colleagues, particularly in their lack of drive and effort, she enjoyed her time with them. Those in the training pool questioned the value of the work they were assigned. As Nelson recalls, 'Our pool comprised an enthusiastic group of men and a few women putting in time doing makeshift work while waiting for serious or permanent assignments.' She once again found herself in an environment comprised mainly of ex-military personnel. Aside from the ex-military personnel, few like her were directly out of university, more were likely to have had outside employment experience.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 38.

⁵⁸ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 43.

⁵⁹ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 30.

⁶⁰ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 31.

Nelson was assigned to research the Caucasus, an assignment which she took seriously and held enthusiasm for, more so than some of her training pool colleagues.⁶¹ Later, after she left the training pool, she would be assigned to the Caucasus desk, and her familiarity with the area gained from her research would prove to be useful.⁶² Her adjustment to the new more permanent assignment proved to be a 'strange and trying experience.' The office was described by her as "inscrutable" and quiet, lacking in foot traffic or communication.⁶³ Later, as she progressed in her career, her scope would be expanded to the Central Asian area of USSR.⁶⁴

Nelson, placed in a pre-operational, division found herself in a situation similar to her training pool in the CIA. This time, the women were moved to a back room together, and much of their time before the division went operational was spent on busywork. Reflecting on her first few months in the CIA, Nelson also wrote that it, 'hadn't been so bad after all, I had been given a marvellous opportunity to acquire valuable knowledge and, more importantly, during the past three months I had learned to be my own best friend.'⁶⁵

Though she did socialise with some in her training pool, she recalls that it was also an isolating experience. For others in her pool the experience was different. Rules regarding secrecy and talking about one's background were ignored, one couple in the pool started dating and were later married.⁶⁶

There were training experiences that were neither strenuous or tedious. Moran notes, for example, that some of her training experiences at the Farm were amusing and enjoyable,

⁶¹ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, pp. 31-34.

⁶² Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 43.

⁶³ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 44.

⁶⁴ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 51.

⁶⁵ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 40.

⁶⁶ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 35.

stating regarding a costume/disguise based training exercise, ‘When Ethan’s eyes met mine, we both burst out laughing. I can hardly believe I’m getting paid to have this much fun.’⁶⁷

The final exercise for trainees at The Farm was a real-world exercise in which they would live a cover and engage in detection and avoidance of surveillance.⁶⁸ Upon the completion of training, CIA agents would graduate from The Farm, in a ceremony which was CIA only, no families, spouses or significant others could attend.⁶⁹ Moran, despite her father’s earlier assertion that she was not the CIA type, graduated second in her class.

Similar attitudes towards women employees were held in MI5.⁷⁰ Assistant Officers, who handled the clerical work and occasionally intelligence analysis work, would initially be placed in a training section. The section would consist of women, but not necessarily of the same grade. Rimington, on her permanent appointment to MI5 in 1969 found herself placed in one of these sections for training. She characterised the behaviour within the section as “eccentric”, representative of the larger atmosphere of MI5 at the time. Rimington entered the organisation at a time of cultural change; though the “debs” were still present amongst the women staff, university graduates and women of other class backgrounds were being hired in increasing numbers. One such eccentricity stood out to her: the women in her training section would pause just before lunch, pull out fine glasses and sherry for a pre-lunch drink.⁷¹ Not only were her fellow trainees in the section women, the supervisors of the section were as well.⁷²

⁶⁷ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 148.

⁶⁸ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 165.

⁶⁹ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 165.

⁷⁰ As discussed in Chapter Four.

⁷¹ EdinTalkSR

⁷² EdinTalkSR

Training time served to familiarise new employees with MI5 procedures and documentation. An anonymous former MI5 clerk, for example, reported two months of training in MI5's industrial room in 1978, after which she worked as a transcriber.⁷³ Training sections appear to mostly be separated by sex, at least through to the late 1980s. This appears to reflect practices of horizontal occupational sex segregation more than any sort of official policy.

Machon's first few weeks echoes those who came before her, minus any noticeably sex segregated training environment. By the time Machon started in MI5, new employee procedures had changed and became more formalised. She spent her first two weeks in the training course (referred to as TC101) engaging in desk work. Trainers emphasised the importance of paper work procedures, and not making mistakes.⁷⁴

A mentoring scheme for post training course employees had been added as well. As Machon recalls, 'All new MI5 officers are "mentored" by a more experienced officer, usually of the same grade, over a period of six months.' Machon compares her mentoring experience to David Shayler's, noting that the quality of mentorship varied by mentor. Hers had little interest in the mentoring scheme, while Shayler's was much more involved.⁷⁵ Machon's first post-training position at MI5 was in a counter-subversion section where she handled classified and sensitive information. Though it was a desk job, handling of information from sources put her close to the front lines of intelligence work. She notes however, 'within a few weeks, the handling of such secret and intrusive information became entirely normal.'⁷⁶

⁷³ 20/20

⁷⁴ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 38.

⁷⁶ Machon, A., "Annie Machon: my so-called life as a spy" *The Telegraph*, 29 August 2010, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/7969608/Annie-Machon-my-so-called-life-as-a-spy.html> [following references: 2010AMTele]

Lindsay Moran's experience of the CIA's training facility (the Farm), was largely positive. She refers to some instructors as 'likeable, and even inspiring.' She was assigned a mentor, a man named Bill known for being a "legendary [agent, not officer] recruiter".⁷⁷ She notes that Bill was among those she viewed positively, that 'Bill differentiated himself from the other instructors by refraining from making inappropriate cracks or sexist slurs.'⁷⁸ Yet even Bill was limited in his acceptance of women CIA agents, displaying an attitude that Moran found old fashioned. To Moran, he recalled rescuing female CIA agents from situations with men, and said he would not want his daughter to be a CIA agent.

Halt and Catch Fire: Impacts of technological advances and changes on intelligence work

For secretarial and clerical duties, it is important to understand the relevant technology. Though MI5 increased the number of computer installations in the 1970s and 1980s, records were still being moved to a computer based system in the 1990s.⁷⁹ The Registry relied on women to write, organise and search for files. As Andrew writes of the late 1970s in MI5's authorised history, 'In addition to the installation of a new main-frame computer, the paper-filing system, which had changed little since the war, was updated by the introduction of an ingenious miniature single-track railway used for moving files around the building.'⁸⁰ However, MI5's multiple buildings housing different sections also proved a logistical hindrance. Andrew points out that the vans used to transport files from one

⁷⁷ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 148.

⁷⁸ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 148.

⁷⁹ As Andrew notes, it was only when Stephen Lander became director of H branch in 1994 that MI5 switched 01970 622708 away from a particularly buggy UNIX-based word processing system to computers with Microsoft software and Linkworks (software that would allow MI5 to create custom and shared workspaces).

⁸⁰ Andrew, p. 551.

building to another could be caught up in traffic jams, a particular problem if the files were needed urgently.⁸¹

Technological advances also changed the way in which surveillance took place. Wire-taps could be recorded on large tape banks which ran continuously. The anonymous clerk interviewed on 20/20 worked as a transcriber after her training. She described her daily routine in the late 1970s and 1980s. In the morning, she would go up to the fifth floor and collect tapes. Once at her desk (on a different floor) she would begin transcribing the tapes. The clerk worked in a room with 7 other women transcribers, no male colleagues were mentioned. At times, the transcribers would joke amongst themselves, especially about having to listen to particularly tedious or inane telephone conversations.⁸²

Technological advances also caused problems for the Security Service. As computers became more common in office work, files previous held on paper needed to be converted to digital formats. However, MI5 information handling procedures were slow to advance, causing frustration for some employees. In the late 1980s a colour coding system was implemented by MI5 to organise its paper vetting files. Files were coded to green, amber or red depending on an individual's perceived concern by MI5. Machon notes that this system led to files being retained by MI5 decades longer than she felt they should have, with cases involving persons who either no longer posed a threat or had no recent association with groups of concern to MI5.⁸³

On a separate but related issue, this paper file system was of concern to MI5 employees particularly those in the late 1980s and early 1990s, who had experience with computerised

⁸¹ Andrew, pp. 551-552.

⁸² 20/20

⁸³ Machon, A., Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers, p. 49.

systems in the private sector. In 1991, Machon, working as an officer in F Branch (in F2, counter-subversion), recalled the inefficiencies of her daily work, 'This also meant that all my work had to be written out in longhand and passed to my secretary for typing, before coming back to me for correction. Having worked in other offices with computers, I found this painfully slow.'⁸⁴

Though MI5 management had realised the need to computerise, the organisation was slow to implement changes. While Machon had been working in F Branch, a computer program had been under development to manage files on subversives, called "Hawk". Notably, the program was designed within MI5, which, Machon adds, most computer programs were at the time. Highly critical of MI5's information technology practices, Machon writes of "Hawk", "It was anachronistic before it even came online in 1992. However, F2 management still insisted that clerical workers spend valuable man-hours inputting the relevant data to justify Hawk's development.'⁸⁵ Despite the attempt to justify Hawk, it became obsolete when the subversion section was shut down in 1996.⁸⁶

Women Office Staff at Home and Abroad

Life abroad for women in MI5 Commonwealth posts was different. Smaller, mixed offices led to a closer, more relaxed working environment, though many women still were limited to clerical work. Rimington's duties as a clerk-typist in India for example included answering phones, typing reports that would be sent off to London, followed by sealing those reports and sensitive MI5 communication in a special bag that would be included in the diplomatic

⁸⁴ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 38.

⁸⁵ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 50.

⁸⁶ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 51.

bag to London. She was paid by the day and in local currency, 25 rupees.⁸⁷ Aside from the pay (and her part time status) her work echoed that of women working in similar roles in other areas of the embassy, the difference being the sensitive nature of her work. However, women clerks and secretarial staff in London worked in a somewhat more formalised environment, one which seems to have relaxed over time, in part, due to the Second World War.

Some depictions of working life for young women in the Security Service appear in the organisation's authorised history. These provide small glimpses into what life was like in the interwar years and the Second World War. Catherine Morgan-Smith held a positive view of her working environment, 'We were a small closely-knit group, friends among ourselves, keenly interested in our work and proud of it. Best of all, the courtesy and kindness engendered by Sir Vernon and "Holy Willy" [Holt-Wilson] penetrated all levels of the Service and made it a happy place to work in.'⁸⁸ Morgan-Smith worked from 1933 to her retirement in 1963, a member of the female staff and later Lady Superintendent.⁸⁹ Income tax was not charged on wartime salaries until after the war, meaning that women's take home pay was larger than it might have been otherwise. Women were paid at the end of each month and would queue up for their pay 'outside the office of a rather terrifying lady, Miss Di[ck]er [Lady Superintendent], and her equally terrifying assistant Miss Constant, who wore a monocle' as another former employee recalled.⁹⁰

Occupational sex segregation characterised the Security Service's working environment, not just in the secretarial and clerical tasks that women were assigned, but also in the way

⁸⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 67-70.

⁸⁸ Andrew, p. 132.

⁸⁹ Andrew, p. 132, fn. 97.

⁹⁰ Andrew, p. 132.

which staff socialised. A female former staff member recalls, 'Working in the Office then was like being in a family firm, one felt secure...'⁹¹ Male staff were discouraged from socialising with female staff, though that policy appears to have not entirely prevented relationships from forming. The abovementioned staff member commented on Colonel Kell, with whom the female staff did not come into contact often, that, 'He kept an eye on our behaviour though.'⁹² Andrew's assessment of their working environment under Kell is that it was paternalistic – a rather accurate depiction of interwar and early WWII working environment. The staff member recalls, 'The Colonel [Kell] did not approve of familiarity between officers and staff. The officers were always known by their rank and surname and, of course, they called us Miss So-and-so. I worked for twelve years for Captain Liddell before he succumbed to the wartime habit of Christian names all round. In fact, the girls knew each other only by surname. I did not know the Christian names of most of my colleagues for years.'⁹³ As MI5 moved locations and registry staff were relocated to Wormwood Scrubs (a prison, at that time still housing some inmates) restrictions and formalities regarding everyday life in the Security Service were relaxed.

Remarking on MI5's history, Rimington remarked that 'the girls were really limited to desk work'. Kell, according to her, did not expect women to be spies. Decades later when she was recruited, she found herself in a not dissimilar situation, speaking to the lack of opportunities for women, even with degrees, upon her permanent appointment to MI5 in 1969.⁹⁴ As mentioned in the above section, Rimington returned to MI5 in London in 1969, as a junior assistant officer and was hired back by the Security Service at a level equivalent to

⁹¹ Andrew, p. 133.

⁹² Andrew, p. 133.

⁹³ Andrew, p. 133.

⁹⁴ ABC, '7:30 Report'.

the Executive Officer grade within the Civil Service.⁹⁵ Though happy to return to MI5, she did not feel her education, background or experience were reflected in this assignment, not those of her peers within the organisation.

Rimington had made the decision jointly with her husband that she would return to work in 1969 after their move back to London. She contacted her former recruiter (the MI5 representative she had worked for in India) and was sent to the personnel office to interview.⁹⁶ She was interviewed by a man and by 'a rather severe middle-aged-lady, who was responsible for female staff.'⁹⁷ This statement suggests she met a lady superintendent, however Andrew reports that the last lady superintendent, Catherine Morgan-Smith retired in 1963.⁹⁸ Though no other woman might have been appointed to the title of controller for women staff or lady superintendent after Morgan-Smith, it appears that a female member of staff was still filling those associated tasks in 1969.

Women in the Field, Women in the Office

Everyday employment experiences are influenced not only by organisation and vocation, but also by environment. Sandy Grimes, who spent much of her CIA career at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia, noted that her work and work environment was task driven. Based on her experiences, she noted that an employee would be welcome to a section or team if they had the knowledge, skills, and willingness to make difficult decisions.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 82-90

⁹⁶ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 82

⁹⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 90.

⁹⁸ Andrew, p. 237.

⁹⁹ International Spy Museum, "Mother, Daughter, Sister, Spy" 1st annual talk hosted by the ISM, October 18 2016, available at: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boyGigccHKc>], [following references: ISMPanel].

Mendez, on the other hand, spent more time in the field. From her experiences in both areas she remarked that there was a perception amongst American men that women could not work in certain areas, including, for example the Middle East. However, her experience contradicts this perception, as she viewed being female as an advantage. Being female, in certain countries, granted her a status of invisibility compared to her male colleagues. In contrast to the perceptions of some of her male colleagues, Mendez notes gender was not an issue when working with agents. On working with agents and sources in the field, Mendez remarked, 'They didn't care if I was from Mars, they didn't care if I was green.'¹⁰⁰ One noted difference for female officers was in regards to meeting male agents. If meeting in a hotel room – for example to train or go over material – the classic solution would be that the female officer jumps into bed if someone attempts to interrupt the meeting.¹⁰¹ Like Mendez, Mahle found advantages to being a woman some of her assignments. In the Middle East, she felt like Western women were treated as a “third sex”, different from their male colleagues, but without many of the social restrictions that women in their assigned countries faced (for example, lesser restrictions in access to government officials). Flynn, on working in Africa, echoes the access she had as a western woman. She found that she could even get meetings her male colleagues could not, and suggests this was possibly due to some sort of perceived novelty of her status as a Western and/or professional woman. However, it was not uncommon for her to be followed or catcalled to the point where she once had to call off a meeting with an agent because she could not shake the men following her.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ ISMPanel

¹⁰¹ ISMPanel, a situation that Mendez never experienced personally, but was prepared to deal with in this manner

¹⁰² ISMPanel

Mahle notes she faced bureaucratic difficulty in getting to assignments in the Middle East in the first place. Assignments in the Middle East were difficult to obtain for women in the CIA. One had to be persistent in dealing with agency bureaucracy and attitudes towards women to achieve their desired assignment.¹⁰³ This is similar to the difficulty MI5 women faced in joining sections working on Irish terrorism. Informal practices, such as attitudes about appropriate (and safe) work for women combined with slow moving organisational policies to create additional hurdles for women who wanted to take on assignments that potentially had more risk involved. As Rimington remarks regarding women's progress in the early 1990s, 'The idea persisted that the culture of Arab countries and even Ireland would make it difficult for women to recruit and run male agents from these societies. There was also some paternalism left in the Service right through the '80s and the men then in charge sincerely believed that the most dangerous work was not suitable for women.'¹⁰⁴ Rimington's experiences and those of other MI5 women echo those of women in the CIA. Both groups faced similar reasoning for being denied certain assignments or job tasks. The resistance they faced seems to be greater from those in their organisation than those outside it.

[HUMINT and agent-running, common themes in discussions about](#)

There are commonalities between both office and field experiences for employees involved in agent-running and work with human intelligence (HUMINT) sources across different intelligence organisations. Agent-running was a difficult area of in-the-field operations for women to break into. Though office work was considered appropriate for women in MI5

¹⁰³ ISMPanel

¹⁰⁴ Rimington, Open Secret, p. 157.

(SIS, and the CIA) from the early 20th century, women faced both formal and informal barriers to more active engagement with intelligence gathering.

This issue highlights a key theme that will be further explored in Chapter Six: women often had to force their way in or persist in their attempts to work in certain areas. Even if no official policy existed, attitudes of male managers could block their path. Not only were locations blocked, but entire areas or subjects were restricted. For one example, Irish terrorism, as Rimington notes, was not seen as suitable work for women in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁵ Viewed as too risky, paternalistic assumptions influenced assignments in this area. The progress made in that area to allow women to engage in such field work will be discussed in the following section.

The other assumption is that women could not function in certain environments due to cultural norms regarding women's roles. One parallel that can be drawn here is with FCO assignments. As noted in the FCO's 'History of Women' historical note, even after the marriage bar was lifted women's progress was still slow. Like MI5, the FCO's 'institutional culture proved resistant to change' reflecting both assumptions about attitudes towards women abroad, and attitudes towards women within the UK.¹⁰⁶

[Running an Investigation and Distribution of Key Assignments](#)

Popular perceptions tend to view intelligence work primarily as human intelligence gathering. Though the recruiting of agents is an important element of intelligence work, there are other areas such as analysis or even electronic surveillance which fall under the umbrella of intelligence. Cathy Massiter's assignment in the early 1980s involved various

¹⁰⁵ EdinSR

¹⁰⁶ FCO, 'History of Women', p. 22.

intelligence types. Her investigation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) led to her eventual resignation from MI5, though her description of the investigation does provide insights into intelligence work. Her work involved reading case files on CND from when it was considered a subversive organisation. Additionally, an agent was placed within CND, an individual who had history of working for MI5. Discussion of electronic surveillance was also a part of her work, finding suitable targets and evaluating information gathered from these methods.

The CND had been removed from MI5's subversive organisation list by the time Massiter was told to take over the investigation, which later added to the controversy over the continued MI5 interest in the organisation and some of its leadership. Like other cases of MI5 assignments and promotions (which will be discussed in the following section) Massiter notes that she was chosen to take on this investigation.¹⁰⁷ Instead of seeking it out or trying to be placed on the investigation, she was simply told by her superiors to take on the task. This follows a pattern that can be seen with the careers of other MI5 employees, rather than actively campaigning or engaging with management to take on certain tasks, it seems that assignments are handed out by management. Interestingly, when Massiter noted that when she began the investigation it comprised only about half of her work. Two years later (around 1983) it comprised almost all of her work.¹⁰⁸

It should also be noted that the CND investigation took place under the counter-subversion section of MI5 – headed by Rimington from the early 1980s. Defence officials approached MI5 asking for a report on CND which Massiter was tasked with compiling. Political interest

¹⁰⁷ 20/20

¹⁰⁸ 20/20

in CND, she claimed, was excessive and did not belong in an investigation of CND. This report and concern over the investigation are what eventually led to her departure from MI5.

Despite the conditions of her departure and later media appearances, Massiter's description of her work does provide important insights into daily operations within MI5 in the early 1980s. As one of the (comparatively few) women officers of the time, Massiter's assignment to the CND case is important, in part because such a high level case was assigned to a woman officer. The CND investigation was politically important, but also important within MI5. Since cases were assigned, this also highlights the nature of how tasks in an organisation internally compartmentalised and focused on security procedures chooses to distribute assignments.

Employee Rights and Unions

Machon, especially, makes a strong case for unionisation rights for MI5's employees. Working in an organisation where positions and cases are assigned, owing to organisational secrecy, a potential power imbalance exists in favour of middle and upper management. Lacking a union, complaints about this process are more difficult to make. Early in her hiring process Machon learned about the restrictions on MI5's employees regarding union membership. She compares the union access of MI5 employees to those of GCHQ, arguing that the rights of GCHQ employees to join relevant trade unions should be extended to those of MI5.¹⁰⁹ Her argument centres on two points: employees should be able to raise concerns through appeals and employees should be able to refuse orders. Both points speak to the issue of overriding direct supervisors and higher management.

¹⁰⁹ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 22.

To illustrate the need for union representation, Machon describes a situation where a Metropolitan Police Special Branch (MPSB) officer was seconded to MI5 in 1993. As Machon describes the situation, the officer had friction with his group leader and was told off loudly by this leader in front of others for doing something that could be considered part of his job. Machon takes the officer's side in this case, 'As this officer's secondment was designed to build bridges with the Met this was clearly an awful way to deal with an individual, designed to humiliate him in front of his peers. Unlike MI5 officers, the detective sergeant had the benefit of his union. He went to the Police Federation and complained. Representations were successfully made on his behalf; his secondment was abruptly brought to an end; and he was taken back to MPSB because he had been put in an unworkable situation.'¹¹⁰

This highlights a resource which MI5 employees lacked. Machon speaks further on the need for an independent advocate when she is later denied a posting she felt she was well qualified for, to a lesser candidate. Despite the addition of a staff counsellor to MI5 in the 1980s, Machon argues that 'Because employees had no employment rights, they could be treated arbitrarily and in effect persecuted for pointing out what was wrong with the organisation. They could be compelled to follow orders even where they know that this might be unlawful.'¹¹¹ This returns to the above issue with lack of transparency in assignments, as Machon believed she was unfairly denied the posting due to her gender, but had little recourse or support to challenge the decision.

¹¹⁰ Machon, A., Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers, p.70.

¹¹¹ Machon, A., Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers, p.22.

Social Withdrawal and Insular Spy Culture: Friendships and Romance in the Workplace

The nature of secrets work can lend itself to increasing withdrawal from outside social circles. Unable to divulge the true nature of one's work, it becomes easier to socialise outside of work with colleagues instead of unaware neighbours or friends. Withdrawal from one's social networks during recruitment and early career in intelligence work is a recurrent theme amongst those who have later spoken about their work. Many, like Annie Machon, remember a process of adjustment, not only to the new employment but to a new way of life. Machon describes her first few weeks as "cognitive dissonance" where 'the feeling of unreality and dislocation is strong,' including this process of her becoming insulated from her old life.¹¹²

Moran's experience in the CIA is similar, during training she found herself, 'becoming a bit withdrawn' a change in herself that she found unusual as she describes herself as an open and social person. Despite this tendency, Moran found herself having difficulty with outside connections and friendships.¹¹³

New officers were likely to socialise within the MI5 community. Machon writes that, 'This, inevitably, often led to more than friendships. What might otherwise be called office romances flourished.'¹¹⁴ MI5 does not appear to have had strict policies against such office romances at the time, and in terms of informal policy, it seems that employee relationships were accepted as something that happened. Machon states, 'Such relationships were not

¹¹² CambTalkAM and 2010AMTele

¹¹³ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, pp. 35-36.

¹¹⁴ 2010AMTele

exactly encouraged, but were generally seen as a good thing by management – unless, of course, it was a clandestine matter that could leave the officer vulnerable to blackmail. Such affairs were seen as vetting offences.’¹¹⁵ Yet, double standards for male and female employees may have still prevailed in certain cases. Machon recounts a case of two employees who were given very different repercussions for their relationship, ‘Among spies, an old double standard held firm. There was one couple who were caught in flagrante in the office, not once but twice. The male officer was put on “gardening leave” for six months; the woman was sacked.’¹¹⁶ Machon shares this particular example in a matter-of-fact tone, suggesting the difference in consequences for the two employees were not surprising, nor unexpected.

