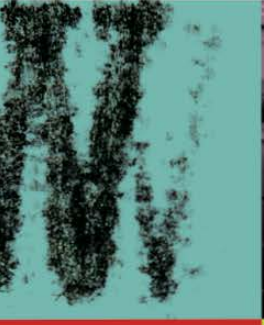

FROM

Typist TO Trailblazer

The Evolving View of Women in the CIA's Workforce

HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

SMITH COLLEGE

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30 October 2013

Smith College – Northhampton, MA

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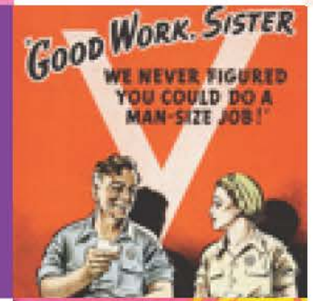

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Typists and Trailblazers:

Defining the Roles of Women in the Early Years of the CIA

Jackie Benn Porter ▪ Historical Review Program

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 office to be sure that your palms were white. I'm not sure what would've happened if they hadn't been white because I was too petrified to change that.[1]

– Carla, Directorate of Operations

During my career…I wore many faces. I was a tour director, a buyer, someone's girlfriend, a photographer, an art collector, even a young teenage boy. It helped to have an innocent-looking open face, a sense of humor, stamina, and the fearlessness of the very young.[2]

– Elizabeth Swanek, Directorate of Operations

It might come as a surprise to know that both of these statements are the actual experiences of two female employees who worked for the CIA during the same time period. Typist and trailblazer; passive and aggressive; subordinate and leader; support and operational—how does one make sense of these contrasting roles? In the early years of the Agency, to what extent could women develop and advance in their careers while contributing to the larger mission? What did these women leave the present-day CIA? To understand their roles and later impact—within the backdrop of sweeping changes in women's rights in the past half-century—we must accept that these terms were not mutually exclusive but reflective of the views and customs of the early 1950s and '60s and characteristic of the social paradox that defined these generations.

The "white gloves" anecdote comes from Carla, a former employee of 39 years whose experience illustrates the dynamic shift of cultural norms during that time. Entering in 1965 as a GS-4 secretary, she eventually retired as a Senior Intelligence Service (SIS) executive. Although her experience is not typical, it is also far from unique. In the nascent years of the Agency, several women challenged social expectations, broke gender barriers, and set examples for generations of younger women to follow. Although the majority of women in these early years could be described as "typists"—secretaries, administrative assistants, and stenographers—there was also a small but formidable group of trailblazers, made up largely by women who served in the Agency's precursor, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Both typists and trailblazers shaped women's roles within the Agency, but it was this latter group who laid the groundwork for future generations to shatter glass ceilings.

It Started With the War

The nation's need for a centralized intelligence entity became especially acute during the Second World War, the greatest and bloodiest war of the twentieth century. The creation of the OSS was the first time in American history that intelligence efforts were concentrated in a centralized government organization. WWII directly impacted civilians, altering cultural and social duties and expectations. As men left to fight battles in Europe and the Pacific, women entered the paid workforce, for the first time, to meet the nation's military needs. This was the period when the cultural and patriotic icon of "Rosie the Riveter" took hold, shaping the career aspirations and dreams of young women across the country.

For the government, there was little time to waste on the slow inefficiency of establishing a new intelligence bureaucracy. The early professionals in the American intelligence community—the men and women of the OSS—were to a great degree, all trailblazers. Under the urgency and pressures of war, each new employee in OSS was expected to maximize their talents and skills, often with scant training or background in the operational theatre. For the first time these ranks included women who took active roles in a range of duties as support officers, intelligence analysts, specialists, and operational officers.

After the war, and upon the creation of OSS's successor—the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) which, in 1947, would become the Central Intelligence Agency—many returning OSS officers continued their careers. This included many OSS women who came to the CIA as highly decorated intelligence and operations officers. However, as was the case of even the most experienced of the OSS's female officers, such as Virginia Hall, an unquestionable heroine of the war, their ranks and salaries did not reflect prior accomplishments as it did for men.

Inequality, But Less So At CIA

By 1953, disparities in pay and position between male and female employees were so glaring that DCI Allen Dulles ordered an internal study to survey the position of Agency women within career fields. "The Petticoat Panel" was comprised of several of the Agency's most accomplished

female employees, including a number of OSS veterans, and their conclusions were summarized in a report entitled "Career Employment of Women in the Central Intelligence Agency," which provided a statistical analysis of women at the CIA compared to women in other government agencies. It was not a pretty picture. The panel concluded that, while the CIA "has offered at least equivalent opportunities to career women [as other employers]…it has not, in common with other employers, taken full advantage of the womanpower resources available to it."[3] The report also revealed gross inequities; particularly that the median grade for female employees was GS-5 and not a single woman ranked above GS-14. By comparison, men averaged GS-9 and 10% of the male workforce was above GS-14. Additionally, only 19% of CIA women were in GS-7 slots or higher compared to nearly 69% of male employees. No women held senior executive positions, no woman held an office higher than branch chief, and only 7% of branch chiefs were women.