[Adjusting to the Security Precautions of a Secret Life](#)

Security restrictions led to adjustment issues for some new employees. This was particularly true for the CIA. Adjustment to the strict security practices of the Agency proved difficult for Nelson, particularly after she left the pool for a more permanent assignment. With restrictions on casual discussions, especially if related to one’s work, it took longer than usual for new employees to settle in. Nelson notes that casual conversations in hallways did not take place, employees did not linger in common spaces within offices. For Nelson, meeting her co-workers took longer than expected due to this more restricted workplace environment.¹¹⁷ With the exception of some military personnel who preferred more formal

¹¹⁵ 2010AMTele

¹¹⁶ 2010AMTele

¹¹⁷ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 44.

address, first names only were used within the office.¹¹⁸ This is an interesting contrast to the depiction of MI5's early use of surnames only as restrictive.

While employee interaction was limited by environment and policy, employees outside lives were mediated by organisational policies and practices regarding secrecy as well. The inability to speak about one's work can cause social issues, either isolating the officer who refuses to speak about their work or forces them to fabricate a career. As such, one of the more obvious limitations intelligence employees face is also one of the most restrictive.

This was an issue for those who worked in Washington D.C. where discussing one's work is not only commonplace, but expected and essential. Nelson faced this problem on more than one occasion, further isolating her and limiting her social circle to colleagues.¹¹⁹ This led to her making the decision to stop socialising with non-CIA people, though it was not the first time she felt the urge to do so.¹²⁰ Eventually, Nelson met her husband through mutual CIA friends. He, of course, had also been employed by the Agency.

Practices of security with the CIA tightened further after secrecy breaches caused a reevaluation of security practices. The Nicholson and Ames fiascos had an impact on CIA morale in the late 1980s and early 1990s, similar in some ways to the impact of the Cambridge spies on MI5. One result of the security breach was that instructors working for the CIA were also no longer given the surnames of their students.¹²¹ The CIA became even more compartmentalised as a result of these perceived failures to catch moles within their ranks. Despite the official secrecy, Moran notes that the reality was different than policy.

¹¹⁸ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 45.

¹¹⁹ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, pp. 35-39.

¹²⁰ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p.49.

¹²¹ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 53.

People – and, as she notes, a problematic computer system – caused need to know failures. Most, knew more than needed.¹²²

CIA employees were provided with specific employer contact information to provide for credit checks or tenancy references. In Nelson's early years no contact phone number was provided, only an address for a non-CIA U.S. government job.¹²³ By the time Moran was employed by the Agency, its employees were given a telephone number.¹²⁴ Only urgent messages would be passed on.¹²⁵

It was also expected that one would not use their time in the CIA explicitly on their resume.

As Moran noted, options outside of the Agency for her decreased.¹²⁶

[Views of the Security Service and its Organisational Culture](#)

Organisational culture can have a profound impact on employee experiences in an organisation, more so, arguably in the intelligence sector due to its relative isolation. How women write about organisations and organisational culture will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. However, organisational culture is also addressed here due to this impact on workplace environment, everyday experiences, and promotion prospects.

Though former officers such as Massiter, Ingram, and Machon are critical of the Security Service culture, the focus in their statements is on reforming or changing this culture.

Though all advocate for improvements, particularly in terms of employee complaints and

¹²² Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 53.

¹²³ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 45.

¹²⁴ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 55.

¹²⁵ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, p. 56.

¹²⁶ Moran, *Blowing My Cover*, pp. 46-47.

grievances procedures, none advocate for wholesale change or complete openness.

Massiter for example, critiqued specific targets and methods, along with practices which discouraged employees from taking concerns regarding their work higher up within the organisation.¹²⁷

Rimington is perhaps the most positive about MI5's organisational culture, though this does not stop her from critiquing certain aspects of it. She notes the risk inherent in closed organisations such as MI5, but also states that, 'At best, a strong communal loyalty develops in organisations like this, and that is a great strength.'¹²⁸ In another point of contrast to the depictions of other former officers, Rimington notes that secrecy had relaxed by the 1980s.¹²⁹ Though it was less a key component of Security Service culture for Rimington, Ingram and Massiter viewed life within the service quite differently. Machon was also critical of Rimington's depiction of the service. In the introduction of her book Machon writes, '*Open Secret* reveals little of the abuses of power which David and I saw during our time in MI5 – the very years when Dame Stella was in charge. That is why my private subtitle for this book is *What Dame Stella didn't tell you*.'¹³⁰ This is in line with Machon's overall critical stance towards the practices and culture within MI5, though few other former MI5 employees have spoken about Rimington. Of men's public recollections, Peter Wright is highly critical of the Security Service, but Tom Marcus, in his more recent published book, takes a more balanced and nuanced approach to MI5.

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¹²⁸ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 180.

¹²⁹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 177.

¹³⁰ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 7.

The Balancing Act: Family and outside life

The insular culture of MI5 was not unique to the organisation. Similar patterns were reported for the CIA around the same time. Speaking on maintaining friendships, former CIA Officer Jonna Mendez described associating with other CIA families, and CIA family friendships as a “relief”.¹³¹ The same pattern of friendships is noted by Rimington, who noted that within MI5, ‘many of us got round the problem by making friends with each other and having quite restricted circles of close friends outside work.’¹³²

Another former CIA officer, Rollie Flynn, noted that living overseas as an officer was easier than working at headquarters. Flynn noted that people were more willing to help her, childcare was more affordable, and despite the long hours she worked, there was greater flexibility with her schedule.¹³³ Grimes, mentioned earlier in this chapter, was stationed in the US more than her colleagues in the CIA. In this way, her experience parallels more closely that of MI5 women working in London in the 1970s and 1980s (and is not dissimilar from experiences of working mothers in other high demand careers). Grimes found childcare to be difficult to obtain and expensive. She had no way to thoroughly vet those watching her children. At the same time, there were advantages to not being posted abroad, including the added benefit of stability for her family. She found occasions where she was briefly sent abroad stressful, along with the strain of not being able to talk about her work.¹³⁴ Melissa Mahle, another CIA officer reports similar pressures resulting from not being able to talk about her work with her husband, who was not employed by the CIA. Similarly, Flynn noted she could not tell her husband where she was going late at night, for

¹³¹ ISMPanel.

¹³² Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 177.

¹³³ IMSPanel

¹³⁴ ISMPanel

example to meet an agent – this was a level of secrecy in a relationship which required trust between spouses.

In addition to strains placed on family relationships and stress from arranging childcare, women in intelligence had to navigate their workplace environments as mothers, often with colleagues making assumptions about their capabilities or willingness to take on certain tasks based on their family obligations. Mahle, for example, chose not to reveal her pregnancy to her bosses in order to keep her position in the field. Though this caused some logistical issues, being in a high-demand high-danger post, she notes being determined to figure out a way to make it work, even taking her baby to work on occasion.

For Mahle, one challenge to remaining in her field post was that while seven months pregnant, she had to deal with an explosive device. The device was in a Palestinian police office, shown to Mahle as she arrived for a meeting with her local contacts. She was shocked when she realised the danger the device posed, and urged the Palestinians to call in Israeli assistance. The police were adamantly against the idea. Despite their resistance, Mahle managed to convince them to remotely detonate the device. In describing the explosion, Mahle comments on the surprise of those officials when the detonation was much larger than they had anticipated.¹³⁵ Though Mahle now speaks about this incident publicly and with humour, she does not disguise the fear she had at that time.

Mahle also stated that the emotional side of her work was actually the most difficult. It created a black hole of secrecy, she remarked, in her relationships.¹³⁶ The strain of not being able to talk about one's work, for fear of divulging classified details, is a pervading fear of

¹³⁵ ISMPanel

¹³⁶ ISMPanel

those involved in intelligence work, and often, for these employees, both male and female, a source of added stress.

Rimington notes she faced problems in being both a mother and an employee of MI5.

Rimington's account of balancing motherhood and MI5 employment is unique amongst the recorded accounts of MI5 work, as she is one of the few female MI5 employees to have had children and speak openly about it. Rimington had two daughters, rather early on in her MI5 career (the first was born in 1970 and the second in 1974). Though Rimington raised her daughters in their younger years with her husband, they later separated in 1984 and she found herself a single mother. Rimington's experience is also unique amongst publicly available MI5 women's narratives, since she later had to make this transition to being a single mother.

Rimington is remarkably candid about the struggles she faced as a working mother. She writes of her first daughter's birth, 'I had worried a lot about how we were going to manage when the baby was born. It had never been my intention to be a working mother and I was extremely uneasy about the idea.'¹³⁷ Societal pressures at the time, including ones echoed by her own mother, left her feeling that as the mother of young children she would be doing them harm by working. This left her with a feeling of guilt, yet, if she wanted to maintain her job at her current grade, it was made clear to her that she would need to return to work, full-time, three months after her daughter's birth.

Rimington comments on her lack of options as an MI5 employee and mother, 'There was no part-time work in those days, except for clerks and typists, and job-sharing had not been

¹³⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 109-112.

invented. It was taken for granted that intelligence staff worked full time or not at all.¹³⁸

Her lack of options coloured her experience as a working mother, she recalls, 'I was neither strongly committed to MI5, nor was I earning large sums of money.'¹³⁹ She adds that she would not have admitted this to her superiors in MI5, had they ever inquired about it. It should be noted that the situation for women in the Civil Service at the time was very similar. Few part-time options were available and support for CS employed mothers was scant.¹⁴⁰

Like many women in the 1970s, financial concerns played a significant role in Rimington's decision to return to full time work, despite her discomfort with the arrangement. Her husband's break from government employment meant that he lost out on part of his pension, and so Rimington sought to ensure she would have her own pension to rely on.¹⁴¹ Financial concerns continued to cause issue throughout the 1970s for Rimington, not just in terms of childcare, but also in terms of living arrangements. Household issues contributed to the financial stressors on her. A house (which had not been entirely modernised) purchased just before she found out she was pregnant along with her husband switching employers caused her significant anxiety.¹⁴² Though her income helped, it was not enough to live comfortably. (It was only later when she was promoted to higher level management positions that she would feel her compensation was adequate.) It should be noted that few women speak about pay, and rarely do they do so in exact terms. Those who speak about pay, like Rimington, gauge the compensation by whether it was adequate at the time. In a

¹³⁸ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 110.

¹³⁹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 113.

¹⁴⁰ The barriers which women in the Civil Service faced were addressed in the Kemp-Jones Report.

¹⁴¹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 110.

¹⁴² Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 108-109.

similar approach, some men do speak about pay, but only when they find their pay to be insufficient.¹⁴³

In 1974, Rimington's husband was posted in Brussels and she sought some way to join him, possibly through an MI5 posting or secondment to another department. Her request was denied, though she was offered two years leave that would not negatively impact her pension. Of her request, she writes, 'He [the personnel officer] told me firmly that those security posts were for experienced officers (I took him to mean men) and I would not be regarded as suitable.'¹⁴⁴ On the one hand, this represented a unique arrangement for a woman of her grade and position (an assistant officer) within the Security Service. Though she was denied a posting, there was more flexibility in this arrangement than she had previously experienced. On the other hand, despite the generosity in freezing her pension and allowing her to return, this was a move that could have easily halted her career within the Service. In fact, she notes that she did not think the personnel management staff expected her to actually return to MI5 after her leave was up.

In addition to finances, childcare concerns also proved to be a problem for Rimington. As with her CIA counterparts, finding reliable and affordable childcare was difficult at times. Though she found suitable arrangements, such as the wife of a police officer in her first daughter's early years, and later, a latch-key approach when the girls were old enough, there were still mishaps along the way.¹⁴⁵ One such potentially dangerous situation involved a burglar in the house while her two daughters were at home. Rimington received a phone call at work from her eldest daughter informing her of the situation while it was ongoing.

¹⁴³ Tom Marcus' book is a useful example here, as finances are a continued concern for him throughout much of the time period he covers.

¹⁴⁴ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 127-128.

¹⁴⁵ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 111-112.

Though the situation was resolved (the burglar ran off once he realised people were in the house) it was this very sort of situation that presented an added burden to her everyday life as a working mother.¹⁴⁶

Rimington notes, 'It is impossible totally to compartmentalise your life, however hard you try.'¹⁴⁷ This is one of the key issues for those working in intelligence and is echoed by CIA officers, such as in Mahle's statement above, where secrecy and compartmentalisation go hand in hand, adding to the emotional burden on those who work in intelligence.

[From Employee to Agency Wife](#)

Both Nelson and Rimington had experience working for their respective organisations before taking time away from work. In this, they had the unique perspective of being involved in intelligence work before stepping away to primarily in support of their husbands' career progress. Both Nelson and Riminton later return to their respective intelligence employers. In Rimington's case, her husband worked in a government post abroad. In Nelson's case, she travelled with her husband to his foreign posting. Nelson's view of the position of CIA wives in Turkey shows her dismay at the restrictions imposed on non-employees. She writes:

'The wives were not to meet with each other, participate in local recreational groups or clubs, or associate with other Americans in Turkey. None of us was to mingle socially with CIA personnel in official positions, some of whom we knew from Washington. The appropriate conduct for the women was to spend most of the time at home or stay "hidden," the senior representative decreed.'¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 138.

¹⁴⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁸ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 97.

Wives were left with little to do, cut off from socialising with one another they were allowed to accompany their husbands out in the evenings, 'Intimidated by repeated security injunctions, the wives barely left their apartments during the day.'¹⁴⁹ However, Nelson notes she and other CIA wives later ignored this restriction, meeting for outings to local markets and to share cooking information.¹⁵⁰ Some wives adapted, though others found themselves rather lonely. As Nelson notes, there was a high divorce rate for CIA employees.¹⁵¹

The monotony was eventually broken for Nelson when she was hired as a "contract wife". With the expansion of the local CIA office, trusted staff were needed to perform routine duties. As with MI5, the CIA found wives a useful source of low level but trustworthy employees to fill these posts. Nelson was happy to return to work and started working for the local office on a part-time, hourly basis. Her colleagues were mostly men, along with a few women.¹⁵²

Nelson, however, remains critical of the CIA's attitudes towards the wives of its male employees. She comments, 'I have always thought that a wife should know some of the details about her husband's role in the CIA. (This does not mean intelligence data.)' It is clear from Nelson's depiction of her time in Turkey that she supports giving wives some information about their husband's activities, some personal freedoms, and, for some wives, purpose through employment.

¹⁴⁹ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 98.

¹⁵⁰ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 114.

¹⁵¹ Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 99.

¹⁵² Nelson, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, pp. 109-110.

Glass Ceilings, Glass Boxes: Promotion and Progression

To understand an important long-running theme which characterises MI5 assignments and promotions it is important to look at its emergence early in MI5's history. Joan Miller, whose early employment experiences were typical of women's WWII employment in MI5 – consisting mainly of office work in the transport section – later found herself working for Maxwell Knight in counter-espionage. Her recruitment into this division was not through formal channels. As she wrote, she 'was invited to lunch in the staff canteen with a distinguished MI5 officer who, it seemed, had had his eye on me for some time.'¹⁵³ By that time, she was keen to move on from the transport section and difficulties in her shared office, though she was also intrigued by and enthusiastic about Knight's description of his division's counter-subversion work.¹⁵⁴ For Miller, this unexpected opportunity meant a move to another section and employment as an agent. Miller's experiences highlight an important theme. Assignments are generally given by management, a theme which continued well into the 1990s. Another, related theme is that promotion, or more adventurous work could be obtained by women, often those selected by management. When doors were opened, for example to agent-running in later years, rates of women's progression were still controlled and limited to small numbers of women as these doors were opened.

Later Career Progression and Promotion

Discussed above with regard to the changing nature of agent-running, Cold War focus within MI5 shifted to terrorism. This shift also highlighted an issue for female officers, especially ones seeking to progress in their careers. Agent-running, this essential part of work for

¹⁵³ Miller, *One Girl's War*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁴ Miller, pp. 16-17.

officers within MI5, existed as a specific barrier for women who were looking to move from assistant officers to full officer status. Formally, assistant officer work was desk work, analytical intelligence work. Officers, on the other hand, were more likely to engage in the very sort of field work considered either inappropriate or unsuitable for women.

As Rimington put it, over a decade after her retirement, most in MI5 will engage with agents in terms of recruitment or running over the course of their career.¹⁵⁵ However, when she started out, this was not the case in the early 1970s. The agent-running course in MI5 was closed to women, and they had to agitate within the organisation to eventually be allowed entrance to this course. Though the course was opened to women (Rimington was the first to be allowed on the course) the floodgates did not open to them as MI5 was slow to progress in this area, allowing only a trickle of women into agent-running opportunities. These opportunities slowly increased over the late 1970s and early 1980s. Part of this change can be attributed to the letter of complaint from MI5 women officers, however it is important to note that this process of change is longer and more drawn out.

Rimington remarks that it was clear that MI5's agent-running course was designed for men. In the field training exercises took place in environments where women might stand out more than their male colleagues. In one such example, Rimington notes that officers taking the course (including herself) were required to go to an assigned pub and strike up conversation with an unsuspecting/uninvolved person (with the officer using a fake identity of course). as a woman in the mid-1970s going to chat up a man at the bar, Rimington remarked that she rather stood out in this pub. Unbeknownst to those officers participating in this exercise, another person from the course would come in to blow their cover, to see

¹⁵⁵ EdinSR

how the trainee reacted.¹⁵⁶ Though she passed the course, this particular exercise is one which Rimington refers to often (multiple talks, Q&As and in her memoir) when speaking about difficulties she faced as a woman and/or breaking barriers within MI5.

The blocking of women from the agent-running course is just one example of the dual career path system which existed for women in MI5. Comprised of both formal and informal barriers, women hired in the 1950s to early 1970s experienced to most formalised (set-in-place) version of this dual system. Though this concept of a dual career path is one way to describe it, Rimington's description of it as a "two-tiered system" might be more accurate, noting that women's careers remained subordinate to men. Women, as Rimington put it, 'were for the paperwork'.¹⁵⁷ She notes however, that women might be able to engage in 'intelligence analysis if you were thought to be quite bright.'¹⁵⁸ Within women's roles, there were further hierarchical divisions. Differences existed between clerical and intelligence based careers for women. As such, it may be better to view MI5 as multi-tiered, with hierarchical associations between the different career paths.

Not only was the Registry comprised almost entirely of women until the mid-1970s, assistant and junior assistant officers were considered women's "comparable" career paths to those of male officers. The main differences in job duties and tasks aside, officers might be able to progress to middle-management and further up in MI5's hierarchy while the women were held back. In this way, the horizontal occupational sex segregation of MI5 directly influenced the vertical occupational sex segregation. In other words, without the

¹⁵⁶ EdinSR

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opportunity to take on work related to career development, women's careers were halted, and for the most part (outside the Registry) women's career progression was halted.

Promotion, because of barriers on women's opportunities, was particularly difficult for women in MI5. However, such barriers were certainly not exclusive to MI5, or women's work in intelligence. For women who took on job tasks in which they faced resistance from their male colleagues, it is important to understand that resistance was not universal within the organisation. Though agitation from female employees was often involved in bringing about change, there were men in management positions which assisted them in progressing in their careers. In Rimington's case, her breakthrough into agent-running happened when the Director of her section, Cecil Shipp, whom she describes as rather forward thinking, placed her as the first woman in that agent-running section. However, it should be noted that such progress had limits, he was also the person who prevented her from work related to Northern Ireland because she was a mother.¹⁵⁹

Some of the changes within MI5 echo those which happened in the CIA, though some of these changes in career progression opportunities happened nearly a decade earlier in the CIA. Vertefeuille, hired in the 1950s by the CIA was originally quite limited in career options. Working in Africa for most of her early career, Vertefeuille, hired at the rank of GS-04, faced an unofficial cap on her rank. An opportunity to remain in Africa which would have her switch assignments without progressing left her frustrated. On the source of this frustration Vertefeuille wrote, 'By now I had developed some rudimentary career goals, and this did not sound like it would be a satisfying assignment. Furthermore, it was the African components policy (freely expressed in those days) not to promote women above GS-07. I had attained

¹⁵⁹ Rimington, Open Secret, p. 158.

that grade long ago.’¹⁶⁰ Since no women were promoted above GS-07 her career progression was halted. As a result, she moved to take a position in Finland at GS-09 to get around this cap.¹⁶¹

Women in the CIA, like MI5, often found they were blocked from courses or postings that would allow them to progress in their careers, on par with their male colleagues. However, officer training courses opened up earlier for women in the CIA, in the mid-1960s. While this is not entirely the result of the CIA’s Petticoat report looking at the role of women in the agency in the first half of the twentieth century, the increased focus on women in the agency did have an impact on their opportunities.¹⁶²

Vertefeuille was able to enrol in the Career Training Course, which allowed her to progress to officer. Yet this (as in other cases of women’s progression to officer in MI5) did not entirely place her on the same level as her male colleagues. Though she had obtained officer status, and in the eyes of the CIA, then viewed as a professional employee, she was still limited to analyst or reports officer roles. Even as some vertical barriers broke down, horizontal occupational segregation remained a hinderance for women looking to further their careers. Vertefeuille and other women in the CIA in the 1960s who had made it into the officer course, were blocked from operations officer roles (involving fieldwork) and paramilitary training.¹⁶³ The limited progress of women, once opportunities were opened to them is evident in her description of her training class. Of sixty-six total participants, only seven were women, including Vertefeuille.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Vertefeuille, *Circle*, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ Vertefeuille, *Circle*, pp. 5-9.

¹⁶² This internal CIA report was released as part of the Typist to Trailblazer series, available at: [<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/typist-trailblazer>]

¹⁶³ Vertefeuille, *Circle*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Vertefeuille, *Circle*, p. 6.

About a decade after Vertefeuille had joined the CIA, Sandy Grimes joined the CIA in 1967 as an Intelligence Assistant, with the rank of GS-06. Grimes benefitted from some of the changes happening in the CIA, and her pace of progression was overall faster paced than that of Vertefeuille. Though she was working as a professional in intelligence, she was not officially considered a professional by the CIA. For that to happen she would have to go through a process to convert to professional status. This progression had the potential to lead to real career progression for her, but without it, her options were limited. Her responsibilities within her section had increased gradually, and her division sponsored this conversion in 1970. Similar to her original employment application, the conversion application also involved psychological testing, review of her work, and an interview with a senior Directorate of Operations officer on the review board.¹⁶⁵ On the pace of her progress Grimes comments, 'While thankful for the division's recognition and support, I silently thought that it was about time a wrong was corrected.'¹⁶⁶ The eventually successful application allowed her to finally be considered a professional, though she already had been one for some years.

Though supported by her immediate managers, Grimes' conversion to professional status was not without its hurdles. The primary hurdle was the interview. Though she was serious about her work and keen on furthering her career, her interviewer was more concerned about her potential family plans. According to Grimes' her interviewer seemed to be working off the assumption that having children would by default make her leave the CIA to be a stay at home mother, ending her career. Grimes felt that her response to this line of questioning damaged her chances of conversion to professional status. On this she writes,

¹⁶⁵ Grimes, *Circle of Treason*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶⁶ Grimes, *Circle of Treason*, p. 13.

‘Taken aback by the inappropriateness of such a question, I responded by inquiring as to his plans for additional children.’ Grimes recalled feeling that the interview went rather poorly, and was surprised to find out she had succeeded, though she did wonder if someone higher up had stepped in on her behalf.¹⁶⁷

Promotion Denials and the Slow Path to Leadership

Hesitancy and caution appear to be common themes in the promoting women into leadership positions. This is one notable area where private sector employment can have advantages for women over public sector employment. Career advancement and mobility have been more difficult in intelligence work, both due to the secret nature of the work and the limited alternate options.¹⁶⁸ The perception that the private sector could be more accessible to female employees led some of the women working in intelligence to seek new careers outside intelligence work. Other female employees, despite dissatisfaction with bureaucratic procedure or advancement opportunities decided to stay.