Despite these inequalities, the Panel also reported that CIA women were still in higher grades compared to women employed in other areas of the government.[4] Moreover, women made up 39% of the Agency's workforce whereas female employees of other government agencies averaged 25%. On average, CIA women earned higher salaries than all other working women. While the Career Service Board (CSB) commended the Panel for its findings, it refused to implement any immediate corrective policies, stating "…the status of women in the Agency does not call for urgent corrective action, but rather for considered and deliberate improvement primarily through the education of supervisors."[5]

By 1980, the CIA was still primarily a male agency with women only accounting for 35% of its workforce. A recent 2009 report estimates that the percentage has steadily climbed to 44%.[6] While the Petticoat Panel's findings were telling, they illustrated only one side of the story of a particular moment in history. It did not predict the progressive direction the workforce would take in future years, however, it established sex discrimination existed and was extensive. In the words of a former female officer, the Petticoat Panel, and later on, the Glass Ceiling Study "put in hardcopy under CIA seal the statistics that proved the discrimination."[7]

To illustrate the prevailing views of women in the workforce, the 1953 study included several comments from Agency officials. Although they must be appreciated in context of the times, the comments are revealing. They indicate the deep-rooted gender bias that prevailed within the early Agency. While the statistical data exposes the extent of discrimination, these comments give color to the worldview and cultural constraints of the 1950s. However, by viewing the comments in light of what that era's trailblazers accomplished, we can start to appreciate the paradoxical nature of women's roles in the early decades of the CIA and throughout other industries where women, before now, had few roles.

The committee concluded this statement "seems questionable," but added that "there are specific positions requiring traits or specialized training which women are unlikely to possess." These "traits" and "specialized training" were not elaborated upon, indicating that this view

"Women are not qualified to perform the duties in those positions which they do not now occupy."

stemmed from more of a career redlining, one that was convenient, discriminatory, and based on assumptions than actual facts. Even in the 1950s and 1960s, many women were just as skilled and qualified (and sometimes more so) than their male counterparts to perform duties requiring high levels of training and operational fluency. For example, on one occasion, a female employee recalled that when she first applied for employment in the 1960s,

> *She could fly an airplane, speak the mandarin dialect of Chinese, and [was] a college graduate, but was only asked 'Can you type?' She could elicit no responses from the interviewer on where she might work in the Agency, what she might do, and what kind of work was open to her.*[8]

The prevailing view of the Directorate of Operations (DO) in the 1960s and 1970s was that women were at a disadvantage as case officers in certain parts of the world—namely the Near East, Latin America, Africa, and Asia—because those societies regarded women as "second-class citizens" and "Women in these countries seldom have access to information of value."[9]

The reverse of this view was actually more accurate. It became apparent that female operations officers had particular advantages in the field, and even exceeded expectations when the targets harbored the same negative stereotypes of women. In an internal interview, four former DO female officers were asked about their views on women's capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses in the field. One of them, Patricia, remarked that on overseas missions,

> *[women] were terrific because they had no preconceived notions and they inevitably… were much better at detecting surveillants on foot. I always put that down to women [being] more sensitive [to] who's near or in their space, for physical protection. You know, somebody moves in on you, you're going to want to know. But they were great at picking up surveillants on foot and in stores. Because surveillants don't shop well; they just can't fake it.*[10]

Another interviewee, Meredith, agreed and elaborated:

> *I always said if I ever wrote a book, I would start it with, 'You could tell'em by their socks.' You would always know surveillants in [REDACTED] at the time by the socks and the shoes. We digress here, but with all [REDACTED] having such horrible clothes and horrible shoes and socks, the surveillants had good ones. That would never occur to my husband to look at it.*[11]

In some cases, female operations officers took advantage of male discriminatory views, using their assumptions to position themselves to gain access to valuable resources and intelligence. As Patricia bluntly put it, "the biggest advantage for women in recruiting… was that men, foreign men, will tell women darn near anything."[12] Adding to this, Carla shared an especially illustrative story whilst working in the field:

> *I got credit for a recruitment, but I never actually had to pitch the guy… Anyway, I was sort of the 'Dumb Dora' personality to survive, and 'Golly!' 'Gee!' and 'Wow!' And this [REDACTED]…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 just sit like this*

[makes an innocent expression]… the recruitment ended because he told me about a plot to go bomb the embassy in [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…because I was just a woman who wasn't very bright.[13]

DCI Allen Dulles apparently also appreciated women's advantages in the field. In a 1971 memo from the Chief of the Office of Personnel's Recruitment Division, Dulles was said to have publicly remarked in the mid-50s that women were "fine spies."[14] One of the women who may have inspired Dulles to have made such a declaration could have been Elizabeth Swanek, who joined the CIA in 1951. She had a military background in signals communications and medical training before entering graduate school to study political science and Russian. Upon graduation, she was immediately recruited by the CIA and sent to the Office of Special Operations in Germany.[15] Swanek worked alongside two male colleagues to "assess, select, and train candidates to infiltrate the Soviet Union," — most of whom were former Soviet citizens and defectors.[16] She took part in every aspect of the training process including "survival techniques, parachute jumps, drop-zone familiarization and wireless transmission."[17] Swanek would eventually go on to open a station by herself and be awarded the CIA Career Intelligence Medal.