Returning to Machon’s discussion of promotions and union representation, the denial of an opportunity on what she believed was gender discrimination, stands out as a clear example here. Having been employed by MI5’s F Section for a few years, Machon found herself looking for a change. She was recommended by her Assistant Director for a liaison post with National Criminal Intelligence Services (NCIS). Eager for a new challenge, Machon was excited about the opportunity. Though she had been recommended for the position, was not successful in the end. Entrenched attitudes towards women negatively impacted her

¹⁶⁷ Grimes, *Circle of Treason*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁶⁸ Though it can be argued this statement is less accurate for the 21st century with increased private sector involvement in intelligence related fields.

chances. As Machon recalls, 'This was a new, challenging and high-profile post and I was keen to take it on. However, a year before, a female MI5 officer had buckled under pressure while working with MPSB. MI5 management therefore decided that working in a police environment was no job for a woman, whatever her experience and expertise. As I had no employment rights and no staff federation to turn to, I could not challenge this blatant sex discrimination. The job went to a far less experienced male colleague.'¹⁶⁹ Instead, she was offered the only other posting free at the time, one which she was considerably less interested in.

Rimington's experiences echo Machon's, though Rimington does not directly recall being denied a promotion in the same way as Machon. Rimington's earlier leadership progression was not towards higher risk positions, rather than placing her in a challenging position upper management remained cautious. In 1983, Rimington remarks that she thought a promotion might be in the works for her. Though she was promoted, the position was in a section she considered a 'bit of a backwater'. She writes of the promotion, 'When I was summoned by Cecil [Shipp] to be told formally of my move, I tried to look both surprised and enthusiastic. I was indeed delighted to be promoted to Assistant Director, the first significant management level in the Service, which only one other woman had reached. But I was disappointed that it was not a more exciting job, and yet again I had a sense that they were being extremely cautious and that I was being tested in a way a man would not have been.'¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁰ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 159.

Though Rimington was well aware of this trend, it was not something she openly challenged. Only two years later, Rimington found herself in the position of acting Director of Counter-subversion. She notes that, 'This elevation was a trial run and lasted only a few months.'¹⁷¹ After completing those few months as Director, the only option for Rimington was returning to a lower post. Yet, she did not see this demotion as a negative, instead she was grateful for the opportunity, 'I was not too upset by this because I was told that I would be a substantive Director before too long. In truth, such elevation was more than I had ever expected.'¹⁷²

Upper management had not misled Rimington, by the end of the following year she was promoted to Director of Counter-espionage. Though the promotion was viewed positively, as she was the first woman to hold a directorship on a non-temporary basis, not all in the organisation were happy with her progress. As Rimington recalls, 'some of the men regarded my elevation as a step too far and I heard tell of mutterings about it in the men's toilets.'¹⁷³ Despite the slow and cautious path to upper management, for the most part, Rimington remains grateful in her memoir, 'Had I allowed myself to brood on these things, I would have felt that I had been asked to prove myself for longer and more thoroughly than any man, but I didn't. I just felt pleased and satisfied to have made it.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 180-181.

¹⁷² Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 180-181.

¹⁷³ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 184-185.

¹⁷⁴ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 184-185.

Departure

While many of MI5's women left on good terms, there were those who did not. Joan Miller's story stands out as one of the more unpleasant situations. Contradictory stories about her departure exist, but the common thread through all of them that her departure was not entirely her choice.

Returning to Cathy Massiter's resignation, the organisational treatment of those who express dissent and critique in MI5, or other intelligence organisations, has not been historically well managed. Until Massiter's departure and subsequent public revelations, MI5 lacked a specific strategy to address employee concerns. As Ingram pointed out in her piece in *New Society*, dissent was not encouraged, and could even negatively impact one's career. Ingram wrote, with Bettany's case in mind, 'If he cannot discuss his doubts within the service, and he certainly cannot do so outside, he is faced with one of two choices. He can leave his job, or he can keep quiet.'¹⁷⁵ Though the latter is an option taken first by those who have later become whistleblowers or public critics, clearly they cannot stay quiet indefinitely. This is true in Bettany's case, as Ingram notes.

Similarly, Massiter expressed discomfort with what she saw as politically motivated requests for information on the CND, which she had been placed in charge of. Massiter, and others as she notes, brought forward concerns and complaints to management. Massiter recalls that she tried to approach management with her concerns about the politicisation and extent of the CND investigation. On the state of the investigation and pressure she faced, Massiter comments that, 'violating our own rules, it seemed to be getting out of control.'¹⁷⁶ Though

¹⁷⁵ Ingram
¹⁷⁶ 20/20

she raised her concerns, she claims that they were not followed through on.¹⁷⁷ Ingram notes that if critiques were not accepted, they were not taken further.¹⁷⁸ Massiter felt that the lack of action based her complaints left her with no other option than to resign.¹⁷⁹ No procedure of appeal or bringing an issue further up the chain of management was formally available at the time. Rimington notes that after Massiter's departure and the public interest in the CND investigation after Massiter spoke publicly, an internal review was conducted within MI5. This led to the creation of a position within MI5, a person dedicated to reviewing and listening to employee's concerns.¹⁸⁰

In the televised interview, Massiter notes that despite her critiques and calls for parliamentary oversight, she still fully supports the counterterrorism and counterespionage work of MI5. This appears to be a common thread, shared by Annie Machon, who later resigned in the 1990s as a whistleblower. Machon maintains a similar stance in many of her public talks, defining and defending the work of MI5 as necessary, but in need of oversight, limitations, and regulations.

Massiter was working in Rimington's section when issues regarding the CND investigation became topics of serious concern. Rimington does not dwell particularly long on Massiter in her memoirs, though she notes the shock and sense of betrayal felt within MI5 at the time. Rimington writes, 'We were still reeling from the Bettany affair when the second crisis struck.'¹⁸¹ Rimington continues on to use phrases such as, "massive shock", "amazing and shocking", and 'It was breathtaking.'¹⁸² In doing so she also reinforces the intelligence

¹⁷⁷ 20/20

¹⁷⁸ Ingram, *New Society*

¹⁷⁹ 20/20

¹⁸⁰ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁸¹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 176.

¹⁸² Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 176.

culture attitudes towards speaking out, that one does not, and should not do so. Though Rimington speaks to the circumstances surrounding Massiter's public statements, Rimington's emphasis remains on the emotional and organisational reactions to this incident.

At the same time, Rimington, who retired on good terms with the Security Service, did note that she was suspicious of the motivations of certain other whistleblowers, such as David Shayler (who resigned at the same time as Machon in the 1990s) and Richard Tomlinson. In her defense of the service she points out the abovementioned new post in MI5, the Staff Counselor, created to give employees an outlet for taking concerns they felt were ignored or mismanaged, forward. The Staff Counselor, from 1987 onward would be filled by a retired Permanent Secretary, someone familiar with the inner workings of MI5.¹⁸³ However, the creation of such a post did not prevent Machon and Shayler's later whistleblowing.

In Machon's case, there was a clear dissatisfaction with procedure in MI5. Though when she left MI5 in 1997 she knew there would be risk of arrest, but her motivation outweighed that risk for her. Machon's goal was to have an official inquiry into MI5 practices.¹⁸⁴ Massiter and Ingram have disappeared from the public eye since the mid-1980s. Machon, however, has maintained a public presence, writing an account of her story and speaking publicly on issues of security, intelligence, and privacy rights.

Rimington's experience was fundamentally different from the women who came before her. As the first woman to become Director-General of MI5, and the first of that title to have their name released, Rimington's chances for post-retirement anonymity were greatly

¹⁸³ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁸⁴ CambTalkAM

eroded. Publishing her memoir in the early 2000s was not an easy process. As the first of her position to seek approval, Rimington struggled with an organisational culture of secrecy and parliamentary resistance to her request for authorisation to publish.

Certainly, Rimington's experiences with publishing are not unique, though, arguably she paved the way in the UK for those seeking to write memoirs about intelligence. This key post-departure activity – sharing ones' experiences of intelligence work publicly – will be explored in Chapter Six. Much of the personal sources used in the following chapter come from former, rather than current intelligence professionals, owing to organisational secrecy.

Conclusion

This chapter has broken down typical employment patterns in intelligence work into key career stages: recruitment and hiring, everyday employment and work life balance, promotion and progression, and departure. By looking at these common stages and how they were experienced by intelligence professionals, this chapter identified themes and trends in their common experiences. In doing so, the focus has shifted to the role of the employee in the intelligence sector. By highlighting these individual experiences, the evolution of intelligence organisations and cultures can be examined from another perspective. Key commonalities and differences emerge in examining the career experiences of women and men, across different intelligence organisations. While trends have shifted over time, reflecting changing attitudes and expectations (for example, with regard to childcare responsibilities) contemporary experiences also demonstrate how much continuity there is with past experiences.

Employee experiences also help to triangulate and differentiate between employment policy and practice, giving greater insights into organisational culture. At the same time, this opens up room for critique of organisational cultures and the ways in which gender, class and other aspects of identity exist within the intelligence field.

Further, employee experiences allow us to examine motivations, goals and ambitions as reported by the employees themselves. Note, for example, Rimington's useful anecdote where she lies about her career ambitions and institutional devotion at an early stage in her career, as her goal at the time was to continue with paid employment. Looking at the personal, at multiple accounts and insights into individual actors, with particular focus on gendered experiences, new perspectives are added to intelligence history. Organisations are unlikely to be self-reflective or critical in the ways that their employees are of them. This serves to also highlight and reinforce the gendered nature of organisations as discussed in Chapter Four.

One of the most important contributions in including first hand accounts is that we can see what aspects of intelligence sector employment matter most to women. Through this, we can see which aspects are returned to most often in both public speaking and writing endeavours. This leads well to Chapter Six, which examines closer these reflections, how women think, feel, understand, construct and represent their experiences. The following chapter will take a closer look at the how and why that goes in to the sharing of personal narratives, asking: what role do former intelligence professionals play in constructing intelligence history and their own representations, and how do women reflect on their experiences in intelligence?

Chapter Six

Through the Looking Glass: Reflections on Gender and Intelligence

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, women's experiences in intelligence employment can have both similarities and differences with men's experiences. One such area where differences are often highlighted is in the recruitment and running of agents. While official primary source material can provide some understanding of intelligence officers' recruiting work, other more personal primary sources can provide insights into how they actually went about this work, and how they reflect upon it. In essence, it is impossible to present an accurate and comprehensive picture of women in intelligence without venturing in to personal narrative accounts. One of the key points of this chapter, and indeed of this thesis, is the valuable contribution of first person narratives to our understandings of women in intelligence work.

The following example serves to underline this point, excerpted from a 1994 internal panel discussion of senior women in the Central Intelligence Agency reflecting on their experiences and career trajectories. One panellist Patty, notes how the writing of reports with regard to agent recruitment by officers can be a gendered performance:

When you read 201s, when you read agent files, one of the things I've been struck by is – and I think it's still going on – women recruit very differently than men recruit, number one. Number two: [in] the files, however, you could never tell it was a female case officer if you took it away because we reported like a man would report it because we knew how to survive in the system. But the biggest advantage for women in recruiting – and I think

maybe [name redacted] might have been smarter than the average fellow – was that men, foreign men, will tell women darn near anything – ¹
– because we are the “nurturing” part of the equation, we are non-threatening, [and] if we play our cover at all, they assume that we’re not intelligence officers.²

The official account, in this instance, is by default gendered, and in terms of intelligence history, that default is often male. This chapter serves to contradict both that notion and the more dominant images of archetypal spies, not only by presenting counter narratives from women in intelligence but also by showing how these women have shared their own experiences publicly. Some of these sources come from situations where women are directly asked to speak about gender (such as the CIA panel excerpt above), others are unprompted discussions or parts of larger sources which speak to longitudinal career trajectories and experiences (such as the memoirs which will be referred throughout this chapter).

The CIA panel also illustrates the role of audience, or intended audience. As an internal event, the panel was not conducted with wider distribution, instead it was released as part of the CIA’s “Typist to Trailblazer” archival releases. In these excerpts, intelligence professionals are sharing their experiences with other intelligence professionals. In contrast, the other panel discussions referred to in this chapter are semi-public events organised by the International Spy Museum, which have been recorded and included in the museum’s online video collections. However, as a whole, these sources provide insights which are not available elsewhere, including access to the personal: the thoughts, feelings, and reflections from women in intelligence work.

¹ Patty, ‘Divine Secrets of the RYBAT Sisterhood: Four Senior Women of the Directorate of Operations Discuss Their Careers’, [<http://www.foia.cia.gov/typisttrailblazer/pdfs/1994-01-08.pdf>], pp. 10-11. Note: Patty is interrupted here as another panellist agrees.

² Patty, ‘Divine Secrets’, pp. 10-11.

Another panellist Carla, illustrates how gender impacted her recruitment work, though this went unacknowledged by her superiors. As was the case through her own experience, she states, 'I got credit for a recruitment, but I never actually had to pitch the guy.' As she recalls:

I was sort of the "Dumb Dora" personality to survive, and "Golly!" "Gee!" and "Wow!" And this [redacted] that was it, he would seek me out. "Oh, could we talk?" He would tell me, "I just love talking to you because you're not very bright." And I would sit like this [*makes an innocent expression*], and I would get home and my spouse would say, "Well, how was it?" "Golly! Gee! You know? Wow!" But it worked. And finally, unfortunately, the recruitment ended because he told me about a plot to go bomb the embassy [redacted] and we arrested him and his gang of merry men as they crossed the border. He just told me everything and I got tons of intel out of him without ever getting to breaking cover or anything because I was just this woman who wasn't very bright.³

As Patty's statement demonstrates, personal accounts highlight how gendered aspects of tradecraft can be left out of the official record. Similarly, Carla's anecdote illustrates this point, showing us an experience of intelligence work which is clearly mediated by the role and perceptions of women as recruiters of agents. First person narratives, in particular those from women, have the potential to demonstrate gendered dimensions of tradecraft, and more broadly, of intelligence work.

While the role of women in intelligence is a gradually expanding as an area of interest in scholarly literature, the experiences and voices of these women are less frequently foregrounded in such research. The aim of this chapter is to discuss how and why women who have worked in intelligence speak about their work and examine the ways in which they represent themselves and their careers. This emphasis does not exclude the

³ Carla, 'Divine Secrets', p. 11.

experiences and reflections of men, which are included where helpful and insightful in this chapter, though it is women's voices which are intentionally foregrounded.

As part of this goal to illuminate the voices of women who have worked in intelligence this chapter looks at how and why former intelligence professionals speak about and construct meaning in their work and lives. Key themes and trends in women's discussions about their work are identified, with points of similarity and contrast drawn between individuals' experiences. This chapter uses these experiences to connect the central chapters of this thesis, showing the interaction between social and political context, organisational culture and policy, and individual employment decisions and experiences in the field of intelligence.

The goal in using women's representations of their experiences is to build upon the previous chapters, connecting the different viewpoints used. Chapter Three spoke to the larger structural and social forces which impacted their everyday lives and their employment trajectories. Chapter Four addressed the organisational environment in which these women worked, looking specifically at MI5. Chapter Five illustrated the variety in experiences of women at different stages of employment, from recruitment to everyday tasks, on to promotion and departure. Chapter Five also serves to highlight the role of women themselves in shaping and changing career patterns within intelligence.

In doing so, this chapter also examines how women speak about themselves and others, in relation to creating their own identities and self-definitions, asking: do women in intelligence view themselves alike or in contrast to their colleagues, especially in male dominated work environments? In other words, do women intelligence professionals themselves identify gender as a factor in how they view or describe their identities and career experiences?

Another key theme looks at how these tellings and retellings of their experiences add to existing understandings of intelligence work. Images created through public discourses on intelligence work can serve to reinforce or contradict existing gendered archetypes and conceptions of intelligence work. As a result, this chapter seeks to highlight areas where speakers challenge or reinforce these dominant images (such as the fictional James Bond, or real-turned-exaggerated Mata Hari) by speaking about their own careers in public settings.

As a part of looking at these wider elements in the discourses on intelligence, and specifically women in intelligence employment, specific topics amongst women's representations of their experiences are highlighted. This includes the roles of wives of intelligence employees, family and caring responsibilities, differences in career opportunities and gendered social pressures. These elements are often less prevalent in discussions or depictions of intelligence employment and serve to broaden the discussion of how intelligence employees reflect on their work and everyday lives.

The first section of this chapter will address two key areas relating to how first person information about intelligence professionals is produced. One aspect speaks to the importance of the contexts in which intelligence professionals share their experiences and their motivations for doing so. There are a number of internal and external factors which have influenced and, in the case of official secrecy restrictions, dictated a former intelligence professionals' ability and willingness to share their story. As a part of this, organisational cultures and personal attitudes towards secrecy have also played a role in the availability of first person primary sources. At times, prospective memoirists have challenged organisational secrecy, through seeking to publish memoirs or even fictional works. The other part of this section speaks to the different types of sources used in this

chapter, highlighting particularly relevant sources and identifying potential methodological concerns.

The second section of this chapter contains the analytical focus on the discourses primarily addressed by women in intelligence work. This section identifies thematic areas of interest and intersection within reflections of women in intelligence. Three broad thematic groups are identified: identity, family and work life balance, and career experiences. By highlighting issues of identity, this section examines how women choose to describe themselves and their colleagues. This brings in issues of gender, class, and educational attainment. Family and work life balance includes issues of balancing secrets work with family life, challenges faced with childbirth and childcare (such as job security), and feelings of guilt regarding work life balance (whether internally or externally manifested). The final thematic group is closely related with the other two, discussing how women specifically reflect on their work experiences, opportunities, and career paths.

[Intelligence Professionals, Organisational Secrecy and Public Disclosures](#)

[To Speak or Not to Speak: Personal Choices, Spy Culture, and the Official Secrets Acts](#)

One overarching theme throughout this thesis has been access to primary sources. A common roadblock in contemporary intelligence history, organisational secrecy and legal exemptions from archival releases have reduced the number of primary sources available. However, access to MI5 was not always so tightly controlled. A notably laxer attitude was taken earlier on in MI5's history. The interwar magazine of the Nameless Club, for example, was remarkably open about their MI5 work. While critical information was not given away, women contributors to the magazine shared memories and anecdotes relating to their work experiences. Though contributors' names were occasionally shortened to initials, full names

were commonplace in announcements and updates. More importantly women at times were quite candid in the magazine about their work.

As MI5 matured as an organisation, security and secrecy issues increased in importance. Cold War espionage fears drove internal agency security upwards in MI5's priorities, though the organisation itself was slow to change and look inward. Multiple scandals both within and outside MI5 led to increased caution, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. The legal battle over the publication of Peter Wright's book *Spycatcher* in the mid-1980s represented a failure of the state to maintain secrecy. Wright, formerly employed by MI5, parted ways with the agency in the 1970s and eventually moved to Australia. He remained convinced that former Director-General Hollis was a Russian spy. Despite making the claim in a previous collaborative effort written by journalist Chapman Pincher, Wright was determined to publish his own book. The British government's furore over the book, and in particular the battle in Australian courts to prevent its publication, led to increased publicity and sales abroad.⁴

Spycatcher was not the only controversy of this type in the 1980s. The case of Michael Bettaney also provided media spectacle and breakdowns in MI5 secrecy. Bettaney, a disaffected MI5 officer who sought to work as an agent for the Soviet Union and failed, was convicted in 1984 for breaches of secrecy.⁵ Bettaney criticised the Security Service's overreaches in surveillance and Security Service culture. The Bettaney trial had direct impact

⁴ Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the state in modern Britain*, (Cambridge Univ Press 2016), pp. 333-334.

⁵ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The authorized history of MI5*, (London: Penguin 2010 ed.), p. 557.

on MI5. As Christopher Andrew's authorised history of MI5 argues, the Bettaney case gave credence to internal critiques of Security Service management methods.⁶

At the same time, Bettaney was not alone in making such a public critique of the Security Service. His case influenced other MI5 officers to speak out publicly. In 1984, former MI5 employees Miranda Ingram and Cathy Massiter began to write publicly about their experiences.⁷ Both Ingram's and Massiter's statements had an impact on public perception of the Security Service. Massiter appeared on a television programme to share aspects of her MI5 experiences the following year, provoking sharp criticism of her decision to speak publicly. The decision to not prosecute Massiter under the Official Secrets Act (for filming a television interview) may also reflect a shift in perspectives on prosecution following the *Spycatcher* scandal.

Though it remained formally unacknowledged by the government, the mention of MI5 by name in newspapers, magazines and on television increased. MI5's increasing unofficial media presence in the 1980s presented a clear challenge to government attitudes and secrecy. Within the MI5, attitudes largely changed in favour of official recognition, including legal authorisation for MI5's existence. With the 1989 Security Services Act, MI5 was given official status. As Andrew notes, 'Nothing better epitomised the transformation of the Security Service during the 1980s than its ultimately successful campaign for the passage of the Security Service Act of 1989.'⁸

⁶ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 557.

⁷ Both Ingram and Massiter's statements will be discussed further in this chapter.

⁸ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 564.

Christopher Moran argues that 'Since 1989, there has been, on the face of it, a major reduction of secrecy within the intelligence community.'⁹ Though the most widely noted changes have been official acknowledgement of the intelligence services and the establishment of a statutory framework for MI5's existence, other aspects of MI5, under Director-General Rimington's leadership, instituted a campaign of greater openness. At the same time, Rimington herself attracted attention as the first ever head of MI5 to be publicly acknowledged. The Official Secrets Act was amended, and the previously broad language which had been used to maintain state secrecy was updated with more specific information.¹⁰

The 1990s proved to be a time of change for state secrecy for SIS and GCHQ, though changes for these two agencies started later in the decade compared to MI5. The Intelligence Services Act, 1994, set out to establish SIS and GCHQ on a similar standing to that of MI5. In 1994, all three major intelligence organisations fell under the auspices of the newly formed parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee. These changes represented a shift in British state attitudes towards secrecy and openness, but were not limited to legal changes. The Official Secrets Act has historically restricted ability and willingness of individuals to speak about their employment. Combined with an organisational prioritisation of secrecy and a professional culture of discretion, those who speak about their experiences in public often face criticism from former colleagues and potential legal consequences. A decision to speak about intelligence work can be a fraught one for former spies. As former MI6 officer Daphne Park stated, human intelligence work

⁹ Moran, *Classified*, p. 330.

¹⁰ Moran, *Classified*, p. 329.

was based on trust rather than betrayal.¹¹ If former spies spoke about their work or even named individuals, this could have an ongoing impact for current and future intelligence operations. Park was asked by SIS to speak publicly on its behalf in 1993, an unusual move for an organisation which had remained in the shadows since its formation. This move from SIS followed a shift in MI5 policy. In sum, written and other reflections on intelligence work have increased in Britain since the official and public emergence of the British intelligence community in the 1990s.

Motivations to speak about employment vary as noted with the abovementioned Daphne Park. In this case, it was likely loyalty to her service that prompted her to agree, though she was generally against former intelligence officers speaking about their work. The television interview Park participated in was unique in that it had SIS approval, but it should be noted that Park was not the first British intelligence officer to speak on a television programme. Cathy Massiter, for example, contributed to a programme which aired in 1985. Originally planned for broadcast in February of that year, the programme was delayed over fears of Official Secrets Act violations. It was eventually aired weeks later.¹² Like Park, Rimmington was placed in the public eye by the service she worked for. However, unlike Park or Massiter, Rimmington was still employed in intelligence while she was “outed”. As Director-General, Rimmington made use of this newfound publicity and public interest to make inroads towards positive public relations and steps towards greater openness in MI5.

¹¹ Corera, G., *MI6: Life and death in the British Secret Service*, (London, Phoenix, 2012), p. 100. Author interview with Park.

¹² Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 757.

The Various Ways Women Spies Have Been Depicted

Spies who tell their stories publicly help shape popular images of intelligence work, and both non-fictional and fictional works contribute to this endeavour. Though individual authors or speakers may not have contributing to such constructions in mind when they start sharing their experiences, this can be an unintended effect of their speaking or writing. Other sources directly speak to this issue, particularly in the case of works that seek to “correct” the public record or perception (be it of a specific case or an individual’s narrative). This is perhaps most relevant in the ways women in espionage are depicted. Even when a former spy does not explicitly seek to correct the record, popular stereotypes about spies are used to catch the interest of audiences, introduce speakers and entertain.