Accomplished, Awarded, and, if Female, Ignored

At least as early as 1961, women had been participating in the annual Junior Officer Training (JOT) program, a training course designed for future operations officers.[18] The portion of female JOT graduates steadily increased from 4% in 1961 to 32% thirty years later in 1991 when the program was renamed Career Service Training (CST). During the 1960s and 1970s, women remained a small minority in the operations field. A 1978 study found that only 8% of the DO workforce was women.[19] However, while this group was small, it was illustrious and founded on the legacy of the women of the OSS.

"Women can't work under the pressures of urgency and special considerations inherent in much of the Agency's work."

One of the most decorated OSS officers in intelligence history was Virginia Hall Goillot. Hall spent considerable time behind enemy lines and contributed significantly to US intelligence collection efforts during the Second World War. Her story is perhaps one of the most well-known in the Agency and her portrait is on display at CIA Headquarters. After receiving degrees from Radcliffe and Barnard colleges, Hall began her career in government service at the US Embassy in Warsaw. At the outbreak of war in 1939, she quit the State Department and volunteered for Great Britain's intelligence service. During her first tour in Vichy France, she organized resistance networks, made a daring escape across the Pyrenees in 1942, and then joined the OSS before returning to France in 1944. As she was already well known to the Nazis, Hall was forced to use elaborate disguises. Dyeing her hair gray, the thirty-eight-year-old Hall presented herself as an elderly milkmaid, wearing layers of tattered clothing to disguise her slender figure, and mastering a slow, shuffling old woman's walk.[20] Hall's most defining characteristic, and one that makes her story more remarkable, was the fact she had lost her lower leg from the knee down in a hunting accident, and used a wooden prosthetic. Such a disability would have sidelined lesser souls, but Hall used it to enhance her cover. Such was her dedication and aplomb. Her value as a spy was reflected by Gestapo flyers that read "The woman who limps is one of the most dangerous Allied agents in France… We must find and destroy her."[21]

Hall entered the CIA after the war, but by 1963, she held only a GS-14 rank, even though she had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and had spent more time behind enemy lines than several of her male contemporaries — including DCIs Richard Helms and William Colby.[22] To our modern day sensibilities, it is remarkable that an officer as heroic and celebrated as Virginia Hall was still a victim of discrimination, and faced the convenient and clearly self-serving assumption from male higher-ups that women could not perform effectively in the field. Every facet of Hall's OSS career was unquestionable evidence to the contrary, and her contemporaries knew it.

"Women are absent for illness or family responsibilities more often than men."

At the time of these statements, the committee reported that "a fairly large number of women" served overseas. Women were needed in various field positions from operations to support and administration. Examples in the records are numerous. 1963 JOT graduate and intelligence officer Diana spent her first seven years in field operations, several of which were abroad.[23] Jeanne Vertefeuille, who came to the CIA in 1954 and later helped to uncover Aldrich Ames as a mole, spent her early years on two different tours of duty in Africa.[24] All four of the women profiled in the RYBAT Sisterhood interview spent significant time overseas. Elizabeth Swanek worked as a field operative in southern Germany almost immediately after joining the Agency in the 1950s.

"Women are undesirable candidates for long-range employment because they frequently interrupt or terminate their employment for marriage or family reasons."

Having a family and working abroad posed difficult but not insurmountable obstacles to female officers. Balancing work and personal life was, and still is, a challenge for any Agency employee who is duty-bound to both the mission and their family. While women may have been more susceptible than men to this problem, documents, oral histories, and other evidence suggest that many Agency women frequently sacrificed time with their families to pursue the greater aims of the CIA's mission. Notes interviewee Meredith:

I felt so compelled—we were talking before this, about sacrifices women—and, yeah, men, too—were willing to undergo at the time to have opportunities to do that. I was in [REDACTED] [for my] first tour and got pregnant and came back to Washington a couple weeks before the baby was born, [knowing] it was going to have to be a cesarean. Went in, worked up until the day the baby was born, had the baby, had the cesarean, and was back on the street in [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.[25]

"Women won't travel."

Susan related her own personal struggles in trying to balance an Agency career with family life:

> *Talking about sacrifices: once I tasted this drug of 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. When I went on [my] first tour it was a separated tour, and that almost cost our marriage… 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 kind 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.*[26]

Sacrificing family life for career was a serious issue not only for women but also for managers and supervisors under pressure to equalize gender disparities in the workforce. After the Petticoat Panel presented its findings, a Director of Training commented that hiring women between the ages of 21 and 28 was exceptionally costly. Recalling the advice Frances Perkins—who had served as Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of labo—gave him: "Don't hire a woman except between the ages of 28 and 35. When she is 28 she knows whether she is going to be in Government either as a married woman or whether she is not going to get married usually…You will waste money on training and recruiting the 21-to-30-year-olds."[27] It remained true that female employees would at some point in their careers, be forced to make difficult choices. However, many women seemed equally torn between family and career and did not just default back to the home when confronted with a tough decision. Recalls Carla:

> *I think the key was we took those sacrifices. I often tell the younger officers, male and female, it's not true that opportunity only knocks once, but that particular opportunity only knocks once. And you have to make a conscious decision—particularly women—okay, here's your chance.*[28]

The prevailing cultural attitude of the 1950s and 1960s that women were emotionally volatile was used to justify discrimination against women for decades. It was abetted by Sigmund Freud's then popular but now discredited theories regarding "women and 'hysteria.'" It is logical to conclude that decades of such discrimination would have impacted the morale of those it targeted. In 1981, an internal report concluded that female Agency employees had to overcome both institutional and "personal" barriers—specifically, "self-limiting behaviors which result from encounters with institutional obstacles" which have an adverse effect on "self-image."[29] Eloise Page, while looking back over her humble beginnings as General William Donovan's secretary, recounted to Elizabeth McIntosh for her book *Sisterhood of Spies* that she had to grow out of her initial timidity:

> *I was in total awe of [Donovan] and of all the men in authority in those early days, but I learned quickly. After about six months I was able to stand up to the general, and later to male colleagues in CIA.*[30]

Page subsequently worked very close with Donovan in organizing and outlining numerous intelligence operations and eventually was appointed to Brussels after the war to run counterintelligence operations and to identify Nazi refugees. After the war, Page planned to return to Baltimore to restart a career in music, but was recruited back to the newly-formed CIA where she quickly rose to become a top operations executive and then Chief of Station in Athens. Eloise Page challenged her contemporaries' assumptions that women were too emotionally insecure and passive to excel in high-pressure positions, but she clearly experienced sex discrimination of those times despite her many accomplishments. Page told McIntosh in a later interview that women did "face an uphill battle against older Agency chiefs who "became feudal barons and could never consider women as their equals." However, she added, "Our new career women are proving them wrong. Historically, I suppose you could say that the women of OSS prepared the groundwork for their sisters who came after them in CIA."[31] In 1975, Page was the highest-ranking female employee at the CIA at GS-18.

"Women are more emotional and less objective in their approach to problems than men. They are not sufficiently aggressive."

Another case-in-point was when Mary Elizabeth Hutchison who received a PhD in archeology, was fluent in French, German, Greek, and Spanish, and was a member of the Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) during WWII, was only offered a secretarial position by Richard Helms during a job interview in 1946. When she pluckily replied that it would be a waste of her abilities, Helms hired her as one of the first female reports officers.[32] Hutchison acknowledged, however, that her case was more the exception than the rule and that typically, women had neither the encouragement nor the opportunity to pursue "command positions" and "professional careers." In a 2002 interview, she implied that men were the reason why women were not in more leadership positions:

> *[it] was very difficult…for a woman to get into a position where she really commands. No matter how capable she is, she will not be able to because she is female… Say what you like, it is still just a man's world and it is going to keep on being so for a good long time.*[33]

The committee agreed with this statement, adding:

> *It is probably offensive to many men to find a woman occupying positions superior or even equivalent to theirs. It is also probable that many women prefer to work for men. In part, this preference comes from a traditional attitude toward women which will be affected only through a slow evolution of sociological change.*[34]

By the 1960s, such changes were starting to take place. Evangeline Cawley was so respected as a collection requirements expert, that a recommendation for her to be promoted to GS-15 read: "Her stature among colleagues is reflected in the fact that several senior officers, including GS-15 branch chiefs, have expressed the desire to work under her supervision as the best means of mastering the most complex collections tasks and techniques."[35] Cawley had served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during WWII and entered the CIG

"Men dislike working under the supervision of women and are reluctant to accept them on an equal basis as professional associates."

in 1946 as a Requirements Officer for the Office of Reports and Estimates Staff. Her personnel folder included the note that she was "at the nerve center of all clandestine operations against the Soviet target."[36]

Cawley was not unique; evidence reveals that there were several women in the early years of the Agency who commanded the respect of their male colleagues. A Career Intelligence Medal recommendation for Adelaide Hawkins, one of the Agency's best early cryptanalysts, stated: "Through the years, she has always had the ability to work with and supervise men of equal ability without the slightest trace of resentment…She is highly regarded as an accomplished authority in the cryptanalytic field."[37]

Mary Hutchison, beginning as a reports officer, served in a supervisory position throughout most of her Agency career and was well respected.[38] As Chief of the Clerical Training Branch, Dorothy Emily Knoelk taught supervisory techniques to mostly male employees from GS-5 to GS-14 during the mid-to-late-1950s and was noted as having excellent leadership qualities by her rating officer.[39] Oddly, all of these women served on the Petticoat Panel. Despite the glowing reviews and recommendations within their personnel folders, their report's concurrence that men dislike working under the supervision of women gives further evidence that they personally dealt with discrimination, and had inculcated it to the extent they accepted some of it as an immutable state of being. The variance of experience and opinions confirms the fact that gender issues were complex and often contradictory in the early years of the Agency.