From James Bond’s *femme fatales* to more modern visions of female spies in television series such as the BBC’s *Spooks*, women have had a continued presence in espionage and intelligence related media. Though male intelligence professionals might speak of James Bond or Jason Bourne, the references shift for women. Though women do make references to these fictional characters, they are also as equally likely to speak about (the non-fictional) Mata Hari, or more generally, to the “honeypot” or spy seductress archetypes.

While these fictional images have often dominated the discourse on women in intelligence, other depictions also exist, ones which are presented as having some further claim to truthfulness or accuracy. These images, both non-fictional and fictional help to shape the ways in which women working in intelligence are viewed by outsiders and the appeal of intelligence as a career choice for women.

Non-fictional representations include auto/biographical works, interviews, speeches and museum exhibits. Memoirs and autobiographies serve as a counterbalance to organizational histories, often providing far more information on decision making, everyday life, and employment practices. Interviews and speeches (in print or broadcasted) also serve to show the personal aspects of life for women in intelligence. These sources are notable because they contain content created by or created with input from women who have worked in intelligence. Another aspect of non-fictional representations which will feature prominently in this chapter is experiences which are discussed in a panel discussion format.

A further area where women have had some input is in museums, and specific museum exhibits are also of interest here. Fieldwork for this research project was conducted at the International Spy Museum in Washington D.C. and at the Imperial War Museum in London in order to provide the basis for a discussion of the ways in which women were included and portrayed in these representations of intelligence and espionage.¹³ It should be understood that the International Spy Museum also actively initiates the creation of primary source material. The museum furthers the production of primary source material available through the hosting of events and creation of recordings (such as interviews) with former intelligence professionals.

Women who have worked in intelligence have also had input into the genre of spy fiction. Of particular interest here is the sub-genre of Insider Spy Fiction, or, simply put, works by authors who have worked in intelligence. Fictional works are not a central focus of this chapter, however, an exception is made for Insider Spy Fiction as it incorporates the

¹³ The International Spy Museum is entirely focused on intelligence and espionage work, while the Imperial War Museum has a specific exhibit, "Secret War" which focuses on intelligence history.

experiences of individuals who have worked in intelligence. Blending fiction and experience, these works are sometimes given greater leeway in censorship requirements and publication approval. Further, female characters in Insider Spy Fiction written by women tend to offer a critique of both the genre and the lived experiences of their authors, rather than serving solely as archetypal set pieces, a problem noted in studies of the literary genre.¹⁴

[Medium and the Message: Types of sources and key sources in this chapter](#)

When speaking of first-hand accounts from intelligence professionals, memoirs are generally the most recognisable type of source material. Much of the primary source information about intelligence professionals emerges in written accounts, be it in official documents or first person accounts. As Davies notes, official records are often subject to “sanitisation” prior to their release.¹⁵ Such processes can cut out sometimes necessarily secret information, but also serve as an additional layer of editing which these texts go through. Official records, in the sense of the example used at the beginning of this chapter, can be gendered and the writers themselves may engage in self-censorship and editing in their writing process. As such, the end result is as much a subject of the forces that went in to its creation, editing, and censoring, as it is a document representing events that happened within it.

This problem leads to a turn to alternative primary sources, particularly in a project such as this thesis, where the voices of women are frequently obscured in the official records. Yet, this is not a unique process for intelligence history, as Davies notes, ‘it continues to be

¹⁴ Woods, B. F., *Neutral Ground: A Political History of Espionage Fiction*, (New York: Algora, 2007).

¹⁵ Davies, P. H. J., ‘Spies as Informants: Triangulation and the Interpretation of Elite Interview Data in the Study of Intelligence and Security Services’, *Politics* 21:1 (2001), pp. 73-74.

necessary to substitute interviews for official documents in many areas, particularly concerning the post-1946 history of Britain's intelligence machinery.¹⁶

This turn to the personal is also noted in Andrew Hammond's discussion of the CIA and oral history, where he argues that the use of oral history in intelligence studies allows researchers broaden the scope of their inquiry. He adds that, 'This is especially true with reference to questions surrounding identity and culture, as well as those that consider meaning, memory and narrative.'¹⁷ Hammond notes that oral history is much more closely aligned with bringing forward (often minority) voices otherwise obscured from history, contrasting the "top-down" approach that characterises much of intelligence history.¹⁸

Owing to organisational cultures of secrecy, the media obsession with espionage (for example with Stella Rimington in the 1990s), and the editorial control one can have over their written work compared to television and radio interviews, the preference for writing makes sense amongst former intelligence professionals. Though personal information appears in memoirs, they are subject to editing and review, far more so than recorded panel discussions or interviews.

Written accounts are not the only means of conveying one's experiences; loosening restrictions on former intelligence professionals have allowed those who are already known for their work to speak about it more frequently and in public settings. This shift in secrecy restrictions, as discussed in the previous section, has allowed for more personal information to emerge about intelligence professionals. These alternative primary sources can be added

¹⁶ Davies, 'Spies as Informants', p. 74.

¹⁷ Hammond, A., 'Through a Glass, Darkly: The CIA and Oral History', *History*, 100:340 (2015), p. 313.

¹⁸ Hammond, 'Through a Glass, Darkly', p. 314.

to Hammond's argument on oral history interviews, some of the following sources such as panel discussions and the question and answer section following lectures adds to this plurality of available information.

Since first-hand accounts are not limited to written autobiographical works, this chapter addresses memoirs along with a wider variety of primary sources which emphasise personal narratives. These sources are divided into four general categories: memoirs and other autobiographical writing, public speaking and lectures, interviews and panel discussions, and public displays (such as museums exhibits or material produced for film and television).

One way to understand and perhaps even categorise the ways in which intelligence professionals speak about their work is this level of interactivity. Though memoirs, public speeches, articles and interviews comprise much of the available information, other forms of information sharing also exist which present unique challenges. Museum exhibits are a key example of this.¹⁹ This section will discuss some of the differences in contributions from various formats with focus on what these sources can contribute that other types of sources have not be able to add. Methodological issues also vary by individual source and type.

In addition to the four broad categories of non-fictional information, a fifth category is added to this section. Though separate from accounts that make claims to authenticity or factual information, spy fiction also plays an important role in shaping images of intelligence work. Specifically relevant to the concerns of this chapter, insider spy fiction – written by former intelligence professionals – can serve as an outlet for professionals who wish to

¹⁹ For example, a number of former intelligence professionals are either on the board of or work for the International Spy Museum. It can be argued that the museum uses this aspect of its leadership to show both engagement with the intelligence community and add to the museum's credibility.

critique or explore other aspect of their work which might be discouraged or not allowed in non-fictional writing. Notably, women are increasingly writing contemporary spy fiction, sometimes referred to as “post 9/11” or “post Cold War” spy fiction, including former intelligence professionals like MI5 former DG Stella Rimington and former CIA officer Valarie Plame Wilson.

Memoirs and Other Written Autobiographical Accounts

Memoirs, particularly intelligence focused memoirs, have gained a certain level of notoriety. Their popularity and appeal to the general public has been intertwined with the fortunes of spy fiction as a popular literary genre. Separating fact from fiction is one of the most common issues researchers face and in intelligence history the blurred boundaries between fictional and factual make this a particularly daunting hurdle. The tendency towards sensationalism in fiction can creep over into non-fictional discussions of espionage and intelligence work. However, certain projects in intelligence history can benefit greatly from the incorporation of memoirs and other similar primary sources. For example, in writing on Anglo-French intelligence liaison, Emily Jane Haire argues that the benefits of memoir usage can outweigh their potential weaknesses as sources, especially for aspects of intelligence work where personal recollections and reflections provide insights beyond the official record.²⁰ Further to this point, she writes that, ‘Material about the social engagements that formed the backdrop for intelligence liaison may only be recorded in memoir-type materials, but the manner of the recording is also a vital route for interpretation. Autobiographical accounts stand as historical sources both of the past they describe, and

²⁰ Haire, E. J., ‘A Debased Currency: Using memoir material in the study of Anglo-French Intelligence Liaison’ *Intelligence and National Security*, 29:5, (1990), pp. 758-777.

the present in which they were written.’²¹ These sources can also show how former intelligence professionals make sense of their careers through their autobiographical writing. As a result, autobiographical writing can show personal aspects of intelligence work which are left out of official documentation. This thesis makes a similar claim to Haire’s, inherent in its focus on personal experiences within larger structures, memoirs provide deeper insights into individuals and their later reflections than other sources are capable of. In part, this is due to the amount of information they can contain compared to other methods, such as public speaking.

Through their position as intelligence professionals, either former or current, those individuals who speak about their work make a claim to authority and factual accuracy on the topic. Liz Stanley, in writing on auto/biography, notes the role of the “confessional pact” an assumption which can be made by both readers and writers that the information contained in an autobiographical work is the truth, presented in an unadulterated and raw form.²² Of course, personal accounts, particularly accounts of events from one’s past, are not simply reproductions of that past. Returning to Haire’s argument of the value of memoirs, ‘The subjectivity of the memoir is one of its most compelling aspects as it offers an insight into how a participant has written about the past.’²³ Though Haire focuses on memoirs, her argument for their value can also be extended to other mediums such as prepared speeches and collaboration on public representations. The process of constructing a narrative of one’s own past allows for reflection, editing, and even self-censoring.

²¹ Haire, E. J., ‘A Debased Currency’, p. 777.

²² Stanley, L., *The auto/biographical I*, (Manchester: MUP, 1992), pp. 60-61.

²³ Haire, ‘A Debased Currency’, p. 762.

Stanley argues that selective remembering is inevitable, 'Because memory inevitably has limits, the self we construct is necessarily partial; memory ties together events, persons and feelings actually linked only in such accounts and not in life as it was lived; it equally necessarily relies upon fictive devices in producing any and every account of the self it is concerned with.'²⁴ Stanley builds upon this idea of constructed self and discusses the linked concepts of the past self, present self, and written self. Contrasting with this delineation of selves, she argues that inherent in autobiographical writing is 'the myth of a single, coherent, stable and gradually unfolding inner and indubitably real essential self.'²⁵ Separating these aspects of autobiographical accounts/ autobiographical selves has interesting, and somewhat unique implications for the spy memoir. This is a genre which acknowledges its secretive nature, often without acknowledging the secrets themselves.

Spy memoirs are well placed to challenge the myths of the confessional pact and the cohesive self. Though it should be noted that this holds true – perhaps to a lesser extent – for the other mediums discussed in this chapter. Censorship practices, including, but not limited to publication review boards, challenge the idea of a spy tell-all. Either through imposed deletions or instances of self-censorship, the presumption of full and unaltered truth is undermined.

In his discussion on the, 'Future of the British Intelligence Memoir', Defty argues that memoirists write from one of two perspectives: either from a place of support of the intelligence services, or to berate the intelligence services for issues during or after one's career. Defty identifies the effects of these perspectives well, 'Implicit in these memoirs is a

²⁴ Stanley, *The auto/biographical I*, p. 62.

²⁵ Stanley, *The auto/biographical I*, pp. 131-133.

marked respect for the government's policy on official secrecy, which often manifests itself in a less than candid record of events. In contrast, those who have sought to condemn their former employers often seem to favour a more revelatory and provocative style.²⁶ In doing so, Defty notes that policies of organisational secrecy are only part of the problem. A "culture of secrecy" amongst former intelligence professionals has, as he suggests, an influence equal to or greater than that of government and organisational policy.²⁷

Some authors, conscious of this perception of truthfulness, make note of the percentage of material questioned and/or removed through the review process. In the Preface to their co-authored account, former CIA officers Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandra Grimes include both the CIA Publication Review Board (PRB) required statement (an agency disclaimer) and speak to the frustration of the PRB process which took approximately three years to complete. Given that the authors were originally asked to speak about their work in capturing a mole within the CIA, their issues with publication approval are somewhat surprising. However, the authors note that ninety percent of the disputed material was resolved in their favour.²⁸

Similarly, claims to authority are well established from the outset of Grimes and Vertefeuille's book. Their opening pages look at the number of books written on Cold War espionage critically, stating, 'Other books, whether written by outsiders or insiders, also suffer from being written by persons with an axe to grind, or who are besotted by a pet theory, or are simply more interested in producing a marketable commodity than in

²⁶ Defty, A., 'The Future of the British Intelligence Memoir', *Intelligence and National Security*, 10:1 (1995), p. 184.

²⁷ Defty, 'The Future of the British Intelligence Memoir', p. 189.

²⁸ Grimes, S., and J. Vertefeuille, *Circle of Treason: A CIA account of traitor Aldrich Ames and the men he betrayed*, (Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2013), pp. x-xii.

searching for truth and accuracy.’²⁹ With respect to the latter portion of the statement on truth and accuracy, the authors do not make a claim to being entirely neutral in their account. While they speak to facts and balance in their approach, they do not shy away from opinion. The authors tacitly acknowledge selectivity and role of experience in their book, and at points note their potential fallibility.

Of the autobiographical material referenced in this chapter, Grimes and Vertefeuille’s account is particularly useful. Their experiences in the CIA are a useful comparison to MI5, and particularly relevant as both authors were employed by the CIA throughout most of the Cold War. Vertefeuille was hired in the 1950s and Grimes began her employment in 1967. As the following section will show, there are common threads that can be found in intelligence work between different intelligence organisations, even across national boundaries, this includes general similarities, but also other points which are specific to women’s employment experiences. Some of the progress which the CIA made in the employment of women happened earlier than that within MI5, though a number of changes took place at a similar pace (allowing women to run high value agents for example). Despite the slightly different time frame (approximately a decade), similar patterns regarding segregated career structures, informal attitudes towards women, and patterns of and hurdles to progression occur between the two organisations.

Comparisons can also be made historically. For example, Joan Miller’s account of her clerical work, and later as an agent for MI5 during the Second World War shows the development of organisational employment patterns and attitudes that impacted women employed

²⁹ Grimes and Vertefeuille, *Circle of Treason*, p. ix.

decades later. Changes in social norms can also impact the ways in which memoirists view their past experiences.

Memoir material has the potential advantage of focusing on the individual and their memories, within the context of larger organisational changes. This is certainly the case in some of the memoirs referred to in this chapter which span longer careers, such as the writings of Stella Rimington, Tom Marcus, Richard L. Holm, and Kay Shaw Nelson. Not only do authors have the opportunity to speak to and formulate their own identities, they can establish a perspective on intelligence work more broadly. Scott and Jackson, in their article 'The Study of Intelligence in Theory and Practice' note the benefits and potential pitfalls of non-official accounts, while acknowledging their necessity for illuminating certain aspects of intelligence. They write, 'While this mater must be used with care, it should not be ignored by scholars of British intelligence. There are areas, such as the role of women in espionage/intelligence and the perspective of gender where so far the study of the subject has often been dependent on such sources.'³⁰

There are some exceptions to the personal focus of memoirs. Former MI5 officer Annie Machon's book, *Spies, Lies, and Whistleblowers* is, for the most part, remarkably focused on procedure, including a critique of the organisation's surveillance practices.³¹ Machon's book has elements of autobiographical writing but would be difficult to classify primarily as a memoir. While Machon speaks to her experiences very clearly earlier in the book, entire chapters in the latter portion focus on the experiences of fellow whistleblower David

³⁰ Scott, L. and P. Jackson, 'The Study of Intelligence in Theory and Practice', *Intelligence and National Security*, 19:2 (2004), p. 145.

³¹ Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers: MI5, MI6 and the Shayler Affair*, (Sussex: The Book Guild, 2005). [Out of print]

Shayler. In contrast to the majority of memoirs discussed in this chapter, Machon's public speaking and interviews tend to be more candid than her book.

Public Speaking and Lectures (including Academic Cooperation)

Public speaking engagements are a key area of interest. While prepared speeches, like memoirs, can be subject to similar amounts of editing there is an increased opportunity for interactivity in this medium, particularly in public lectures followed by question and answer sessions. While text from prepared speeches can be useful, it faces similar limits to memoir material. Of greater assistance are the number of recordings of these lectures that have been made publicly available. This presents an interesting cooperation between intelligence professionals and academia.

As Scott and Jackson noted in 2004, there is a greater amount of intelligence community cooperation with academia in the United States compared to the United Kingdom. Much of this is due to efforts from the CIA to encourage academic interest in the subject of intelligence.³² It can be argued that the situation has improved in the United Kingdom, with increasing public engagement from former intelligence professionals. Some of the material in this thesis draws from these talks by former intelligence professionals, who have given lectures at various university departments and societies. Public talks by former intelligence professionals such as Stella Rimington and Annie Machon serve as examples of this.

Some of these lectures can take on a tone of, or discussion about recruitment. Former MI5 officer Annie Machon, speaking at the University of Aberdeen is one such example.³³ In this

³² Scott and Jackson, 'The Study of Intelligence', pp. 152-153.

³³ Machon, A., talk at the University of Aberdeen, 2014, available at: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmObwmUHq7I&t=1457s>]

lecture, she encouraged the students curious about a career in MI5 to consider both their suitability to the organisation and the suitability of an MI5 career to themselves. In contrast, Machon gave a lecture at the University of Cambridge three years prior which was more critical of secrets work.³⁴ In viewing both recordings, there are notable differences in tone and characterisation (of MI5) that emerge in both the lectures and subsequent question and answer sessions. Machon – recruited by MI5 in 1990 – provides a useful understanding of changes to MI5, in how it transitioned from the Cold War era to the contemporary MI5 both as an intelligence organisation and as an employer. Machon left MI5 in 1997 as a whistleblower and remains critical of some of MI5's policies. She is also not the only MI5 whistleblower to be included in this chapter, as Cathy Massiter is another example.

Interviews and Panel Discussions

For the purposes of this subsection interviews and panel discussions are grouped together. Though there are key differences between the two formats, both source types used in this chapter rely on the role of an interviewer or discussant (i.e. a panel host). One-on-one interviews are useful in that the questions asked often stray into more personal areas, where the interviewee may share thoughts and feelings about events in their careers. While published interviews are included in this thesis, they are overshadowed in both quantity and quality by the wealth of material gained from panel discussions.

Panel discussions not only venture into personal experiences and reflections, but also allow for discussion and interaction between participants, comparing and contrasting their experiences. Examples include the appearances of Baronesses Park and Ramsay, both of the

³⁴ Machon, A., talk at Cambridge University, 28 January 2011.

SIS, on the BBC radio show *Woman's Hour*. Due to the focus of the show, discussants often speak directly to issues of gender. Rimington, for example has been involved in a number of high profile public panel discussions on intelligence organisation, espionage work and fictional representations. The panels she participates in are generally more international in scope, such as the *New Yorker's* panel on espionage fiction which also had a participant formerly employed by the CIA.

However, the most insightful of the panel sessions referred to in this chapter come from two International Spy Museum panels, Mother Daughter Sister Spy (MDSS), and from an internal panel discussion hosted within the CIA. The MDSS panels were held in 2016 and 2017, with plans to make this an annual event coinciding with Mother's Day (held in May in the United States). The panels feature women formerly employed by the CIA in a variety of areas. The first panel has four participants, and the second panel has eight participants. There is some overlap in participation, with certain panel members present in both years. Both MDSS panels featured in depth discussions amongst the participants. While the moderators in each panel present general questions and occasionally prompt participants for answers, much of the material results from information volunteered or from discussion amongst the participants (including prompting of each other). Both MDSS panels have been made available as videos by the International Spy Museum and for the purposes of this thesis, they have been transcribed.

The internal CIA panel is not available in video or audio form, instead it was provided as a written transcript within the "Typist to Trailblazer" collection recently released by the CIA. This panel discussion is unique in that it was not meant for audiences outside the Agency. As such, material is redacted from the transcript. In many cases the redactions are obvious,

such as names or locations, however there are larger sections of text missing from the transcript. In using this source in this chapter it should be noted that where the type of information redacted can be determined by context, it is included.

Public Displays

The ISM is dedicated entirely to espionage and intelligence work with an emphasis on history and tradecraft. After an introductory video, the museum is designed to send visitors through a generally chronological path. The museum's exhibits focus on interactivity, and the museum advertises itself as family friendly. Much of this history addressed is American intelligence, though certain sections address intelligence cooperation and specific emphasis is given to Russia. The ISM maintains close ties with the CIA and the intelligence community more generally. The ISM Advisory Board includes some well-known names in American intelligence amongst its membership, and it should be noted that Stella Rimington is also on this board.

The level of cooperation that goes into the museum is of particular interest. Throughout the museum, documentary style interview clips with former intelligence officers are shown on loop. Jonna Mendez (an Advisory Board member) and Sandra Grimes both feature prominently amongst those included. In addition to the museum's historical exhibits there is also a special exhibit which focuses on the James Bond franchise. As a part of this exhibit, another series of video clips called "My Bond Moment" are on display which include former intelligence professionals speaking about the more dangerous or exciting moments of their work.³⁵ The short clips throughout the Bond exhibit contrast and blend reality with fiction.

³⁵ International Spy Museum, "My Bond Moment" available at <https://www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/exquisitely-evil/my-bond-robert-baer/> It should be noted that the ISM provides online access some of its videos, such as the aforementioned series.

This echoes a theme within recollections by former intelligence professionals where they intentionally compare or contrast themselves with popular fictional images of spies.

Of specific relevance to this research is the “Sisterhood of Spies” exhibit which focuses on women in intelligence. As former CIA officer Kay Shaw Nelson recalls in the conclusion of her memoir, Jonna Mendez and her husband, both retired CIA officers, were involved in the creation of this exhibit.³⁶ Though the material from the ISM forms a small part of this chapter, it is important to include here as it shows an active role of former intelligence professionals in shaping the ways in which their careers, and the field of intelligence more generally, are depicted. This lines up well with E. K. Vigurs’ thesis on the roles of SOE women in shaping both fictional and non-fictional representations of women of the SOE after the Second World War.³⁷ Vigurs examines the narratives of Odette Churchill and Violette Szabo (who did not survive the war), looking at the role of Odette in the creation of films about both women after World War II.

The Potential Subversiveness of Insider Spy Fiction

While this chapter focuses on non-fictional accounts of intelligence employment, it cannot remain entirely separate from fiction. As Vigurs identifies in her thesis, the public images and remembrances of women in SOE were shaped by these fictional representations of them created after the war. Vigurs argues that, ‘An agent’s portrayal on film forms the basis of the public’s awareness of them and their stories.’³⁸ In this sense, fictional images shape prevalent images and interpretations of historical events. It should be added that not only is

³⁶ Nelson, K. S., *The Cloak and Dagger Cook: A CIA Memoir*, (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2009), p. 362

³⁷ Vigurs, E. K., *The Women Agents of the Special Operations F Section – Wartime realities and post war representations*, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011).

³⁸ Vigurs, *The Women Agents of the Special Operations F Section*, p. 182.

fiction a seemingly ubiquitous touchstone in non-fictional accounts, it has made its way into scholarly works as well.

The reach of fictional spy accounts extends well beyond its genre. As Scott and Jackson note, spy fiction played a role in shaping the early British intelligence.³⁹ On the one hand, this is not all that surprising given the influence of early spy novels on the British state, which introduced espionage to a broader public and sounded the alarm about potential espionage threats from abroad.⁴⁰ For example, fear of German invasion prompted authors such as Erskine Childers to write *Riddle of the Sands*, which blended fiction and factual naval strategy in order to advocate for the expansion of the British Navy. Childers' book fulfilled its purpose of alerting the British to the problem while also becoming a seminal work of espionage fiction, containing elements seen in contemporary works.⁴¹ The influence of spy fiction continued well into the Cold War. Importantly, intelligence fiction, as Scott and Jackson acknowledge, can bring up moral and ethical questions regarding intelligence.⁴²

On the other hand, spy fiction has had a varied reputation within intelligence organisations. Though spy fiction has often been grouped with detective fiction as there are clear similarities, it should be added that there are distinctions between the two genres. Insider spy fiction, in this sense, could be considered a sub-genre of spy fiction, with some authors using their employment background in intelligence to lend credibility and add a sense of truthfulness for their fictional works. For some professionals, it is also a way to subvert secrecy practices or subtly critique the organisations which they served. This is in line with

³⁹ Scott and Jackson, 'The Study of Intelligence', p. 158.