The panel offered that this particular belief was "not offered as frequently at present as it had been in the past when, incidentally, it had more merit." Though it was not entirely socially acceptable, the reality of the 1950s and 1960s was that many women faced increasing responsibilities to support themselves and/or dependent family members. Adelaide Hawkins was a single mother of three and additionally supported her two ailing parents while she worked at the CIA.[40] Herma Plummer, one of the most prominent female DO officers in the earliest years of the Agency, held a series of secretarial jobs to support her ailing mother, as her sole caregiver, before joining the OSS.[41]

"The economic responsibilities of women are not as great as those of men. Women should not be employed in higher paying positions and deprive men of these opportunities. Women should not be employed at all when men are in need of employment."

Herma Plummer's story is yet another remarkable example of the fortitude, innovation, and dedication of the OSS generation. Born to Polish Jewish parents, Herma escaped Europe before the outbreak of war in the late 1930s. During the war, she worked for Allen Dulles in the OSS. She was assigned to a counterespionage unit as an intelligence officer. Within a short time, Herma became a division chief supervising ten research analysts who handled operational reports, trained and dispatched personnel to the field, and covered "all aspects of their activity for [REDACTED]." Later on, she assisted William Donovan at the Nuremberg war crime trials. After the OSS was dissolved, Herma was transferred to the War Department and then CIG, where she entered as a GS-12 specialist in counterespionage. Eventually, Plummer was promoted to a GS-14 in June of 1950 and served as deputy chief, chief of operations, and a senior case officer in her station. During the 1960s, Plummer had returned to headquarters to become chief of a regional operational unit, served as a counterintelligence officer in another division, took another overseas assignment as a chief of operations until her mandatory retirement in 1968 at the age of 60. While dealing with family responsibilities, Herma Plummer excelled in counterintelligence, analysis, and espionage, and established a reputation among her colleagues as an excellent intelligence/counterintelligence officer, asset handler, and manager.[42]

Consequences of "The Petticoat Panel"

After the findings of the 1953 Panel, the "woman question" lay dormant for nearly two decades. Finally, after several lawsuits and new federal policies dealing with Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO), sexual equality issues once again came to the forefront in the early 1970s. In 1972, Executive Director William Colby established a Women's Advisory Panel. Two years later, the numbers of women in GS-9 positions or higher had shown a gradual increase—a "marked improvement"—due to Colby's initiatives.[43] Conditions continued to improve throughout the decade. In 1977, the federal government mandated the elimination of "masculine" pronouns or the addition of "and her" in government records unless referring to specific bodies.[44]

It is understandable why the "woman question" remained unanswered for so long. CIA historians agree that during the founding years of the Agency, pressing matters relating to the Cold War along with bureaucratic and organizational issues in setting up a stable and permanent intelligence community took precedence over sexual equality in the workplace. The mere fact that the CIA even sponsored a panel to look at sexual inequality in 1953 is indicative of a relatively progressive and dynamic organization—one that was ahead of its time when compared with the treatment of women in business or industry. While roadblocks, glass ceilings, and misogynistic presumptions were widespread in the country, and therefore existed in the workplace, CIA women were inspired by their OSS forebears, and relished their important and, at times, all-consuming assignments supporting and running operations while protecting colleagues and country. All the while, they continued to plan full-time careers in the Agency and made lasting contributions to its mission. Nora Slatkin, once appointed to the CIA's third highest office as Executive Director, aptly described the central narrative of the history of women at the CIA:

> *"We have had problems at CIA, and some women have left the agency in frustration… But for every woman who left, there were hundreds more who stayed, excelled, and changed the Agency in the process. These are women who have traveled the world, dined with ambassadors, briefed princes and presidents, run clandestine operations, and pioneered new technologies."*[45]

The early CIA was in many ways an "old boys' club"—one that reflected the unfair tenor of the times—but it was also home to the some of the strongest and most accomplished women in the government. In later years, it would respond to the changing climate for equal opportunity by training, inspiring, and promoting many women who now serve as leaders in CIA and elsewhere in the Intelligence Community.

Note that the footnotes for this article are not included here for reasons of space. The full version, with footnotes, can be found on the *Typist to Trailblazer* Microsite: **https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/historical-collection-publications.**

Addressing "This Woeful Imbalance":

Efforts to Improve Women's Representation at CIA, 1947-2013

Brent Durbin ▪ Smith College

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was founded during a period of unparalleled social change in the United States, including new roles for women in the American workforce. The fevered national mobilization for World War II had created a new labor force of "Rosies" who stepped into traditionally male-dominated industries. Breaking out of their traditional roles as school teachers and secretaries, these women took the opportunity to demonstrate their competence in almost every sector of the economy, including U.S. national intelligence. The present collection of documents released by the CIA's Historical Review Program, *From Typist to Trailblazer: The Evolving View of Women in the CIA's Workforce*, provides an account of these women and those who followed them at CIA.

Covering the entire history of U.S. central intelligence (three documents even predate CIA's founding in September 1947), these files recount both the challenges and the accomplishments of women at the agency in both personal and bureaucratic terms. As such, the collection will be of great interest to scholars and others interested in a variety of topics. For example, the collection provides detailed personnel records of several female employees, particularly from the early years of the agency, and thus reveals the experiences of individual women in a cross-section of CIA positions. Perhaps the greatest contributions from the collection involve internal CIA efforts to understand and rectify persistent discrimination against women employees. The most notable of these studies include the 1953 "Petticoat Panel" report, the Glass Ceiling Report of 1991-1992, and the 2013 Director's Advisory Group on Women in Leadership. While a few of the collection's documents were previously available in unclassified form (the 2013 report in particular), the *Typist to Trailblazer* collection provides a valuable context for understanding the full trajectory of women's experience at CIA. Taken together, these documents show how an insular and at times very traditional bureaucracy has attempted to keep up with evolving national mores regarding the role of women workers.

This essay seeks to draw out some highlights from the collection and place these in their broader social and institutional contexts. It seeks to show, largely through the evidence available in the *Typist to Trailblazer* documents, just how far the Agency has come in its treatment of women employees, and also some of the challenges that remain.

Joining the Fight: Women in the Wartime OSS

When the United States stood up its first independent intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), women played a limited but important role. At the organization's peak, approximately 4,500 of OSS's 13,000 employees (35%) were women[1], the majority of whom spent the war as "invisible apron strings" in the words of OSS director William Donovan. "They were the ones at home who patiently filed secret reports, encoded and decoded messages, answered telephones, mailed checks and kept the records."[2] Some however, earned high plaudits in less traditional female roles, as cryptanalysts, overseas unit contacts, and spies. One cryptanalyst, Adelaide Hawkins, had joined the OSS's precursor, the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), four days before Pearl Harbor. Following distinguished service during the war—and despite entering her service with no more than a high-school education—Hawkins would go on to become chief of CIA's Cryptanalysis Section before her retirement in 1973.[3]

OSS also included one of America's most famous and successful wartime spies, Virginia Hall. Hall worked alongside the French resistance and British Special Operations Executive in occupied France, spying on the Germans from under her cover as a milkmaid. After the war she joined CIA as one of its first female operations officers.[4]

The best known female OSS officer, however, was surely Julia McWilliams, later known worldwide by her married name Julia Child. (She met her husband, Paul Child, while both were serving with OSS in Ceylon, present-day Sri Lanka.) Following her graduation from Smith College, McWilliams worked in advertising before joining OSS at the outset of the war. (She would later recall that, at over 6 feet, "I was too tall to get into WACs or WAVES."[5]) McWilliams served as a researcher under Donovan as well as in the OSS Emergency Sea Rescue Equipment Section, where she may have presaged her future culinary skills as part of a team tasked with developing a shark repellant. She later posted to Ceylon and then China, earning the Emblem of Meritorious Civilian Service as head of the Registry of the OSS Secretariat.[6] She was hardly an "invisible apron string," flashing the wit that would help make her famous after the war. "If you don't send Registry that report we need," she once wrote to OSS Headquarters from her station in Ceylon, "I shall fill the next Washington pouch with itching powder and virulent bacteriological diseases, and change all the numbers, as well as translating the material into Singhalese, and destroying the English version."[7] There is no record of any rebuke or reprimand for this or other missives, such was the liberty afforded to high-performing women in the freewheeling OSS (or at least the indomitable McWilliams). Many years later, Julia Child was asked if she saw OSS as a career opportunity, a way to break out of the social constraints on women in 1940's America. Her response indicates

just how rigid those constraints were, even for a well-connected graduate of Smith: "I wasn't thinking in career terms," she responded. "There weren't many careers to have. There wasn't anything [else] really open."[8]

Following the war, most women found that their employment liberation had been temporary, and that once again, "there weren't many careers to have." As soldiers returned from overseas, the U.S. government partnered with industry leaders to replace women workers with men. Despite women having demonstrated their competence and interest in historically male-dominated areas of employment, old prejudices returned, including at the newly minted CIA.

Setting the Mold: Women in the Early CIA

Labor discrimination against women in post-war America took on two distinct forms. *Glass walls* served to limit female workers' access to certain male-dominated industries altogether (e.g., police, longshoremen), while *glass ceilings* limited women's potential for advancement where they did work.[9] Perhaps owing to the number of women who had served in OSS, as well as to an abundance of clerical and administrative jobs deemed suitable for women, glass walls do not seem to have governed hiring at CIA in the early years. By 1953, nearly 40 percent of CIA employees were women, compared with only 25 percent in the federal government and 30 percent in the broader U.S. workforce.[10] On average, these women were also better remunerated than women employed elsewhere: more than 90 percent of CIA women earned salaries in excess of $3000 per annum, compared with just 7 percent of other American women earning income.[11] Average General Schedule (GS) salary grades were higher for CIA women than for other federally employed women in each of twelve age categories, with more than half of CIA's female employees at GS-6 or higher, compared with less than 15 percent in other agencies.[12]

Despite these relatively positive numbers, glass ceilings were still very much the reality in the early CIA. In May 1953, newly appointed Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen Dulles was asked at an employee event whether he was "going to do something about the professional discrimination against women" at CIA. Dulles responded that he thought "women have a very high place in this work, and if there is discrimination, we're going to see it stopped."[13] The DCI duly asked his Inspector General to generate a study of women's employment at the agency. This "Panel on Career Service for Women," whose members were all accomplished women at the agency, came to be known by a more informal title: "The Petticoat Panel."