⁴⁰ For a wider overview of spy fiction see: Woods, B. F., *Neutral Ground: A Political History of Espionage Fiction*, (New York: Algora, 2007).

⁴¹ Woods, *Neutral Ground*, pp. 28-29.

⁴² Scott and Jackson, 'The Study of Intelligence', pp. 159-161.

Scott and Jackson's observation about the opportunity to address different representations of intelligence through fictional works. They also acknowledge the role of fictional accounts in shaping understandings of intelligence, writing, 'Yet public perceptions of what intelligence is and what it does owe as much to fictional representations as to public debate in the "real" world of international politics.'⁴³ Further to this argument, it could be argued that this holds an additional layer of truth for well-known former intelligence professionals who write fiction.

One example of an insider who went on to write spy fiction and speak about their work is John Starnes. After a career in Canada which involved both intelligence and leadership positions, stretching from the Second World War to the 1970s, Starnes retired and began to consider writing fiction. This desire to write can be linked both to his childhood exposure to the genre and to his resignation, which took place due to 'frustration with the evident lack of interest of ministers and senior officials in the very serious problems of the [Canadian] Security Service and frustration with the unwillingness of the Commissioner of the RCMP to make the Security Service "more civilian and more separate in character", a key feature of my appointment.'⁴⁴ Reflecting on both the nonfiction and fiction works that Starnes wrote, he admits to a broader goal: that he hoped to educate Canadian people about intelligence.

In terms of writing spy fiction, Starnes was initially concerned with professionally gained secrets knowledge unintentionally finding a place in his novels. Partly, these fears were ameliorated due to Canadian releases of classified files in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁵ Starnes also found that once he began researching and writing this likelihood of making such an

⁴³ Scott and Jackson, 'The Study of Intelligence', p. 157.

⁴⁴ Starnes, J., 'Why I Write Spy Fiction', *Intelligence and National Security*, 5:4, (1990), p.205.

⁴⁵ Starnes, 'Why I Write Spy Fiction', p. 207

error lessened. However, this fear is a concern for some spy fiction writers, and certainly, intelligence organisations.

As non-fictional publication review practices have evolved, fictional accounts from individuals formerly employed in intelligence have also fallen under the purview of publication review boards. As a result, contemporary spy novels may face increased controls within these formalized review practices. Stella Rimington's novels, for example, must be reviewed prior to publication. British spy fiction in particular, has a history of insider involvement, much of it not directly under institutional control. As noted by Nigel West, there is history of hiring authors in British intelligence. In addition, a number of those employed in intelligence have written fictional works which have drawn on their experiences such as Graham Greene, Ian Fleming, and even Maxwell Knight.⁴⁶

Rimington began publishing fictional works after her successful battle to publish her memoir. Her series focuses on a female protagonist, Liz Carlyle, an officer in MI5. Notably, the Liz Carlyle novels take place in a contemporary, rather than Cold War environment. In this sense, her work fits in well with contemporary 'post-Cold War' or as some have referred to it as a 'post-9/11' spy fiction.

In a public talk and interview at the Edinburgh Spy Week, Rimington reflected on the role of women in spy fiction, particularly in relation to her own novels. Conscious of the role of gender in spy fiction, Rimington remarked that she wanted to, 'rescue the spy novel from the men'.⁴⁷ This goes beyond featuring women characters, as she puts forth the idea both in

⁴⁶ West, N., 'Fiction, Faction and Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, 19:2, (2004), pp. 275-277.

⁴⁷ Rimington, S., "Women in Spy Fiction", Discussion with Prof. Penny Fielding at Edinburgh Spy Week, University of Edinburgh, 11 April 2016.

this talk and in her novels, that women go about intelligence work differently than men. She states that, 'both can do the job, but they do it in a different way'.⁴⁸ Rimington also acknowledged that she intentionally highlights cooperation and teamwork in the way in which she depicts Carlyle's work environment and working style. From reading her novels, it is clear she generally seeks to depict a positive image of MI5, however she is also more critical of some aspects of intelligence organisational cultures within her fictional writing than she is in her autobiographical writing. Rimington's depictions of certain MI5 and SIS officers verge on caricatures at times. For one example, fictional SIS officer Fane is depicted in the early novels as a caricature of sexism in the intelligence world. Fane's internal dialogue at one point states, 'These young women in MI5 nowadays are very defensive. Thank goodness in our neck of the woods we're still masculine. Well, nearly. It makes life so much easier.'⁴⁹ However such depictions are not limited to SIS, at a later point in the novel, a senior MI5 officer in charge of Liz Carlyle's operation dismisses her concerns, referring to her as a, 'Silly, panicky woman.'⁵⁰

As of this writing, Rimington is the only female contemporary former MI5 novelist working on post-Cold War insider spy fiction. However, former MI5 surveillance officer Tom Marcus is following in her footsteps. After the publication of his memoir, it was announced that he will publish a fictional work.⁵¹ Nor is Rimington is not the only female former intelligence professional to break in to fictional writing. From the CIA, Valarie Plame Wilson has also co-authored a number of novels.⁵² Like Rimington, these novels centre on a female

⁴⁸ Rimington, S., "Women in Spy Fiction".

⁴⁹ Rimington, S., *Illegal Action*, (London: Arrow, 2008 reprint), p. 184.

⁵⁰ Rimington, *Illegal Action*, p. 316.

⁵¹ Set for release 31 May 2018, Marcus, T., *Capture or Kill* (Macmillan, 2018).

⁵² See: Plame Wilson, V., and S. Lovett, *Blowback*, (Blue Rider Press: 2013); Plame Wilson, V., and S. Lovett, *Burned*, (Blue Rider Press: 2014).

protagonist. The shift towards more contemporary insider spy fiction writers allows for a glimpse into how more recent intelligence professionals view their careers and the world of intelligence.

The tendency for women to write about women ought to not be a notable feature of spy fiction, however given the prevalence of masculine images in spy fiction, it is an element of the genre which deserves greater analysis. Such analysis should not be limited to the role of women or written works. Rosie White's work on images of women spies in popular media highlights a shift in perceptions and representations that has taken place in the 1990s.⁵³ Additionally, Stephanie Jones' thesis on masculinity and the James Bond film franchise should be acknowledged here as a formidable step towards understanding gender in fictional depictions of spies.⁵⁴

[Creating and Deconstructing the Image of the Female Spy – Definitions of self, rhetorical techniques](#)

One of the key themes which appears in the reflections of former intelligence professionals is the role of identity. Due to the nature of their work, identities throughout one's career are intentionally plural. This section discusses the various ways in which those working in intelligence seek to create and articulate their own identities, both in relation to their work and outside it. This is particularly pronounced when living under a cover, such as in the case of CIA or SIS officers stationed abroad, often under the cover of diplomats, or passport control officers (as discussed in Chapters Four and Five). Furthermore, organisational culture

⁵³ White, R., *Violent Femmes: Women as Spies in Popular Culture*, (Routledge, 2007).

⁵⁴ Jones, S., *A Reception Study and Textual Analysis of Masculinities in James Bond Films 1966-2008*, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberystwyth, 2012).

can influence the ways in which those working in intelligence see themselves. Comparing oneself to colleagues is yet another way of forming identity in recollections. This is notable as well for its intersection with wider social and class issues, where university educated women in the 1960s and 1970s found elements of MI5's organisational culture to be outlandish, old-fashioned, or even eccentric. Another aspect of examining identity in relation to intelligence work is that areas which are otherwise left out of scholarly research are highlighted. The spouses of intelligence professionals, often historically women, engaged in elements of intelligence work, either through formal employment as low grade "contract wives" or secretaries, or informally by assisting their spouses with their work. Though the roles of CIA wives are mentioned, rarely are they focused on scholarly literature. This is another area where first person accounts add to existing material, by addressing the experiences of groups of women less visible in the official record.

[Spy, Diplomat, or Professional?](#)

Though contemporary terminology emphasises the official and professional aspects of intelligence work with terms like "intelligence professional" or "intelligence officer" the ways in which those who have worked in this field have defined themselves have varied significantly. Some of the terms have also changed, mirroring the process of professionalisation and bureaucratisation of intelligence work. The following section will examine the ways in which women who have worked in intelligence define themselves publicly.

From the previous section it is clear that secrecy restrictions and cultures of secrecy can have an impact on the ways in which former intelligence professionals speak about their work. One such example is the case of Daphne Park, an officer for the SIS. Park, for the most

part, was reluctant to speak in great detail about her work. She was concerned that doing so would discourage potential agents who might cooperate with intelligence officers from coming forward. In revealing too much information about her past work, she thought that might cause these agents to fear a later reveal in an intelligence officers talk or memoir. However, Park did not hide from public engagement after her official retirement. Under her cover of being a former diplomat she gave lectures and interviews discussing her work, not shying away from calling herself a diplomat.

At the introduction to one such lecture in 1992 Park says, 'You may be wondering why I have called this Lecture "Difficult Places". I served in at least three such places in my time as a diplomat – the Soviet Union from 1954-1956, not long after Stalin's death, the Congo, now Zaire, in Africa from 1959-1961, the years before and after independence, and North Vietnam, where I served as HM Consul General in 1969 and 1970, in the middle of the Vietnam war.' Many of these locations were public record, with her listed in Who's Who as diplomatic staff, including the well-known cover of "passport control officer". In 1993, Park officially spoke on behalf of the SIS, chosen to represent the service on an episode of *Panorama* as the service finally stepped into officially acknowledged existence.

Interestingly, Park's tone in later interviews changes little. Her anecdotes are often echo previous ones, and "diplomat" changes to "intelligence officer" or more simply "officer".

['In the land of eccentrics': Defining Self Though and in Contrast to Colleagues](#)

In many ways, the reflections on working in intelligence are not dissimilar to reflections on office work for other, non-intelligence sectors. Like workers in other sectors, those who were employed in intelligence often comment on boredom or drudgery, particularly in relation to in-office assignments. This is true amongst both officers and non-officers. Though

the above section discusses how those working in intelligence describe themselves, this section discusses how they describe the people they work with or in the same environment as, often noting points of difference between themselves and their colleagues. Frustrations with colleagues can offer additional insights in to how writers' feel about their employment, work ethics, and intraoffice social relations.

In many ways, the depictions of working in an office which come from intelligence work, focus on the everyday concerns and experiences just like those of office workers in other fields. Joan Miller's description of working for Maxwell Knight during the Second World War highlights this:

We were all jubilant over the new office arrangements. M and I shared the largest room, working at desks which faced one another with a good distance in between. Paper-work held no appeal at all for M, so most of this fell to my lot. *He* seemed to be under the impression that things left in the in-tray would eventually sort themselves out by some mysterious process not involving his co-operation. I did as much as I could to make things easy for him. I didn't mind this, though some of it was extremely boring, because I felt I was learning all the time.⁵⁵

Miller's tone towards her working environment is generally positive and optimistic, though she does not shy away from or ignore the impact the war has on her. Like others, her descriptions of her office work environment are fairly straightforward, mixing general impressions with factual information. What is interesting about the above passage is the way she describes how she felt about the paperwork. In this way, Miller's tone differs from other accounts, not only is she keen to help her boss, she also identifies it as a learning experience.

Knight's attitude towards paperwork is not uncommon amongst MI5 officers of the time. In this way, Miller's recollections parallel those found in the magazine of the Nameless Club. In

⁵⁵ Miller, J., *One Girl's War*, (Dublin: Brandon, 1987), p. 59.

the 1920 publication, Registry workers reminisced about their experiences during the First World War with paperwork and office life, in particular S. Callow's "Song of the Women Clerks" combines both humour and frustration:

There we met with famous men
Set in office o'er us,
And they beat us with "f.p's"
Passports, cards, or worse – "N.T's"
(This in spite of our degrees)
For the love they bore us.

And we all praise famous men
Ancients of the office
For they taught Intelligence
Tried to teach Intelligence,
Taught us all Intelligence,
Which is more than knowledge.⁵⁶

As a whole, the "Song of the Women Clerks" takes a nostalgic tone, including the value they felt in the wartime work in MI5. Throughout the magazine there is a sense of comradeship.

Another verse towards the end of the same issue echoes this:

We, that have laboured as comrades throughout the long years,
Of the War, and have toiled side by side,
We, who have wrestled with work, and overtaken arrears
Stacked around us like mountains – defied
All our troubles and smiled, finding something of humour therein -
Though weary, have seen it all through

Yet, not all employee relations are so cordial. In contrast, at points in her writing Miller compares herself indirectly to some of her colleagues. In a footnote, Miller mentions an old school friend, also employed by MI5, who is jealous of Miller's success within the organisation.⁵⁷ In another example, following the passage quoted above, Miller gives her

⁵⁶ IWM LBY E.J. 2710 The Nameless Magazine, 1920.

⁵⁷ Miller, J., *One Girl's War*, p. 57.

impression of the woman in charge of operating the switchboard for her office section.

Miller writes, continuing the description of her office environment:

A door in this main office led into a smaller room where our zany telephonist-cum-filing-clerk, Babe Holt, was installed. Both Babe and I came from the West Country, and I'd known her slightly before the war, when we used to bump into one another at hunt-balls and other social occasions. She was a real blonde, very decorative to look at and great fun, though highly disorganized; the office switchboard, with Babe in charge of it, did not function the way it should have. Certainly she was not employed on account of her efficiency. Like the rest of us girls, though, she was absolutely trustworthy and discreet, as well as adding considerably to the gaiety of things.⁵⁸

Miller and Holt come from similar social backgrounds, both young women of social privilege who were more likely to be considered trustworthy by their employers. It is interesting that Miller notes how Holt's performance is of little relevance to the position she held. This point is made in two separate but linked ways, the first being class and presumptions of trust and discretion, the second being Miller's comments on Holt's appearance. Miller's description says as much about Holt as it does herself. Both are amongst the "girls" and both are in positions of trust, valued for their discretion.

Though Miller comes across in her writing as considerably more level-headed than the way that most of the "debs" are depicted, she herself falls into this category based on her background (in terms of both class and education). She also uses "debs" as a descriptor for some of the women she meets, both in and out of MI5. With Miller, the usage remains somewhat neutral, acting as shorthand descriptor which also indicates the status quo nature of the presence of debs in MI5 and related social circles. Later accounts from other authors take a more critical stance towards the debs.

⁵⁸ Miller, J., *One Girl's War*, pp. 59-60.

Though some, like Miller, were happy to take on paperwork and related tasks, others were more conflicted about the relative isolation such work could lead to. Partly, this reflects changes in attitudes towards secretarial and clerk tasks as more university educated women entered intelligence work, often with greater ambitions for their working lives or longer-term goals developed after their recruitment. This can be seen in the reflections from those recruited in later decades, such as Rimington, Vertefeuille and Grimes.

Contract Wives

There are some interesting aspects to the ways that contract wives are viewed in the mid-1990s by senior women on the CIA panel. At least two of the four panel members have early CIA experiences as contract wives and all four were aware of and had contact with them during their careers. An interesting exchange occurs between the moderator (another woman in the CIA who arranged the panel discussion) and Meredith:

Susan, moderator: I'm not sure we have contract wives anymore. Can you say what a contract wife was!

Meredith: Sure we do!

Susan, moderator: Not like they were, though.

Meredith began her involvement with the Agency as a "contract wife" as her husband, a CIA employee, was an operations officer. At the panel moderator's prompting, Meredith describes what it meant to be a contract wife, though she does not really define what a contract wife was. (There appears to be a level of assumed knowledge in this internal CIA panel discussion.) Contract wives, were wives of operations officers, who, before going to live in foreign postings with their husbands, were required to undergo CIA training. The

course involved identifying surveillants.⁵⁹ As Meredith recalls, ‘There were lots of us, and it was a venue for bringing women in at the time.’⁶⁰

Like Meredith, Patty entered the CIA as a contract wife. Though the reason – likely education or language skills – is redacted, Patty was hired as a GS-6 employee. She remarks:

Woohoo! And all of the other wives got mad at me because they were hired as 3s [redacted] I went, “Hey, whoa, this is not my problem!” This was a problem with the Agency and the way they were treating the wives – contract slaves. Anyway, I quit... and we came back to Washington.⁶¹

Many of the wives were hired at significantly lower grades, yet if they wanted to accompany their husbands to operational postings in foreign countries, being a contract wife was a part of the deal. Patty’s husband continued to work for the CIA until he passed away due to a heart attack while travelling for work (an unspecified amount of time after their move back to Washington D.C.). She recalls that a case officer was assigned to her and that the CIA decided to offer her employment as, ‘it was the easiest thing to do’.⁶² As a result, Patty shifted from contract wife to professional trainee.

CIA officer Richard L. Holm speaks about his wife’s experience in his memoir of his own career. Unusually, Holm spends more time speaking about his family than most CIA officers and describes his wife’s involvement with the Agency prior to their marriage. His wife Judy, prior to her marriage to Holm had been married to another CIA officer who was killed in the field. They had been in an unspecified foreign posting at the time. After her husband’s death, Judy left the CIA (presumably as a contract wife) to return home to Illinois.⁶³ Holm

⁵⁹ The training course name is redacted from the panel transcript, but the abbreviation “CE” is used. This likely refers to a Counter Espionage course.

⁶⁰ Meredith, “Divine Secrets” p. 3.

⁶¹ Patty, “Divine Secrets” p. 6.

⁶² Patty, “Divine Secrets” p. 7.

⁶³ Holm, R. L., *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, (London: St. Ermin’s, 2003), pp. 67-68.

describes Judy's desire to return to Washington D.C., and she eventually did so with guarantees from the CIA that they would immediately re-employ her if she so desired. Judy returned to CIA employment and later enters a relationship with Holm. He recalls that Judy was unhappy working as it caused her time away from her young child. When Judy was offered a post in Taiwan, Holm decided to propose marriage, an offer which Judy accepted, after some convincing. Holm serves in a number of foreign postings throughout his career, often under diplomatic cover. Judy and their children accompany him to these locations.⁶⁴ Interestingly, though Judy officially leaves the CIA, she is once again a CIA wife, on occasion helping Holm make connections and reinforcing his official cover. Judy's story is particularly useful here as it highlights one of the gaps in intelligence agency histories: the experiences of wives, especially those unofficially involved in intelligence work in foreign postings.

White Glove Checks and School Ties in the Dining Rooms

As discussed in Chapter Four (on intelligence organisation), gender divisions within the CIA and MI5 have similar timelines for changes in women's employment patterns. Also, as noted in Chapter Five, MI5 was coming to terms with the culture of the "debs" in the 1950s and 1960s as more university educated women entered the workforce. Similarly, life in the CIA had certain gender and class expectations for its women employees. As one participant in a CIA panel discussion, Carla, noted,

When I came in in 1965 the first assumption was that any female you met in the hallway was a secretary or a clerk. And the other big difference was when I came on board, we wore hats and white gloves every day. The gloves were inspected as you entered the

⁶⁴ Holm, *The American Agent*, pp. 79-81.

office to be sure that your palms were white. I'm not sure what would have happened if they hadn't been white because I was too petrified to change that.⁶⁵

Carla began her employment with the CIA as a secretary. Her experience is echoed by the other women on the panel. The panellists also recall a woman whose sole job throughout her CIA career was to check the badges on those trying to enter a particular section. This job was highlighted as an aspect of secrecy – compartmentalisation – which had the effect of isolating certain employees, often leaving them without networks to support job growth (a key theme which emerges in the panel discussion).

This ties in to another everyday aspect of CIA experiences, one which is not discussed in depth elsewhere. The unique dining arrangements within the CIA headquarters led to a separation of employees by grade and section. Most notably, the Directorate of Operations had a separate dining room from other CIA staff. While one panellist justified this as a way of protecting secret identities of Directorate of Operations employees, another noted that employees (with the exception of their invited guests) had to be of a higher employment grade to dine there. This was noted to still be in place by panellist Meredith in the late 1970s. Another panellist, Patty, who began her CIA career in 1973, remarks,

One of the things I remember in those years – you talked about the white gloves – the Agency dining room used to be the executive dining room. You had to be a, what, GS-16 to get up there? Before the guys went up, they all put on their school ties. They were all from the big eastern colleges, the big 10, &c.[redacted] who I used to call my [redacted] godfather because he's the one who offered me the job to come in, was the only non-big 10 school and [redacted] had done his master's, I think, at Harvard, so he had a school. But they literally would change their ties before they went up.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ 'Divine Secrets of the RYBAT Sisterhood: Four Senior Women of the Directorate of Operations Discuss Their Careers' <http://www.foia.cia.gov/typisttrailblazer/pdfs/1994-01-08.pdf> p.2.

⁶⁶ 'Divine Secrets' p. 7.

This is an element of CIA culture for men that has not been a central focus. While some memoirists speak to a reduction in elitism in later years, few detail the ways in the class played into intrapersonal exchanges (or class performativity) within the CIA.

Training Pools and Culture Shocks

Nelson's frustration with her colleagues in the CIA training pool emerges through her writing on the experience. As highlighted in Chapter Five, Nelson was frustrated after diligently working on her assignment to discover that many of her colleagues took their training pool assignments less seriously, taking days out to have fun. However, her clearest commentary on the differences between the work efforts of her and her colleagues emerges at the end of the chapter. Out to celebrate her progression out of the temporary pool for new CIA employees, Nelson reflects on how she spent her time while in the pool. Already, Nelson defines herself in contrast to most of those colleagues in the pool with her, noting the isolation she felt from hours spent researching and writing on her given topic (writing informational reports on the Caucasus). Though she later would benefit from her efforts in the training pool in her permanent post, her writing shows that at the time she felt conflicted about her decisions in contrast to those of her less diligent colleagues:

Then my companions started bragging about how they had not been carrying out their assignments, finding them meaningless. They wanted more "action" so after our morning check-in, they'd take off to explore the city or look for something to do. Only one of them got caught. While spending his time at a suburban racetrack he had dropped his identification badge. It was found and mailed to an official CIA office and then sent to our pool instructors, who were understandably livid.

Like the others I joined in on the laughter, thinking the tale amusing. "Some spy. He even lost his badge before getting his top-secret clearance," I thought to myself. Suddenly my mood switched. While not revealing it, I was astounded. I had worked diligently at the Library of Congress writing hundreds of pages of data about the Caucasus. Furthermore, I had even felt guilty about leaving my desk a few times to go sightseeing or to listen to the

House Committee on Un-American Activities hearings. Maybe I was too naïve for the spy business, I mused. In a few minutes I departed with a cordial farewell.

On my way home I changed my mind. No, I shouldn't be irate. What did it matter what one man had done? T'was better to have been with the books than the horses, I said to myself.⁶⁷

Nelson's descriptions of her thought processes are common in her memoir. Throughout this chapter on the training pool she comments on her increasing isolation and resulting loneliness. It should be noted as well, that her background check and assignment to a permanent section took longer than that of most of her training pool class. Some progressed quickly, others, like Nelson and the men she went out to celebrate her assignment with, spent months waiting for more permanent work. As can be seen from the above section, it is clear that she experienced frustration with inept and less diligent colleagues. Notably, her reflection differs towards the end of this selection where her perspective shifts and she makes the decision to not care about the actions of her colleagues. Her attitude towards isolation also begins to change. Partially, this can be linked to her experiences on her first official assignment, where she expressed that the isolation of her early months prepared for CIA office culture.

Rimington describes the training section she was placed into after joining MI5 in London. Both men and women were trained in this section, which was, 'presided over by a couple of training officers, two well-bred ladies "of a certain age", from the twin-set-and-pearls-brigade.' Rimington entered MI5 at a time when the female educational demographic was shifting. Dwindling in number were the "debs" being replaced by greater numbers of university educated women in the 1970s. This fundamental shift in the backgrounds of

⁶⁷ Nelson, K., S., *The Cloak and Dagger Cook*, p. 39.

those employed contributed significantly to demands for equal opportunities for women in the organisation. Yet, upon Rimington's employment, the "debs" were still quite visible in the organisation. She continues with her description of the training section:

'On my first day I was intrigued when at 12 noon, these two opened their desk drawers and produced exquisite cut glasses and bottle of some superior sherry, and partook of a rather elegant pre-lunch drink. I realised then that I had arrived in the land of eccentrics and that this promised to be a lot more entertaining than spending my days in Woking.'⁶⁸

[Seeking Something Interesting to Do: Education, Motivation, and Chance](#)

The eccentricities of the spy world as depicted by Rimington lead to the question: why would someone not drawn to this culture want to work in intelligence? For some, patriotism is a key motivating factor. Rarely, however, is patriotism the sole primary motivation. For most, the reasons are more complex and multifaceted. Examples are varied and include the need to secure paid employment, an interest in travel, the desire for interesting work, and once employed, the desire to continue in work that is found to be fulfilling. As will be demonstrated in this section, motivations overlap, change, and even come into conflict with other motivations. For Rimington, she sought paid employment out of financial need to support herself and her daughters. Others, like Nelson, sought employment to use their language skills and see the world.⁶⁹ This leads to the theme highlighted in this section, how women speak about the development of their motivations and career ambitions.

⁶⁸ Rimington, S., *Open Secret: The autobiography of the former Director-General of MI5*, (London: Arrow, 2002 ed.) pp. 93.

⁶⁹ See Chapter Five section on motivations for additional discussion on this topic.

Rimington, identifies this thread in describing her interview experience, she writes:

‘All that the Welshman and his colleague were prepared to offer me, as a female, was a job at the equivalent of Civil Service Executive Officer. It did not matter that I had a degree, that I had worked for several years already in the public service, at a higher grade than they were offering, or that I was thirty-four years old. The policy was that men were recruited as what were called “officers” and women had their own career structure, a second-class career, as “assistant officers”. They did all sorts of support work – collating, indexing, ensuring the papers were filed in the right place and simple, straight-forward enquiries, but not the sharp-end intelligence-gathering operations. What the two recruiters were offering me, that June day in 1969, was a post as “Junior Assistant Officer”, the bottom rung of this rather humble ladder.’⁷⁰

It is important to note here that Rimington and her CIA counterparts both acknowledge how little their qualifications mattered. As with the experiences of women in the CIA, experience, skills, and education were valued less for women recruits than for their male counterparts in terms of job placement and progression, once hired. Despite this, the recruitment of well-educated women remained a holdover from the World Wars. The women who were recruited into these organisations had limited options, but were also motivated by the idea of interesting work.

The quote above highlights how the dual career structure placed women at lower positions and in more menial work, but more importantly it also gives some insight into how she felt about the work. There is a tone of ambivalence and matter-of-factness in Rimington’s writing on her recruitment, in this and the following paragraphs, particularly in discussing her lack of career ambitions. In taking the job, Rimington was taking a clear step backwards in terms of pay and opportunities. She acknowledges how she did not fully understand why she took the job and that it was an issue she wondered about frequently afterwards. Equally

⁷⁰ Rimington, S., *Open Secret*, pp. 90-91.

relevant, she notes that at the time that she had not thought to seek a better offer or opportunity outside MI5.⁷¹ Rimington continues on to write,

‘I often wonder why I took the job. In salary and responsibility terms it was clearly unattractive. Certainly my motives were nothing like those they look for in recruits nowadays. I did not feel a particular urge to serve my country, though I was averagely patriotic, nor did I have a strong sense of dangers to the state to be tackled or wrongs to be righted.’⁷²

Though many of the women who have worked in intelligence express patriotism, few are adamantly so patriotic. Instead, patriotism mingles with interest in adventure, or romanticised notions of intelligence work. For Rimington she does not admit to this to her interviewers, but acknowledges, ‘In fact, I was still romantically dreaming about the Great Game, and my experiences in India had reinforced the dream rather than destroyed it.’⁷³

This view of intelligence work that is intermingled with romanticised views of espionage is seen amongst other intelligence employees, and a thread which finds parallels amongst men.

Others, who did not intentionally seek out intelligence work, like Massiter, found themselves eager for more interesting employment opportunities. For example, Massiter refers to herself as a “disappointed librarian”, so dissatisfied with her work that she sought assistance from her university’s career board to find something more fulfilling.⁷⁴ For Vertefeuille, the appeal in intelligence work was the opportunity for travel.⁷⁵ However her co-author, Grimes, does not focus on her motivations for entering intelligence work as much in their book. Grimes is considerably more open about her motivations in her public

⁷¹ Rimington, S., *Open Secret*, p. 92.

⁷² Rimington, S., *Open Secret*, p. 91.

⁷³ Rimington, S., *Open Secret*, p. 91.

⁷⁴ 20/20 Vision, BBC, “MI5’s Official Secrets”, 8 March 1985, available at: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRuAzSDhZXk>]

⁷⁵ Vertefeuille and Grimes, *Circle of Treason*, p. 1.

speaking, where it emerges that there was some pressure on her to support herself financially after graduation.⁷⁶

As discussed in Chapter Five, with regard to recruitment and placement within intelligence organisations, the women who were hired often felt lucky and shortchanged by their employment. Though seemingly contradictory, women report excitement or eagerness about their hiring, but disappointment with their initial assignments and career progression. Women with language skills and higher education such as Grimes, Vertefeuille, Nelson, and Jonna Mendez felt their progress was slower than their male colleagues, and their starting pay grades and positions much lower in the organisational hierarchy. As such, their education and skills were less valued by the CIA compared to the education and skills of their male colleagues.

The Development of Career Ambitions

Another common theme amongst women in intelligence is the delayed development of career ambitions compared to their male colleagues. For some, it was by chance that they ended up in a career path, rather than shorter term employment within intelligence. Grimes highlights this while speaking at the second “Mother Daughter Sister Spy” panel held by the International Spy Museum. In some ways, she expresses the sentiment much more candidly than her peers:

⁷⁶ Mother, Daughter, Sister, Spy” 2nd annual talk hosted by the International Spy Museum, 18 May 2017, [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMOB2VuW2Gc>] [following references: MDSS2]

And I thank the Lord I did not know how to type or take shorthand 'cause the job would've been as a clerk typist, was in those days as young females, college graduated, uh, it was diff- ... it was very very difficult to get in.⁷⁷

Though she spent her early CIA career in the pool, grouped mostly with women seeking secretarial placements, Grimes was well positioned for other work, particularly due to her language skills. It is also interesting to see how she pauses at the word “difficult”, pausing and backtracking to emphasise how hard it was for women to gain acceptance Grimes’ gratitude is clear when she speaks about the topic and this sentiment was met with nods of agreement from other panel members (all women formerly employed by the CIA).

Women who entered intelligence work in the 1950s and 1960s both in the United Kingdom and United States recalled lacking specific, if any, career ambitions. Many describe themselves as bored or dissatisfied with their work and/or lives prior to embarking on their intelligence employment. For women who entered the CIA, they were far more likely to be recruited from university than for women in MI5. Despite the means of recruitment, an element of chance was present in their hiring process, though it was less likely to take the form of a tap on the shoulder. As addressed in the section above on motivations, women were more likely to be drawn in to intelligence work by a desire for travel, adventure, or the opportunity to obtain gainful employment to support oneself, rather than building a career. As a result, for the women who stayed in intelligence work and went on to build careers in this field, the concepts of a career in intelligence and personal career goals developed after they had been working for some time.

Most of the women on this second International Spy Museum panel were unmarried upon starting their CIA careers, and like Grimes above, maintained a desire for marriage and

⁷⁷ MDSS2, Grimes, Sandy.

family life. Grimes notes that she only began to think seriously about a career in the CIA after marriage and birth of her first child. She based this on two factors: she enjoyed her work and she thought she was good at it.

[‘You just make it work’: Spywork, Motherhood and Family Life](#)

This section will examine how women who have worked in intelligence discuss and depict their lives as working mothers. Many of the experiences and feelings expressed by women who worked in intelligence mirror those of women working in other professions. Examples of overlap between intelligence employee concerns and those of working mothers in other employment sectors include concerns expressed over travelling for work, childcare arrangements, and work life balance.

At the same time, intelligence work can present different types of challenges for personal relationships and can create unique challenges for working mothers compared to other career paths. Extended trips can be difficult for any parent, but work related travel can be made more challenging in situations where contact with family may be limited. Increased danger can be present in international travel or longer term postings which can add an element of risk less frequently experienced in other sectors.

As summarised by CIA officer Kathy Smith, ‘You were often in places or doing jobs where you didn’t see your family or have contact with them for some period of time and you had to be okay with that.’⁷⁸ Smith notes that this was even true for those intelligence officers (like herself) who were not working specifically as operations officers. In other words, travel could be a requirement, albeit less frequent, even for those with posts at home.

⁷⁸ MDSS2, Smith, Kathy, 25:05

Indeed, domestic postings can involve other potential issues as intelligence officers face many of the same agency secrecy restrictions at home. Though restrictions can differ by organisation, the common thread remains that employees of intelligence organisations are generally unable to discuss their work with family. Though all of the women discussed in this chapter faced this level of restriction, it was experienced and reflected on in a number of different ways. This section seeks to identify the common and the extraordinary experiences where intelligence work and family life intersect.

“Coming Out” As a Spy

CIA officer Sandy Grimes was based at the CIA’s US headquarters for most of her career. As a result, Grimes had less travel than her colleagues employed in Directorate of Operations field postings. In responding to a question about balance between allegiance to work and family, Grimes states,

Grimes: ... I think we probably all were able to balance it simply because you had to have the support of your family. That wagon had to be pulled together, with the kids and the husband. And uh, speaking for my children they had no idea what I did until it came out in the newspaper. And they didn't think their life was any different and anybody else's. It's all they knew.⁷⁹

Panel Host: What did they think you did?

Grimes: [exaggerated sigh] Mom went to work at CIA headquarters, that's all they knew. My husband had no idea what I did. You just didn't talk about it. That's okay, you got home and you had plenty of other things to discuss, right? The kids. And I will say for me, once I got in that car and drove out of that gate I became a mom. 'Cause that was my next chore, to pick up the kids. And then, once the four of us or the three of us got home, I became the wife. Well, I still had to be the mom, but- [laughter] uh, no. And it was a fun ride I think for all of us.⁸⁰

Grimes’s reply illustrates well the work and family life separation which exists for many intelligence officers. While neither could be said to be entirely separate, secrecy restrictions

⁷⁹ MDSS2, Grimes, Sandy, 25:54

⁸⁰ MDSS2, Grimes, Sandy, 26:33

played a role in family life. Security procedures also prevented most employees from physically taking work home with them, a general rule across multiple agencies. Though employees may be prevented from physically taking their work home with them, work concerns do not disappear from employee's minds as they leave the workplace. In Grimes's statement, she makes clear that family life and responsibilities came for the forefront in her off-work hours.

Another important aspect of the above passage is how Grimes describes the perceived impact of her work upon her children. Her family know that she worked for the CIA but little else. As discussed in Chapter Five, Grimes's work was made public later in her career and she co-authored a book with a close colleague about their most well-known case after their retirement from the CIA. Grimes alludes in this statement to the Ames mole hunt. Once announced by the CIA, this case put Grimes and the other members of the team in the spotlight (to varying levels). Yet, despite the media and political attention the case garnered and Grimes's long CIA career prior the Ames case, Grimes notes that her children did not feel their lives were different or extraordinary in any way.

In contrast, Stella Rimington received far more media attention, much of it critical or sensationalist. Yet, Rimington's early and mid-career experiences do parallel those of other women in intelligence prior to this media attention. Even as she began to reach management level postings within MI5, she notes that her daughters did not know further details of her work. Rimington writes, 'Even though they did not know what I did for a living, they knew it was something secret for the government.'⁸¹ As Rimington progressed in her career she would invite colleagues into her home and acknowledges that it had some

⁸¹ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 203.

impact on her daughters. She writes, 'Inevitably, the girls got involved to some extent in the life of the Service. They met many of my colleagues, and members of foreign intelligence services too, when I entertained them at home. They and various trusted boyfriends were often roped in as waiters for those occasions, just as in any other household.'⁸² In this sense, the experiences of Rimington and her daughters did not differ greatly from those of other families with women in upper management positions. Though undoubtedly Rimington's daughters were exposed to the world of MI5, Rimington suggest that they – like other children of intelligence professionals – were exposed through more social encounters.

Where the experiences of Rimington and her daughters shifts away from overall similarities with other accounts to a stark contrast to these narratives is when the family are thrust into the public eye and media spotlight during the announcement of Rimington as MI5's Director-General. Indeed, the impact of her "outing" on her and her children is something Rimington acknowledges clearly in her autobiography. When she was announced as Director-General of MI5, Rimington was thrown into a media storm, and as a result of her experiences, is highly critical of the media – particularly newspaper based – attention she and her family endured.

Expecting some popular interest upon the public announcement of her name, Rimington and her younger daughter left home for a hotel to weather the initial media frenzy.⁸³ On this, Rimington writes,

I decided that Harriet and I would go away from home the day of the announcement and stay away for a couple of days to let the furore die down, as I rather naïvely thought. Sophie was away at university. So we parked the dog with the security staff at the office and went to stay in a hotel in Half Moon Street, just round the corner from our Curzon

⁸² Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 204.

⁸³ At this point in time, her elder daughter is away at university. With the speed with which the announcement was made, Rimington notes she was unable to reach her in time to warn her.

Street office. We watched the TV news that evening, as they tried with difficulty to cope with the government's announcement. They had no photograph, nobody knew anything about me and they didn't know who to ask for a comment.⁸⁴

Rimington recalls her eldest daughter, after seeing her mother's name on television, commenting, "I thought you must have done something wrong, because I knew you were not supposed to talk about your work."⁸⁵ The lack of available information on Rimington somewhat backfired, with news media clamouring for information about her. Rimington recalls the impact on her and her children,

That was the beginning of one of the most uncomfortable periods of my life. The press inevitably found out very quickly where we lived. Lots of people in Islington knew us. The children had lived there most of their lives and had many friends and we had lived in the same street for nearly ten years by then though the neighbours had no idea what I did for a living. They were surprised indeed to find that the quiet lady who lived in the house up the road had turned out to be someone famous.⁸⁶

Eventually, remaining at her home in Islington with her younger daughter would become untenable due to media intrusion, public knowledge of her address, and the resulting potential security threats. The situation became critical once photographs of Rimington and her home were published in a newspaper. Rimington and her daughter moved into a flat above some offices belonging to MI5, which she describes as, 'It was the most uncomfortable and unsuitable place to be for any length of time.' Her daughter did not adjust well to the arrangement either and Rimington remarks that, 'We felt as though we were in prison.'⁸⁷ In this sense, Rimington's experience shifts from similarity to other women in intelligence to something quite extraordinary in comparison. Though other intelligence professionals have been publicly outed, few have been subject to the same

⁸⁴ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 242-243.

⁸⁵ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 243.

⁸⁶ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 244.

⁸⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 247.

levels of media scrutiny that Rimington was. Rimington is also critical of the lack of preparations made for her public reveal, particularly in terms of accommodation and security arrangements.

Childbirth and Childcare Arrangements

The concept of family responsibility and duty is a theme present in many of the accounts of women intelligence professionals, particularly in the accounts of those who have children. As working mothers in difficult careers and sometimes, in difficult places, women intelligence professionals faced a different type of challenge to work life balance. In Chapter Five, CIA officer Melissa Mahle's experiences with childbirth in a foreign post were highlighted. Mahle's expands on the circumstances surrounding the birth of her child and her philosophy at the time of work and family life balance. Mahle states,

I was in the school of thought at the time, that being a parent was really about time management. And umm, I'm a very organised person, a very focused person, and this was not going to be any problem because *I could control everything*. [pause for laughter]

Mahle makes it clear that all did not go to plan for her and places emphasis on the ability to adapt to unexpected situations. She highlights this in her discussion surrounding childbirth, including her very deliberate decision to not reveal her pregnancy to her superiors,

So one of the first problems that presented it to me was that, you know, I spent my career in the Middle East, and there just were no, really no female case officers. I was, it was a very thin filled⁸⁸, and I worked in all male environments. And I had, I was pregnant, and I had the world's best job, and I knew the minute I spoke up – you know these are the kind of unpleasant facts of life – the minute I spoke up I'd be out of that country so fast, and some guy would be given my job and I'd never get it back. So, umm, I took umm, you know you learn lessons through your careers and one of the, one of the lessons I had was that you have to be very careful with these things, and uh I tried to live as much of a gender free environment, I was a case officer, I wasn't a female case officer. I did my work, I did my best, that's how you're gonna get ahead. And, umm, so you never,

⁸⁸ There is a lack of clarity at this point in the recording with the phrase “thin filled” as the audio is somewhat unclear. Having relistened to the recording, it does sound like she says thin filled, though it could be “thin field”.

I made a point of never talking about that whole female part. But there's a problem with pregnancy, [laughter] you can't really extract the female part [laughter] umm, so I handled it the way I thought best. I didn't tell anybody I was pregnant until 7 months. Alright I was living in the Middle East, I wear loose clothes, nobody really noticed. [laughter] And umm, and then I told them after the, it was too late for them to pull me out. I couldn't fly.⁸⁹

Mahle speaks directly to the clear intent she had to retain her position and this statement illustrates how specifically gendered her role was. She was determined to not let childbirth hinder her career or remove her from a role that she clearly valued. In her opinion, if she were removed from her role she would most likely have been replaced by a man. As important, she notes a lack of job security, in saying 'I'd be out of that country so fast, and some guy would be given my job and I'd never get it back.' Though she does not specify if this would specifically entail an assignment stateside, it is implied in this and other times where she tells this particular anecdote.

Importantly, foreign postings and opportunities to work in the field (such as Mahle's position) were essential promotion criteria within the CIA. To progress to upper levels within the agency (for example leadership roles in grades GS-13 and above) field experience was often a key requirement. This was a primary aspect of gender discrimination complaints against the CIA where women disproportionately faced employment progression roadblocks due to this lack of opportunity for operational experience. Resistance to place women in the field reflected both organisational culture and employment practices which limited women's careers and further impacted working mothers.

The claim that lack of operational opportunities limited women's advancement in intelligence careers was supported in the results of a lawsuit filed by Harritte "Tee"

⁸⁹ MDSS2, Mahle, Melissa, 27:16

Thompson against the CIA in the late 1970s. A Directorate of Operations review following this lawsuit acknowledged a severe dropoff in women progressing to GS14 and GS15 grades within the CIA.⁹⁰ Many, like Thompson, were employed in positions above their grade for years, recommended for promotion by their supervisors, but rejected in promotion panels.

Meredith, one of the participants in the panel of senior CIA women, had originally entered the agency as a contract wife. In the early 1980s she was sponsored by the chief of her division to enter the Career Trainee Program.⁹¹ Like Sandy Grimes, Meredith faces a barrier for advancement due to assumptions about her intent to have children. Of the program entrance interview Meredith recalls:

He was the Deputy Chief of Europe, and he said to me, "I really don't believe in women being ops officers." I said, "I don't understand, [redacted] Why is that?" And he said, "Well, because you know they'll have families." And I said, "You know, almost all of your male ops officer have families, too." "No, no, no," he said, "You might get pregnant. First of all, you can't be an ops officer while you're pregnant and, secondly, you'll have to take all that time off." I had two children at the time. And I said, "Well, it's okay [redacted] because I've been fixed." And immediately he said, "Well, okay, you seem like a reasonable candidate. We'll put you in for that."⁹²

This recollection has clear parallels to Grimes' experience with her transition to professionalisation interview (as discussed in Chapter Five). Both individuals faced assumptions about potential future pregnancy, in a way that risked their career progress.

In reply to Meredith's description of the interview another panellist speaks up to say, 'And you were lying.' Meredith freely admits that she had lied and continues on to discuss how she had another child. She does not mention facing any consequences for this lie, and as a member of this panel discussion of senior ranking CIA women, it is clear her career

⁹⁰ See: Ellison, D., 'One Woman's Contribution to Social Change at the CIA' (2008) part of the CIA's Typist to Trailblazer collection [<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/typist-trailblazer>]

⁹¹ 'Divine Secrets' p. 3 The speaker notes that the Career Training Program later became the Clandestine Service Training Program

⁹² 'Divine Secrets' p. 4.

benefitted from it. It is important to note that without passing this interview with a high level CIA official, Meredith would have found her career progress extremely limited, if not halted altogether. Meredith worked as an operations officer, later moved up to Chief of Station and progressed much to other high level CIA postings.⁹³

Like Mahle, Meredith had to manage working in the field and childbirth carefully.

–I was lying. It was clear to me that I wasn't going to get in without it, so I went out and promptly on my first tour got pregnant again. But I felt so compelled – we were talking before this, about sacrifices for women – and yeah, men, too – were willing to undergo at the time to have opportunities to do that. I was [redacted]{for my} first tour and got pregnant and came back to Washington a couple of weeks before the baby was born, {knowing} it was going to be a cesarean. Went in, worked up until the day before the baby was born, had the baby, had the cesarean, and was back on the street [redacted] in seven days. And I wasn't the only one that was doing that – all of us, you really felt like you couldn't take off and do that.⁹⁴

Though Meredith's and Melissa Mahle's experiences in the CIA took place during different decades, both officer's careers were at risk from perceptions and assumptions about childbirth and motherhood. Both officers sought to resist threats to their job security by returning quickly to work after childbirth. Though policies and practices would have allowed for maternity leave, their career progress would have suffered from the time away.

Childcare

Like other mothers also in paid employment, Mahle was in the position of bringing her baby to work with her when childcare arrangements fell through. Not only did Mahle wait to inform the CIA of her pregnancy, she also worked up to her child's birth and returned to work shortly after. Mahle went into labour early and as noted in Chapter Five this occurred at an important time in her job, managing arrangements for a presidential visit to her

⁹³ At the time of the panel discussion in 1994, Meredith was in the high ranking role of Deputy Chief of Europe Division.

⁹⁴ 'Divine Secrets,' p. 4.

region.⁹⁵ She recalls being on the phone with her Secret Service contacts while in the hospital,

So I get there and uh my doctor says, oh you're not going anywhere. And I said no, no, you don't understand, and so I'm in labor and I'm on the phone with the Secret Service, the whole time, because I'm focused on mission. And you know you laugh about it now. I laugh about it because I think how crazy I was, but that was what being a parent was, in my career. My daughter was born healthy and all, and I was right back at work and didn't think anything more about it, but you always, you now, from that moment on you're thinking about, you're thinking as a parent right, I've got to meet the needs of my kids at the same time you really still are working all the time, and when nanny has the day off you take the baby to work with you, you just do that.⁹⁶

Though Mahle's experiences read as extraordinary, her depiction touches on some of the key themes in this section. She emphasises the demanding nature of her work, and how she could not afford (in terms of job security and status) to take leave for childbirth, as discussed above. At the same time, Mahle emphasises doing what needs to be done in terms of managing work and family responsibilities. Since she returned to work quickly, she opted for a nanny to care for her child. (She elaborates on this elsewhere and it is touched on in Chapter Five as well.) Another aspect of this thread is dealing with the unexpected, including taking her baby to work with her when necessary. This is an important distinction to be made here, as she does not mention her husband's role in childcare, and instead focuses on her own.

Few fathers who have worked in intelligence speak about or address childcare in the same way. For example, male officers are more likely to have wives take on the bulk childcare responsibilities. This can be seen in the writing of author's like Richard L. Holm.

(Interestingly, his account is recommended on the CIA website for how much he speaks

⁹⁵ Though Mahle does not indicate the year she notes that it was President Clinton, placing the visit somewhere between 1992 and 1998.