The Petticoat Panel's final report was released in November 1953, and demonstrated the degree of discrimination facing women at CIA. For example, by 1953, barely a quarter (27 percent) of women at CIA were employed at GS-9 or above, with only 5 percent having attained the "Officer" level of GS-12 or above.[14] No women were appointed to the top four GS grades (GS-15 to GS-18), a status obtained by 3.2 percent of male employees.[15] Different promotion tracks for men and women are starkly demonstrated in the Petticoat Panel report by a chart tracking average salary grades by age for both sexes.[16] For women, the average salary grade flattens out at GS-7 for employees aged 30-34, and never climbs above this level. Male employees faced a much more consistent rise in GS status with increasing age, with every age group earning more on average than the previous group, up to age 62, where mean grade tops out at GS-14 for men. These discrepancies cannot be attributed solely to the different types of jobs held by men and women in the early CIA; the study further notes that "the grades held by women are generally lower than the grades held by men *in the same categories of jobs*."[17]

Employment and earnings gaps between men and women were felt equally in the overt and covert divisions of the agency. On the covert side, the Committee studied the experience of women both at CIA headquarters and in field offices of the Office of the Deputy Director (Plans) (DD/P, later renamed the Directorate of Operations [1973-2005] and the National Clandestine Service [2005-present]). It found that 45 percent of employees at HQ were women—a higher portion than on the overt side of the agency—while only 28 percent of field employees were women.[18] Allen Dulles would later explain why he felt that "overseas assignments for women are more limited."

> *One reason for this is the ingrained prejudice in many countries of the world against women as "managers" of men—in their jobs, that is. An agent brought up in this tradition may not feel comfortable taking orders from a woman, and we cannot change his mind for him in this regard.*[19]

This perspective would return as an oft-cited excuse for the relative dearth of CIA women in overseas positions, although its proponents seldom provide hard evidence to support their contentions.

As in other parts of CIA, women in DD/P served primarily in low-level positions. Sixty percent of DD/P women were designated as "clerical," with another 18 percent in "supervisory or intermediate" positions, leaving only 22 percent in the "professional" category.[20] Only 15 percent of all DD/P operations officers were women, including 25 percent of those assigned to HQ and a mere 7 percent of those overseas.[21] Why would women seek employment in an organization that so clearly felt their sex was a limitation? In her interviews with scores of women who worked at CIA, McIntosh found that many of these women "theorized that the intrigue and excitement were worth the occasional discrimination they encountered with the 'old boy net.'"[22]

Discrimination against women in foreign officer positions was scarcely limited to CIA. At the U.S. State Department, it was not until 1922—134 years after the department's founding—that Lucile Atcherson was appointed as its first female foreign service officer.[23] It took another 11 years before Franklin Roosevelt named former congresswoman Ruth Bryan Owen to be Minister to Denmark, making her the first woman to serve as head of a U.S. diplomatic mission. Even by the period 1961-1971, women made up only 7 percent of new Foreign Service recruits, and female officers found their opportunities for promotion limited.[24] This was due in part to a ban on married women serving in the foreign service, a restriction that lasted until 1972: unlike their male counterparts, married women could not be considered for employment in the service, and single female officers were required to quit on the day of their marriage.

The record of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was even worse. When J. Edgar Hoover became director in 1924, only three women were serving as special agents, the Bureau's intrepid crime-fighters

who would later earn fame under the unintentionally apt moniker "G-men." Hoover demanded the resignation of two of these women during his first month in office; the third resigned four years later. From 1928 to 1972—the remaining term of Hoover's directorship—no women were appointed as special agents. Only after two women employees filed a discrimination lawsuit did FBI accede to appointing female agents once more.[25]

Overseas, women faced similar challenges breaking into male-dominated national security organizations. In the British Foreign Office, for example, diplomatic and consular posts were reserved for men until 1946, and, as in the U.S. foreign service, married women were not allowed to serve until 1972.[26] At the U.K.'s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI6), only one "minor Station" overseas was headed by a woman officer in May 1946, although regional directors were under instructions "to consider where, both at home and abroad, women could be employed as officers."[27] Women in Britain's domestic intelligence agency, MI5, also worked under a different set of rules than their male equivalents. When Stella Rimington reported there for work in 1969, she found her opportunities limited. "It soon became clear to me that a strict sex discrimination policy was in place at MI5," she would later write. "Men were recruited as what were called 'officers' and women had their own career structure, a second-class career, as 'assistant officers,'" far from the "sharp-end intelligence-gathering operations."[28] Rimington, a single mother of two, would go on to serve as the first publicly acknowledged Director-General of the organization, from 1992-1996, and has since become a successful author of numerous spy novels featuring female MI5 agent Liz Carlyle.