⁹⁶ MDSS2, Mahle, 30:42

about his family.) However, the amount he does speak about family matters is still less than female officers. Though Holm speaks to issues of childcare decisions, it is often his wife who dealt with the day-to-day responsibilities for childcare.⁹⁷

When children were present they could cause issues for their parents, though the presence of children can also be useful. CIA officer Alison Bouwmester recalls one such incident,

I had the job of trying to develop a relationship with a foreign diplomat, who umm, really probably shouldn't have been seen going out and doing things with me. So I decided to be really non-threatening about this and to invite him and his family to attend an event – a sporting event – with me and my family. Totally non-threatening, you know, not honing in on the business questions and, umm, we're watching this sporting event and one of my sons comes over and sits down on my lap. And he turns to this guy that I'm just beginning to develop this relationship with and the guy I think had sort of some sense that I had an ulterior motive, inviting him to this event. And my son turns to him and says, you know, whatever your name is, women make much better spies than men, 'cause no one would ever suspect them! And I turned red, and the diplomat turned red, and we both sort of started to laugh 'cause we knew what the game was and he goes, yeah, like Mata Hari, you know, like your mother. And he did actually see me a couple more times after that. But I will just never forget, out of the mouths of babes.⁹⁸

Bouwmester, in trying to recruit a potential agent, had used her family in a disarming manner, something male officers also recall doing.⁹⁹ Holm, for example, recalls the role his wife played in helping him make contacts while in foreign postings, but his children were only involved when they were hosting a guest for dinner. In Holm's situation, he states that his children also believed his cover of being diplomat until they were told otherwise as young adults.¹⁰⁰ Between the statements of Holm, Grimes, and Rimmington, there appears to be a tendency for intelligence professionals to deny their type of work had significant impact on their children's lives.

⁹⁷ Holm, *The American Agent*, pp. 274-276.

⁹⁸ MDSS2, Bouwmester, Alison, 49:14

⁹⁹ Citation needed, perhaps Larry Devlin's book?

¹⁰⁰ Holm, *The American Agent*, pp. 386-389.

Rarely do women intelligence professionals speak about guilt in balancing work and family responsibilities. Instead, the emphasis is on getting the job done and fulfilling obligations to both one's employer and family. Of women who do mention guilt, they still emphasise the necessity of both areas of responsibility and exhibit this "getting the job done" type of attitude and approach.

Mahle's statement on work and family life is perhaps the most emphatic and representative, 'You just make it work.'¹⁰¹

Guilt and Family Life

One clear theme present amongst discussions of women intelligence professionals is that they are more likely to recall the experience of guilt when their children are younger.

Anxieties regarding the return to work can be heightened by unsuitable childcare options.

The senior women in the CIA panellist Susie spent significant portions of time away from her family. Though it helped advance her career it caused strains on her marriage. Yet, she notes that her passion for her work shifted the balance in her priorities. As a result of her involvement in the Iran hostage crisis, Susie's language skills were in high demand. She was invited to join the Near East division, told by her superiors that she would make a good case officer. Susie had a young son at the time (five or six years old) and did not want to enter full time work. Unusual for that time in the CIA, Susie was offered a part-time position in the Near East division. This case of flexible working was unusual for the CIA at this time (early 1980s) indicating her high value to the Agency, particularly due to her language skill and past work during the Iran Hostage Crisis.

¹⁰¹ MDSS2, Mahle, Melissa, 32:00 *Speaker interrupted by panel host

However, Susie acknowledges that her priorities, especially after becoming a full time case officer, flipped. She refers to working as a case officer as a “drug”, saying, ‘Talking about sacrifices: once I tasted this drug of being a case officer – [other panellists interrupt in agreement] – then I really I think sold my soul and myself to being a case officer. The motherhood that I insisted on became kind of secondary, the wifehood that I thought I was in love with my husband became secondary.’

Susie speaks directly to that sense of guilt when she says:

But for me to be sitting here as a senior female case officer of this Agency – every single one of us had to make sacrifices. For men, it’s the same, too. But for us, the sacrifices we made were tainted with king of huge, huge guilts: leaving our husbands, leaving our children, and not being a housewife at home. Now, things have changed. But, even now, for any female to get up to wherever they want, they’ve got to think they have choices. And they’ve got to make those choices.¹⁰²

Choices is a key theme which emerges in women’s recollections. The above passage highlights the active choice making and prioritization process which goes into their career building – particularly for senior level women in intelligence.

TC Marcus: Representative of a new type of male memoir?

Tom Marcus, a former surveillance officer for MI5, is at times more expressive about his emotions and thought processes than his male peers in intelligence work. Coming from a military background, he was recruited into MI5 by a man who became his mentor in the agency. The sudden death of this mentor traumatises Marcus, who writes candidly about his shock and disbelief at the loss. As a whole, Marcus’ story differs from other intelligence accounts in that he speaks, in the latter part of the book, directly to mental health issues.

¹⁰² Susie, “Divine Secrets”, p. 6.

One could argue that Marcus' writing is representative of newer memoirs, ones which are more open, direct, and candid about the author's emotional and mental state.

On feeling torn between these responsibilities, Marcus writes:

My wife was doing an amazing job raising our son and creating a home for us. She was a remarkable woman and I felt like I was failing them in some way. I was so wrapped up with my team I wasn't focused on being a father and because I wasn't prioritizing properly I'd let the finances slip too. This had to change, but I had absolutely no idea how to do it. How was I meant to split my time between national security and my little family? All the while I could feel myself being pulled apart, cracks starting to appear that I couldn't plaster over and carry on. The little fractures in my armour were becoming larger.¹⁰³

Marcus speaks directly to the experience of being torn between two worlds: his work and his family. He writes of his wife throughout the memoir with high praise and feels guilt for not being more involved in family life. At the same time, he faces financial difficulty while working for MI5, which causes shame and embarrassment, especially when this is brought up by a MI5 vetting official.

After a quick meeting with a woman from the vetting section to discuss his financial troubles, Marcus was eager to re-join his team for an in the field surveillance operation. The meeting made him uncomfortable but also hopeful about resolving his financial issues as the vetting official proposed seeking help from a charity within MI5 designed to help employees in financial difficulty. In addition, he would be offered extra shifts, to bring in more money. Here, Marcus highlights the compartmentalisation which he feels is necessary for his work, writing, 'The battle I had now was all the extra shifts would take me away from my wife and son for even longer. I hoped the charity would help out, but the only way I could focus on today's job was to compartmentalize my money problems and slip back into

¹⁰³ Marcus, T., *Soldier Spy*, (2017 paperback reprint, Penguin: London) pp. 175-176.

operator mode.’¹⁰⁴ Marcus attributes his family’s financial difficulty solely to himself, viewing himself as a provider for his family. Though he met his wife through his military service and speaks highly of her abilities, he still sees it as his role to ensure his family’s financial security. As a result, he sees himself as failing at this role.

There is an interesting parallel here between Marcus’ attempts to manage and juggle everything to those of women employees, with the difference that his wife is in charge of childcare. In this sense, Marcus’ experience, (like that of Richard L. Holm) provides an interesting contrast to the experiences of female officers who try to balance it all or flip their socially expected priorities – like Susie in the CIA panel describes.

Eventually, Marcus is forced by his increasing PTSD symptoms to seek help, which he does by contacting an MI5 provided assistance line. Though this resulted in his removal from surveillance work and his eventual departure from MI5, Marcus made the decision to prioritise his family’s wellbeing over his work:

I could hide this from my team and try to crack on, but if this got any worse I risked hurting my family emotionally. No, fuck it. I wouldn’t become that person who put their work before their loved ones. My wife believed in me, and I needed to get this sorted out. Anything, as long as it gave peace of mind to her.¹⁰⁵

In this sense it represents a clear change of priorities for Marcus. He had been juggling multiple responsibilities spoke to the sense of not managing this well, or feeling like a failure, for some time. Like the women who speak to choices and prioritization, Marcus speaks to the difficulty in making such choices. By the point where Marcus chooses to place

¹⁰⁴ Marcus, *Soldier Spy*, p. 233.

¹⁰⁵ Marcus, *Soldier Spy*, p. 275.

his family (and his own health) first, he has reached a breaking point – his symptoms (including outbursts which frightened his wife) reached a point which he found unbearable.

Rimington, Childcare and Guilt

In another example of guilt related to childcare concerns, Rimington faced social pressures with regards to mothering, and financial pressures with regards to working. In this way, Rimington's and Marcus's experiences have certain parallels in some of the pressures they faced. Financially, Rimington was in a position where it was necessary for her to return to employment. Rimington notes that in the early 1970s there were few suitable options for her daughter. Unable to afford options such as an au pair, her next step was to seek out nursery care in Islington. She writes, 'With a heavy heart, I started to investigate the prospect of day nurseries for babies, but in Islington at that time they were few and far between and places in them were limited to what were known in the jargon of the times as "problem families". Whatever they were, we obviously were not one of them.'¹⁰⁶ In the end, Rimington chooses not to send her daughter to a nursery, instead opting for an arrangement where a local police officer's wife would care for her daughter. It was an arrangement that Rimington was satisfied with, though she notes, 'But I was the one who suffered the most from this arrangement and I found it at its most difficult when I first went back to work. I couldn't escape a sense of guilt every morning as I handed over my baby in her pram to Nancy at the gates of Cantonbury School.'¹⁰⁷

Guilt is often not self-imposed, but implied by other, even friendly parties. This was Rimington's experience, as her own mother disapproved of her care of her daughter.

¹⁰⁶ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁷ Rimington, *Open Secret*, pp. 111-112.

Rimington adds of the time, 'But in the early 1970s, with lots of people ready to tell you it was wrong and that you were risking long-term damage to your child it was tough.'¹⁰⁸

In this sense, Rimington's experiences in the 1970s fit in with those of women in the British Civil Service. As noted in previous chapters, one of the key areas in need of improvement for women was the provision of affordable and accessible childcare services. Childcare vouchers, when they were obtainable, still left financial and logistical gaps for women in full time employment. Societal expectations of women staying home to take care of their young children influenced attitudes towards working mothers in both the UK and US.

Rimington's career became more demanding as her children got old enough to transition from dedicated care to a more independent arrangement. Separated from her husband by the time she entered leadership roles within MI5, she had to manage childcare and employment. Her work made some of these arrangements unique and more challenging, noting once that she had to bring one of her daughters with her to an MI5 safe house. In this, Rimington's tone echoes one of the primary recurrent themes amongst narratives told by mothers in the intelligence field: no matter how much you prepare, you will have to manage the unexpected.

Women stationed abroad had different experiences, and in some ways, could escape cultural norms or access more affordable childcare options. This is noted in the first Mother Daughter Sister Spy panel, where Mahle acknowledges how it was easier for her to afford and arrange childcare abroad.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Rimington, *Open Secret*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁹ "Mother, Daughter, Sister, Spy" 1st annual talk hosted by the International Spy Museum, October 18 2016, available at [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boyGigccHKc>].

This attitude of personal and work life balance also true for many of the women employed in intelligence work who did not have children at the time. Childbirth also had varying effects on career goals and ambitions. Some women waited until later in their careers to have children (for example, Jonna Mendez), while others (for example, Sandy Grimes) only began to consider a more ambitious career path after they first had a child. Those who were married or in romantic relationships faced similar issues with secrecy, work life balance and career progression.

Glass Boxes: Career Experiences, Progression and Opportunity

As with MI5, women's progress to field operations, including agent recruitment and running was slow. Meredith shares her experiences of seeking field work in the early 1980s after leaving the farm. Certain divisions, such as Near East (NE) and Latin America (LA) were resistant to taking women in recruitment roles. Meredith was one of the first few to be selected for a trial of women by the NE division:

I was [redacted] in '89, I guess, and had a good recruitment record. NE contacted you, me – there were about 4 females – and said, “We want to take women who are good recruiters in their own context and see if they can do well against that NE target.” And it was only NE that did it. LA didn't was to have anything to do with it.¹¹⁰

From the conversation between Meredith and Carla accompanying this above passage, it is clear that the LA division had one female officer and was satisfied with that number. As Meredith describes the challenge she recalls the difficulty in leaving her family for three months to take on this field assignment. This type of test case also brings up the burden faced by these women of being representative not just of their own capability, but of the potential of all female candidates. Yet, all four women were successful according to

¹¹⁰ Meredith, “Divine Secrets” p. 10.

Meredith, who remarks, 'And I think each of us played the female part of it and really used it as the *best* way to recruit. *Very* high level NE targets, in fact, and we were each successful at it.'¹¹¹ Though Mahle does not give specifics here, her statement echoes the comments at the start of the chapter from the internal CIA panel, suggesting that for a perceptive recruiter, playing in to your target's gendered assumptions could be a valuable tactic.

In instances where women are unsuccessful in these test cases it can backfire and block female candidates in the future. This a problem which Machon identifies, as she was blocked from a position she was interested in and well qualified for due to the unsatisfactory performance of a prior female candidate (as discussed in Chapter Five). This was despite being recommended for the post by a MI5 Assistant Director. Machon notes how eager she was to take on this liaison post with the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS):

This was a new, challenging and high-profile post and I was keen to take it on. However, a year before, a female MI5 officer had buckled under pressure while working with MPSB [Metropolitan Police Special Branch]. MI5 management therefore decided that working in a police environment was no job for a woman, whatever her experience and expertise. As I had no employment rights and no staff federation to turn to, I could not challenge this blatant sex discrimination. The job went to a far less experienced male colleague.¹¹²

Though Machon was able to access other positions which assisted with her career progression, this instance is one of the few where she specifically talks about sex based discrimination. This is particularly notable considering much of Machon's book is a critique of MI5 procedure, policy and practice. Later in her book, Machon returns to this particular

¹¹¹ Meredith, "Divine Secrets" p. 10.

¹¹² Machon, A., *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers: MI5, MI6 and the Shayler Affair*, (Sussex: The Book Guild, 2005), p. 72.

incident, and specifically identifies MI5's personnel section as responsible for making this decision.¹¹³

Tradecraft, Agent Running, Perceptions of Women Working and Reporting Differences

In terms of tradecraft, the women of the CIA panel speak to different methods and different perceptions. Patty believes that 'women recruit very differently than men recruit' but that it does not show up in the reports they write. Her reasoning for this comes from her own experience, she says, 'we reported like a man would report it because we knew how to survive the system.'¹¹⁴ The CIA employees themselves identify one of the key gaps in intelligence related primary sources. Women's contributions and the way those contributions have been made were written in ways that fit dominant narratives and expectations on agent recruitment and running. Meredith and Patty discuss this process of change:

Meredith: Reflecting on women in recruitment, I think it was about the mid-80s, late 80s when women started really actively recruiting. When I came in, I know women were really complaining because when they would get out to the field as fully trained ops officers, they were given [redacted] Officers] to handle, they were given handling responsibilities – support assets, safehouse keepers – but never given the hard recruiting targets to go after. It was kind of all of a sudden in the mid- to late 80s that numbers of use started really recruiting FI producers, high level, with intel.

Patty: Women wouldn't put up with it anymore.

Meredith: That was exactly right. I think it was also about then – and I would like this thread to run through everything we're talking about – that women started talking to each other. And I know all of us became friends about then. Women started talking to each other and, as you say, being very unwilling to sit aside and let all of this go on without us. As a result of that, all of the MO for recruiting, for men as well, changed. And it became rather than "You do it at a cocktail party, you meet these guys in a bar, whatever, and then you move them through [redacted]..." It became the acknowledgement that everybody has their own skills and everybody has their own way to do this. It doesn't have to be the macho "Let's go out and shoot together." From that point on, it was much more creative-thinking kind of recruitment move.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Machon, *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 184.

¹¹⁴ Patty, "Divine Secrets" pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁵ "Divine Secrets" pp. 11-12.

The above passage identifies the following key points: prior to the 1980s field opportunities for women were often restricted to lower value targets; women's coordination and cooperation, particularly during the 1980s positively impacted their opportunities; and, the greater involvement of women in agent running shifted perspectives on what agent recruitment and running should be, allowing for a more varied understanding of the process.

In this, there are clear parallels across organisational and national contexts. The experiences of these women on this CIA panel mirror those of women in MI5. Rimington, for example recalls being restricted from Irish targets in agent recruitment and running, particularly during 1970s and 1980s as she broke in to agent operations. Women's coordination and clear displeasure at the gendered restrictions of their workplace in MI5 led to the so-called "Women's Revolt" letter, not unlike the coordination amongst CIA women.

To the last of the key comparative points: it is interesting that the CIA women panellists tie the involvement of women in agent running operations to a shift in perspectives on methods and techniques. This point is perhaps the most difficult to link with MI5. Though women certainly had an impact on the organisation, shifts in operational focus also played an important role in changing perspectives on recruitment. Rimington, in her memoir, recalled that MI5's agent running course, of which she was one of the first female participants, was clearly designed for men. Machon, having entered the organisation later, recalls similar experiences but with respect to cooperation with other agencies.

Mentorship

Mentoring for female employees took place in different ways that it did for male employees. The majority of men who speak to the topic of mentoring do not necessarily address it by name, but refer to elements of mentoring in friendships and collegial relations with senior male colleagues.

In contrast, women are more likely to speak to a lack of mentorship, or their “luck” in having good mentors. Similar sentiments are expressed towards having good leadership, with overlap between the two themes. As Annie Machon recalls of her time in T5E (Irish logistics department), ‘I had been lucky for the bulk of my time in the section, as I had one of the few really good Group Leaders in the service. She was supportive, but hands off. I felt I was doing something worthwhile and my team was getting results.’¹¹⁶ This particular statement stands out as Machon was largely critical of her experiences with leadership and mentorship in her time in MI5 (as discussed in Chapter Five).

In the CIA panel, Meredith’s recollections are similar to Machon’s, ‘I was very lucky in that I had good COSs [Chief of Station], as many of us did, but there were little patches in there where you had no guidance, no mentoring, no nothing. Not necessarily because I was a woman, but because these guys were just –’ Meredith was interrupted by another panellist (Susie) and does not complete her thought, though Meredith goes on to say, ‘how much *easier* it was with a mentoring manager.’ Meredith also lists some of the male managers, which she found to be good mentors.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Machon, p. 184.

¹¹⁷ Meredith, “Divine Secrets” pp. 12-13.

Susie speaks to how a lack of mentorship challenged her, acknowledging that it made her, 'grow up overnight'.¹¹⁸ She argues that the mentoring issue was not a gender issue, but more so an organisational one, saying, 'But in all fairness, that wasn't a *male* trait. We just didn't know, as an organisation, in the DO, what does mentoring mean?'¹¹⁹ Susie appears to be the only member of the panel to hold this view. Shortly after, however, Susie joins in with Meredith in naming good mentors within the DO. This contrast between Meredith's and Susie's views of mentorship in the DO is interesting, as both feel their opportunities for mentorship were lacking at points in their careers, but attribute the cause differently.

Carla's experience differed considerably in that she experienced good mentoring and good role models early on in her career while she was placed in roles within the DO. However, she found mentorship lacking as she progressed in her career, 'I had lots of mentoring in the first third of my career when I was doing secretarial and operational support work. When I switched over to ops, it's like it all died.'¹²⁰

The panellists continue on to discuss some of the few senior level women they had contact with, who, for them, served as role models. Some, served as mentors, others, as part of the boys' club, unwilling to engage with female mentorship or issues of gender. One positive role model, a higher level woman, with which the women of the panel speak of with a sense of awe, invited panel participant Meredith to lunch one day out of the blue. Such an invitation was considered an honour. Meredith and Carla discuss the meeting:

Meredith: Well, so I get this message, and I go meet her. I'd never seen her before, I didn't know what I was supposed to do, what she wanted. She said, "Sit down. I understand that you have some future here, and so we gotta plan it out, chart it out. Here we go. Where are you now? Where do you want to go? What do you want to

¹¹⁸ Susie, "Divine Secrets" p. 12.

¹¹⁹ Susie, "Divine Secrets" p. 13.

¹²⁰ Carla, "Divine Secrets" p.13.

know?" Whoa! One of the most – and she did that for lots of people, I certainly wasn't the only one –

Carla: But only people she thought were going to do well. She didn't waste her time on the others.

Meredith: This was her discretion, no, no, no, no. And she made good on it. She really would link you up with all these people.¹²¹

In this example, Meredith and Carla also bring up the issue of selective mentorship. This is an area which has certain advantages for the junior participants selected, by making connections and clarifying career goals. In this sense, the development of women's informal mentorship networks parallels the selective culture of male networks seen in the 1960s and 1970s in the CIA. It should be noted that the CIA incorporated a formal mentorship scheme in the 1990s. Similarly, MI5 had a six month mentorship policy in place during the 1990s.¹²²

Returning to Annie Machon's account of her experiences in MI5, the theme of uneven mentorship is echoed. Machon's describes how a colleague benefited from being assigned a good mentor, while Machon, found her own assigned mentor lacking in guidance.¹²³ At the time, MI5 had a policy of an assigned mentor for six months. Even when official policies for mentorship schemes are in place, experiences of mentorship can vary greatly with the mentor's willingness to engage in the program.

The role of mentorship is often less explicitly identified in men's accounts. For example, when Richard L. Holm speaks of mentorship, he refers more to friendship and specific areas of assistance. Remarking on the support he received while stationed in Laos, Holm describes a collegial atmosphere with the men in charge of him and the three other, rather green, newly deployed officers.¹²⁴ Holm tends to instead focus on specifics, such as materials

¹²¹ "Divine Secrets" p. 16.

¹²² Machon, *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*, p. 182.

¹²³ Machon, *Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers*. p. 38.

¹²⁴ Holm, pp. 163-170.

provided, assistance rendered, and questions answered, attributing these instances to the good nature and capabilities of the individuals involved.

Women, Power, and Role Models

Some of the women of the CIA panel speak to having not known how to be mentors themselves, implying it was a skill learned over time. The panellists' status as senior level women and as role models is something that they acknowledge towards the closing of the discussion.

They critique the female role models they had within the agency. The panel moderator asks if 'women role models have changed over the years', a topic on which the panellists agree:

Patty: Some of the earlier ones, like [redacted] who I adored, were often more masculine than any of us were willing to be. And that was another issue. How do you keep – I mean, I like being a woman. I don't need to be a man.

Susie: She was one of the boys.¹²⁵

At the same time, women who attempted to bring about change in their working environments and challenge structural gendered restrictions could face certain criticisms. In the CIA, women members of DOWAC faced blowback from male colleagues.¹²⁶ Patty recalls serving as chair, as a GS-12. Meredith responds with, 'You were chairman of it as a 12?' Patty confirms this, noting that, 'nobody else would take the job.'¹²⁷ Patty notes that DOWAC had influence in diversifying promotion boards in an attempt to address systemic structural inequalities within the Agency in the mid-1980s. Susie and Patty describe the attitude at the time towards women involved in DOWAC:

¹²⁵ "Divine Secrets" p. 14.

¹²⁶ Identified as the "Women's Advisory" in the transcript, likely the "C" stands for council or committee, within the Directorate of Operations.

¹²⁷ "Divine Secrets", p. 17.

Susie: In the beginning, I remember, when it was formed, there was a stigma. Men, when you talked to them about DOWAC, there was a stigma to have anything to do with DOWAC, as a female. I remember that clearly.

Patty: They were waiting for us to go down in front of the bubble and burn our bras, I'm sure.¹²⁸

In a way, this parallels references to MI5's so-called "women's revolt".¹²⁹ Both examples allude to the idea that women were not expected to challenge structural norms or organisational practices. An element of this is also seen in other recollections. For example, some of women who speak to feminist ideals, such as in the Mother Daughter Sister Spy panels, actively try to distance themselves from a feminist identity.¹³⁰

Conclusion

This chapter focused on first person accounts of intelligence work to show the breadth and depth of experiences of women in intelligence. In doing so, the goal has been to foreground these experiences in a way which highlights both women's voices and the contribution their experience makes to understanding intelligence work. It also bridges the connections of the previous chapters, such as how unique challenges of intelligence work intersect with wider social patterns of women in paid employment and how organisational culture and policies (as mediated by wider social norms) can have a strong impact on the careers of women in intelligence.

The thematic groups identified in the second section of the chapter demonstrate the interconnectedness of women's experiences in this field, showing that while their experiences can differ on an individual level, cultural norms, organisational policies, and organisational cultures have had a tangible impact on the careers and everyday lives of

¹²⁸ "Divine Secrets", p. 18.

¹²⁹ As discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

¹³⁰ MDSS2

women intelligence professionals. While overlaps exist between the experiences of men and women in intelligence work, women themselves identify unique pressures, experiences, and advantages that their male colleagues do not or are far less likely to encounter in their careers. Similarly, overlapping pressures, such as guilt about time commitments to work and the impact of work on family are seen in both women's and men's accounts but they are addressed in different ways, with women's accounts often acknowledging different gendered contexts.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Not Quite Killing Eve

This thesis set out with the goal of telling a complex, interwoven story of women's experiences in MI5, from the late 1960s through to the early 1990s. When I sent the proposal out to potential departments and supervisors, I was encouraged to look towards earlier time periods, such as the Second World War. Certainly, greater amounts of archival material exist for the first half of the twentieth century compared to the second half. However, my interest remained with the latter half, where less is known about women's experiences in intelligence work.

In order to shape a narrative of women in modern intelligence work, this thesis has sought to highlight the experiences of women in modern intelligence through a multi-level and interdisciplinary approach. The central research question asked: How have sociocultural, political and organisational contexts shaped women's career trajectories and experiences in MI5 (1969-1994), and in what ways can analysing the narratives and reflections of these women contribute to a critical, multilevel approach to intelligence studies?

This concluding chapter will begin with an overview of the thesis, summarising the key findings of each of the chapters. Following this overview, key contributions and limitations of this research will be discussed. In terms of future research, there are a number of opportunities for contributions which might come from the approaches taken towards women's history in intelligence in this thesis. As such, the importance of these contributions will be discussed in light of the findings of the thesis.

Overview

The thesis began with a broad introduction to the topic of women in intelligence and representations of their work. This was then focused further with the abovementioned central research question. However, from the outset it was clear that this research needed some form of guidance or structure to be understood. Chapter Two on theory, methodology and framework sought to examine the methodological and theoretical basis for this approach to the history of women in MI5. In doing so, it was necessary to identify some of the key hurdles this project has faced and discuss some of the possible solutions.

The problem of missing and unavailable sources was one such primary hurdle. It was discussed how more archival information exists for the first half of the 20th century, due to a combination of institutional secrecy, security concerns and release processes. Some exceptions to this rule exist, but notably for the purposes of this research, archives could not be the sole or primary source of information.

As such, the turn to memoirs and other forms of personal narrative became the goal of this thesis. Key advantages of memoirs and as an extension, other forms of personal narrative, such as public lectures and panel discussions were identified. Important to this thesis as a whole, the value of memoirs for the intelligence studies researcher was discussed.

Emphasis here is placed on what personal narratives can say outside of the official record. Such sources can illustrate how an individual felt about their work, how they made sense of their working lives (both public and personal), and how they view their work at the time of sharing, usually after officially departing from their intelligence careers in the form of retirement, or in some cases, on less positive terms.

The role of personal narratives links closely with some of the newer developments in the field, particularly Hamilton Bean's calls for the shift towards critical intelligence studies.¹ In this sense, the call is for outside disciplinary perspectives to be brought in to the study of intelligence, such as feminist or post-structuralist approaches. This speaks to a central aim of the thesis, to incorporate a framework for analysing women's histories within the intelligence profession.

As such, a discussion of some of the central historical developments in the field of intersectionality was incorporated to inform and shape the framing of this thesis. At the start of the research for this thesis, the concepts of intersectionality or intersectional feminism had less name recognition than they do now at the conclusion of this research, though it was clear that intersectional approaches were on the rise.² Intersectionality allowed the thesis to be structured in a multi-level way, looking from the bigger picture of the structural or macro level, through to the organisational or meso level, on to the experiential or micro level. These three levels were tied together by the fourth, an analysis of women's reflections and representations on their work.

Chapter Three started from this macro level approach, to present a broader overview of the socio-cultural and structural factors which influenced women's employment in Britain. This is particularly important for the latter half of the 20th century. Another important aim of this chapter was to introduce key concepts and theoretical tools to understand women's employment opportunities within a segmented labour market. Women's opportunities were

¹ See: Bean, H., 'Intelligence theory from the margins: questions ignored and debates not had,' *Intelligence and National Security*, 33:4 (2018), pp. 527-540; and Bean, H., 'Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies', *Intelligence and National Security*, 28:4 (2013), pp. 495-519.

² For example see: Adewunmi, B., 'Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality: "I wanted to come up with an everyday metaphor that anyone could use"' in *New Statesman*, 2 April 2014, available at: [<https://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could>].

transformed over the course of the 20th century as attitudes towards women in paid employment and higher education changed. As such, this chapter also provided an overview of some of the key developments in feminist thought and research on women's employment issues.

The key concepts introduced in this chapter include occupational sex segregation, dual or segmented labour markets, and gendered occupations. While there is a temptation to look towards one explanatory factor, it was argued that multiple variables come together to influence and shape women's employment opportunities and career trajectories. Cultural, economic, and institutional factors all impact the labour market and how women navigate it.

Gendered associations between profession and class at the turn of the century, along with technological changes, such as the invention of the typewriter saw increasing numbers of women in clerical work. This continued trends from the late 19th century, as the first half of the 20th century saw significant increases in women clerical workers. This can be traced through the history of women's employment in the Civil Service. Women made some vertical progress, but they were often limited to positions supervising other women, such as the role of the Lady Superintendent. At the same time, women faced gendered restrictions governing their lives which their male colleagues did not, such as the marriage bar which required women to resign upon marriage. Though this restriction was eventually lifted for the Civil Service in 1946, it remained in place for the Foreign Office well into the 1970s.

Wartime labour shortages created additional opportunities for women to engage in paid employment. The reserve army of labour theory suggests that women's employment during wartime necessarily increases, and as men return home from war, women's employment

decreases. However, this does not hold true for the Second World War, as more women were eager to continue with paid employment. Despite this, and the opening up of the Civil Service to married women, struggles over pay, opportunity and progression continued. More widely, it should be noted that women's part time employment increased in the postwar era.

Changes in women's employment in the latter half of the 20th century were influenced by changing demographics, social mobility, and educational attainment. As increasing numbers of women sought university education, they were also more likely to continue working, including after marriage and childbirth. Women entering the labour market, and into clerical or white-collar jobs, were noted to have different expectations compared to previous generations. However, such changes were not total and had the potential to cause tensions between employers and employees.

These cultural shifts had long term impacts on women's employment in the United Kingdom. The 1970s and 1980s saw continued advances for women's employment, amongst the struggles of the Women's Liberation Movement and increased scholarly interest in women's work. The 1980s also saw a rise in the numbers of women working full time and some decreases in occupational sex segregation. This was the backdrop with which women's employment in MI5 must be considered.

Additionally, this chapter examined the role of work-life balance policies and practices. The emergence of work-life balance discussion is relatively recent but remains a recurring theme in women's discussions of their own career experiences. This is particularly relevant for the narratives of mothers in paid employment.

Chapter Four moves from the macro level wider context to focusing on the organisational and employment history of MI5. This chapter traces key developments in MI5's history, with particular attention paid to the history of women's employment within the organisation.

The other important element of this chapter is the introduction of key concepts useful for understanding MI5 as an employer. These concepts included distinctions between organisational informal practices and formal policies, organisational culture and gendered organisations.

This chapter presented four key arguments. The first was that employment in MI5 was influenced by outside factors (relating to the points made in Chapter Three) and that the hiring practices of the organisation were mediated by concepts of trustworthiness. Gender played a key role in determining who was trustworthy for MI5 employment, or secrets work more generally. This builds on Tammy Proctor's work in examining MI5's hiring practices through the lenses of gender, class, nationality, and family connections.³

Second, while employment conditions changed throughout MI5's history, long-term employment trends stemming from early hiring practices continued to influence later policies and practices. Practices of vertical and horizontal occupational sex segregation existed within the Security Service, even as the field of intelligence became increasingly bureaucratised and professionalised. In essence, these practices created a second class of women employees, those of junior assistant and assistant officers.

Third, as increasing numbers of university educated women entered the Security Service, this glass ceiling began to crack. Frustrated with limited opportunities for progression a

³ See: Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence', *Journal of Social History*, 39:2 (2005), pp. 451-466; and, Proctor, T. M., *Female Intelligence: Women and espionage in the First World War* (New York, New York University, 2003).

number of women junior and assistant officers banded together to write a letter of protest. This, in combination with outside labour pressures led to a slow, but important, opening up of higher positions to women. However, this process sought mostly to redress the issues of vertical, not horizontal occupational sex segregation, as much of the Registry in Security Service remained occupied by women.

The final argument of Chapter Four is that in these efforts to obtain equal employment opportunities within the Security Service, women face a double issue of invisibility. Lacking trade union representation, women were forced to advocate without outside assistance. As such, due to issues of gender and secrecy, women have to overcome these hurdles. Notably, this influenced the pace of change within the organisation.

This chapter also takes a brief look at the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), where women faced a number of similar issues, though had different legal options to push back against institutional practices of vertical occupation sex segregation. The parallels between employment conditions for women in these two organisations allows for an interesting and useful comparison for discussing women's experiences in MI5 in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five looks at the employment experiences of women in intelligence. It is organised as an employment "life-cycle" in that each section of the chapter is devoted to a different stage of the employment process: recruitment and hiring, everyday employment experiences and tasks, promotion and progression, and departure. By foregrounding the experiences of women in intelligence work, we can gain an understanding of what working for an intelligence organisation was like, from a personal and more dynamic perspective.

On the topic of recruitment and hiring, it was found that women shared similar "tap on the shoulder" types of experiences. With open recruitment for MI5 starting only in the 1990s,

the secretive referral process was standard practice. Personal recommendations often influenced who was targeted for employment recruitment. Later, misdirection in applying for other government positions was used, as prospective candidates were only informed during the interview of the actual government organisation interested. As related to recruitment, women's motivations, goals, and ambitions were discussed, finding that many were intrigued by the potential of intelligence work, as their opinions were influenced by popular fictional accounts.

Everyday work for women in intelligence, like many careers, is varied. However, employment in intelligence comes with its own set of risks and rewards. Women have served in a variety of locations and roles within intelligence. As women intelligence officers became more involved in agent recruitment and running, these risks increased. Importantly, women reflect on how these risks are viewed, sharing how they felt about such risks in ways which are not reflected in official documents or reports.

Related to this, we return to the concept of work-life balance. This is a topic which comes up repeatedly in women's discussions of their experiences, and features strongly in the personal aspects of intelligence narratives. A key finding of this chapter is the trend of women voicing a "you just have to make it work" attitude towards their careers and family responsibilities. Insular organisational cultures and withdrawal from outside social spheres can also have an impact on the personal aspects of intelligence careers. This trend of withdrawal from social networks, friends and even family was observed in women's accounts for both the Security Service and the CIA.

The section of Chapter Five on promotion and progression returns to earlier observations of occupational sex segregation as identified in Chapter Three, focusing primarily on vertical

aspects. Women recall struggles with progressing in their career, often in terms of direct discrimination or encountering discriminatory attitudes. Though some of these practices are accepted, with clear frustration, some women recall instances where they were able to present challenges at the interpersonal level or to the system itself within the organisation.

As a result of frustrations with intelligence employment, some women did choose to leave.

The accounts of intelligence work, however, are primarily from women who had longer careers. This is a key point, as not all of these women left on good terms with their employers. Some, like Annie Machon, became whistleblowers. Others, like former Director-General Stella Rimington, rose to leadership positions and retired on excellent terms. This is an important point, particularly for the themes addressed in Chapter Six, as methods of and reasons for departure can influence what is or is not shared publicly about employment in intelligence.

Chapter Six builds on the previous three chapters, by identifying thematic similarities in women's personal narratives. First, this chapter examines the climate of legal restrictions, organisational secrecy, and organisation culture in influencing who chooses to share their career experiences, why they do so and how. As related to this, the role of former intelligence professionals in writing insider spy fiction is discussed. Spies who tell their stories publicly, through both fictional and non-fictional means, can shape how intelligence work is viewed by the general public. This includes methods which go beyond memoirs and other written work, such as television and radio broadcasts, public lectures, and collaboration with museums, most notably the International Spy Museum (ISM).

The importance of individual narratives lies in the foregrounding of the personal. Official sources and archival releases only paint part of the picture. As noted by one CIA officer, the

official record can be inherently gendered. As such, this chapter uses a variety of personal sources and narratives to support and establish a history of intelligence that is inclusive of women's experiences.

Specifically related to women's representations of intelligence work, key themes and commonalities form the basis of this chapter's findings. Overarching themes include: how women intelligence professionals define themselves and their work, how they depict their lives with reference to work-life balance and family responsibilities, and how they describe and make meaning of their own careers.

It is clear from analysing women's recollections that there is an interconnectedness and thematic continuity to many of their narratives. While experiences may differ on an individual level, these reflections show how the macro, meso, and micro interconnect. In other words, foregrounding women's reflections allows us to see how the wider socio-cultural, political and structural factors connect with organisational practices, policies and cultures, in a way that is tangible for women in their everyday lives within intelligence careers.

As a result, these four central chapters work together to show how intelligence employment can be viewed through a multi-level understanding. While each of these levels could be analysed separately, tied together they show how interconnected these different levels can be when framed by personal narrative. At the same time, given the lack of wider research on women in intelligence, particularly MI5, in the latter half of the 20th century, these different levels also, in turn, provide grounding and context for understanding how women former intelligence professionals share their own experiences. Further, this can add to understandings of how women have shaped and influenced intelligence organisations.

Key Findings, Contributions and Understandings

In researching women's experiences of intelligence work, it has been necessary to weave together different aspects of their working lives. Central to this thesis is the assertion that women's employment experiences in the intelligence sector cannot be completely examined in isolation from the historical contexts in which they existed, or the contexts in which they have been shared. The employment environment has changed dramatically during the time period discussed, for both women and men, especially as MI5 left the shadows to wider public attention. This has generated popular interest in the lives of intelligence professionals in a way that can at times veer towards sensationalist depictions. Clearly, understanding the lives of women in intelligence, how they speak about their work, and why, is central to the aims of this thesis. As part of this, a key aim was to separate the lived experience from the fictional to illustrate the everyday lives of women in intelligence. Yet, as Chapter Six has shown, these lines can blur as former intelligence professionals use references to popular images of espionage to engage audiences. In some ways, the history of intelligence may never be truly separable from its fiction, and given the engagement of former intelligence professionals in the writing of insider spy fiction, there is a necessary link going forward.

This thesis identified the connections between macro, meso, and micro levels in analysing women's employment in intelligence. By looking at these different parts of women's employment through this lens, it was possible to use women's reflections on their careers to link these seemingly disparate pieces together. In that sense, personal narratives have been the glue of this thesis. A history of women in intelligence work, particularly for the UK in the latter half of the 20th century, would not work at this point in time, without these narratives.

Even with added archival material or other official sources, one of the key findings of this thesis is the contribution of women's experiences to understanding this history.

Another key understanding to be gained is that employment in the intelligence sector does not exist in isolation from wider labour market forces, trends, or attitudes towards gender and employment. Indeed, it is possible here to build upon Proctor's concluding argument from her 2005 article on family ties in intelligence recruitment, to say that employment in MI5 was influenced by outside socio-cultural forces, labour shortages and surpluses, through long terms trends which had a profound impact on the organisation's employment of women well into the 1980s.⁴ It should be noted here, however, that this links to one limitation of the thesis. The lack of specific employment data for women in MI5 from the 1960s to the 1990s has presented a clear challenge, and is one area where additional archival or official releases would be helpful for contextualising women's experiences and linking them with quantitative data.

As related to the employment of women, intelligence organisations in recent years have been looking inwards to examine the role of diversity, or lack thereof, within their organisations. While the turn to diversity language might be potentially encouraging, reports have noticed the phenomena of middle management resistance to change.⁵ This brings in another key understanding to be gained from this research, the so-called middle management "permafrost" has a long and entrenched history within MI5's organisational culture. This resistance to change can be seen through examining women's experiences, as

⁴ Proctor, T. M., 'Family Ties in the Making of Modern Intelligence', *Journal of Social History*, 39:2 (2005), pp. 451-466.

⁵ Intelligence and Security Committee, "Report on Women in the UK Intelligence Community", March 2015, available at: [<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>].

many of the organisational informal practices which comprise this resistance to change exist at this level of interaction.

In other words, examining women's personal experiences allows us to see how workplace barriers can remain in place even after formal policy changes. This was the case in Chapters Five and Six, where women recalled experiences of management resistance to their progress. These experiences included informal barriers to vertical progression, such as the transition to professionalised status in the CIA, and management resistance to women who sought out work perceived to be more dangerous, such as in the case of agent running operations. Notably, field work, such as agent running was often essential for an employee's promotion and progression prospects.

As related to the above two points, the concept of organisational culture was discussed in Chapter Four, with a critique of the limited usages of this term in intelligence studies. This is one area of intelligence studies which would certainly benefit from the incorporation of organisational psychology and business and management scholarly literature on the topic of organisational cultures. As noted throughout this thesis, women's progress within the field of intelligence has, in many ways, been a stop-start process, with advances being won only for women to face additional or informal barriers after policy changes. This is in line with Bean's abovementioned call for the development of critical intelligence studies with influence from outside fields. These central and often gendered aspects of intelligence employment remain invisible if not intentionally sought out.

[Women's \(Supposedly Invisible\) Contributions to Intelligence](#)

One goal of this thesis was to go beyond the finding of women in history. Yet, the next step of analysing women's experiences is complicated by the ways in which women have been

largely overlooked by the prevailing histories of British intelligence. It is in this sense that intelligence history is gendered. Women are often written in as the exception to a masculine norm. As a result, this thesis faced a two-fold task: locate and analyse women in intelligence and their experiences. It is peculiar, but not unexpected that the history of women in intelligence is in this state.

Women comprised the majority of MI5's employee pool for much of the organisation's history, yet they have remained subjects of more isolated narratives. They are found in the margins of intelligence history, singularly through biographical works, or existing outside the scholarly field of intelligence history. They are portrayed as the background characters in an otherwise fascinatingly complex historical narrative. However, it is evident from women's long term employment within MI5, as this thesis has detailed, that women have been involved in the formation of MI5 as a contemporary intelligence organisation. To this point, this thesis has served to reveal a history that was already there. It was not that women's involvement in intelligence suddenly came to life with this thesis, but that women's involvement was continuous, over decades, comprising many different careers and experiences.

Perhaps the best illustration of this point is MI5's Registry section. As the organisational and informational core of MI5, the Registry section is mentioned with considerable frequency in intelligence histories. Comprised of women (by regulation and institutional norm) until the 1970s, the Registry itself is a gendered section of a gendered organisation. Yet, perhaps unsurprisingly, references to the Registry are only occasionally gendered. The history of MI5's Registry is women's history, yet not acknowledged as such. Intelligence organisations are reliant on information, in terms of collection, accuracy, security and management. This

is the central mission of the Registry, and without some form of information system, the Security Service would cease to function.

At the same time, the roles of individual women as junior and assistant officers, full officers, clerks, secretaries, transcribers, and typists contributed to the everyday work of intelligence. Owing to the secrecy and gendering of intelligence, the default pronoun for officer is inevitably masculine. Our recorded histories reflect our assumptions. From the numerous interviews, public discussions, and writings which women former intelligence professionals have produced, it is clear that women are trying to change this gendered perception of their work.

It is useful at this point, to refer to the shift happening in fictional intelligence representations. *Killing Eve*, a drama centred on a woman MI5 officer, illustrates this shift well. Though necessarily sensationalised, the television production and source material (a series of novels) *Killing Eve* presents a challenge to the masculine-Bond archetype. Though not quite like *Killing Eve*, the efforts of former intelligence professionals in sharing their experiences have caused a clear shift in the available information on women in intelligence work.

[Contributions to Intelligence Studies and Critical Intelligence Studies](#)

This thesis sought to make contributions to women's and gender history, intelligence studies and critical intelligence studies. As the above section discussed, this thesis sought to go beyond the finding of women in intelligence history. In doing so, this thesis also serves as a contribution to intelligence studies and critical intelligence studies. Bean's critique of insular tendencies within in the field of intelligence studies resonated with the aims and overarching goals of this thesis. The articulated aim was to go beyond finding women in

intelligence history or writing biographical accounts, towards a more in-depth analysis of the role of gender in intelligence work.

By centring the subject gender as a topic of research, this thesis also presents a challenge to intelligence studies. Gender is a necessary topic of analysis, and gender, along with the role of identity, must be more widely addressed in intelligence studies. It is not enough to make mention of women in intelligence studies, outside methodologies and understandings need to be incorporated to analyse their positioning and experiences within intelligence work. As such, this thesis drew upon a much wider selection of literature to contextualise and analyse the history of women's employment in MI5.

A further contribution to intelligence studies is in the application of outside frameworks and research strategies, in line with the critical intelligence studies aim of diversifying the methodological approaches used in intelligence research. Applying intersectional approaches to the study of intelligence, or drawing on sociological or business and management literatures for their incorporation of multi-level research, has the potential to challenge traditional understandings of intelligence organisations. As Bean observed, 'While IS literature includes multiple biographies of female intelligence agents and analysts, feminist approaches to intelligence *theorizing* that foreground gender, sexuality, and difference in understanding what intelligence is/does are nearly nonexistent.'⁶ Though Bean highlights some works which have taken steps in this direction, the need for additional outside approaches to intelligence is essential.⁷ In this, feminist approaches, including intersectional ones, can open up new ways of understanding and viewing intelligence work.

⁶ Bean, 'Intelligence theory from the margins', p. 533.

⁷ See, for example: Atkinson, C., 'Patriarchy, Gender, Infantilisation: A cultural account of police intelligence work in Scotland', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 50:2 (2017), pp. 234-251.

As such, this thesis contributed to building a foundation for analysing identity in intelligence employment from a critical, intersectional perspective accounting for experiences of structural and organisational power structures within intelligence.

Going Forward

One gap in this thesis has been on the issues of race and ethnicity in intelligence work. For the most part, the women discussed in this thesis were white or white-passing, and with a few exceptions, race and ethnicity are not spoken about in the way gender is. Nor, are these topics addressed with the same frequency as gender in intelligence history. One step towards challenging this actually came from the UK Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee report on “Diversity and Inclusion in the UK Intelligence Community”.⁸ As such, a future area of research could be to expand the analysis undertaken in this thesis to discuss the experiences of other potentially marginalised groups in intelligence, within an intersectional framework.

One key area for further research would be to see if the trends found in British and American intelligence employment are comparable to experiences within other Western intelligence organisations, or even outside of Western intelligence organisations. Another approach which has considerable future value to this work is critical discourse analysis. While this thesis has contributed to the location and study of women’s experiences in intelligence, this research can be pushed further through analysing in greater detail and depth what women say about their work and why.

⁸ Intelligence and Security Committee, “Diversity and Inclusion in the UK Intelligence Community”, (London: HMSO, 2018), available at: [<http://isc.independent.gov.uk/committee-reports/special-reports>].

It is the hope of this thesis, that the way in which this research on women in intelligence is structured and analysed, can provide a framework for understanding these other, clearly important, aspects of intelligence history. Another aim is that the foregrounding of women's experiences as a way to study a complex web of political, social, and organisational interactions, can add to how intelligence studies views the roles of personal narrative in researching and theorising intelligence history. While the emphasis in intelligence studies is often placed on archival sources and first-person interviews, the materials produced by women intelligence professionals outside of these formats are a valuable resource, capable of illuminating what aspects of intelligence former professionals view as most important to their work. By foregrounding these representations, it is possible to give greater weight to the voices and experiences of women.

Appendix: Data Sources

Memoirs and Autobiographical Accounts

Grimes, S., and J. Vertefeuille, *Circle of Treason: A CIA account of traitor Aldrich Ames and the men he betrayed*, (Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2013).

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