CIA in Changing Times

The civil rights revolutions of the 1960s generated new, hard-won opportunities for women in the U.S. workforce. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibited discrimination in federal employment. In 1967, Lyndon Johnson amended an earlier Executive Order to outlaw sex discrimination. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act banned job discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex or national origin,"[29] and created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce these prohibitions. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 strengthened enforcement of Title VII provisions. One part of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 created new programs to bring more women into government service.

These revolutionary reforms changed America's formal, *de jure* approach to women's employment discrimination; *de facto* change would come far more slowly. Several CIA reports document the agency's efforts to advance a new approach to its women workers. A 1971 report by the agency's Recruitment Division noted that they had received "few if any specific directives either encouraging or discouraging the recruitment of professional women." Even so, the authors observed that CIA recruiters and interviewers had "developed a 'feel' as to which components of the Agency, a) positively encourage the professional woman, b) tend to discourage the professional woman, and c) are apparently indifferent as to whether candidates for their positions are male or female."[30] The Clandestine Service (CS) was apparently among the components that "tend to discourage" women, as the report goes on to note that "there has apparently been some resistance by the CS to accept many women on the theory, real or fancied, that they are limited in their operational potential."[31] The report also found that women accounted for only "about 10% of the intake" into the agency's Career Training Program, whose participants usually went on to the Clandestine Service.

Following new legal mandates, the agency did establish an Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) charged with assessing and promoting the hiring of female and minority employees. Among other duties, EEO screened films (including the intriguingly titled "What's the Matter with Alice?," produced by the U.S. Civil Service Commission) and gathered data regarding the position of women and minorities in CIA employment. A March 1972 memorandum from the Deputy Director of Personnel for Recruitment and Placement noted that DCI William Colby had taken a direct interest in EEO issues, requesting that directorate- and organization-level employment data be prepared so he could discuss with each of his deputies EEO developments in their areas.[32] The memorandum also included recommendations for improving the hiring and promotion of blacks and women in the agency. Notably, it found that the Clandestine Service had been active in this area, having "developed a series of mechanisms to upgrade the role of women and to heighten their sense of participation in its work."[33] These included appointing women "to various panels and boards" and to Personnel Management Committees, as well as specifically reviewing the careers of women employees to find opportunities for positive reassignment and additional training. While the author suggested that "[t]here may be appropriate application of this technique in other directorates," there is no evidence provided to evaluate whether these efforts were effective at improving the status of women in the CS. (The original memo includes "18 tables and listings" providing data on "Agency performance in general and in detail with respect to employment, distribution, and advancement of women and blacks throughout the Agency, over a period of time, and in comparison with other agencies." Unfortunately, these have not been included as part of the *Typist to Trailblazer* release.)

Slow movement on EEO issues was not for lack of support from CIA leadership. In November 1972, DCI Colby—described by McIntosh as "an outspoken supporter of equality for women in government"[34]—held a lunch with several female employees at which the conversation focused, at least in part, on the status of women at the agency.[35] These discussions led eventually to plans for a "Women's Panel" at CIA to consider these issues. While the details of this panel and its membership are not included in the present document release, the included records do suggest some of the work undertaken by the agency's new Women's Advisory Panel.

For example, a study conducted for the Panel in 1973 employed statistical techniques (the chi-square goodness-of-fit test) to demonstrate what most at CIA must have known already: that women were overrepresented in lower salary grades and underrepresented in higher grades, and that this was true in each of the four directorates (Intelligence, Operations, Science and Technology, and Management and Services) as well as in the agency as a whole.[36] The study showed that these hiring and promotion discrepancies could not be due to chance (it's hard to believe anyone thought they were), and, importantly, that they remained "highly pronounced" across the higher professional levels of the agency, and thus were not merely caused by the preponderance of wom-

en in low-level clerical grades. While the actual employment numbers included in the report remain classified, these findings suggest that little significant progress had been made in employment sex equality at CIA since the Petticoat Panel study twenty years earlier.

On May 10, 1977, the Deputy Director of CIA, E. Henry Knoche, met with the Federal Women's Program Board (FWPB), a group created to advise agency leaders "on issues concerning women in the CIA and to enhance the employment of women in the CIA."[37] Knoche expressed his intention to "address the problems of women in…discussions with Agency managers,"[38] and requested that the Board send him "themes" that he could use as talking points for these discussions. These arrived on May 27 in a memorandum that included ten concise statements addressing the roles and challenges of women in the agency workforce.

This document provides a remarkable window into how social and attitudinal changes were affecting women and managers in CIA and the broader federal workforce, at least as perceived by the Federal Women's Program Board. For example, the Board recognized that managers committed to the "cultural standards of the past" held outdated beliefs about why women might want to work in the first place. "[M]any young women today are not making motherhood a full-time career," the memorandum noted. "Unlike many women in the past, they are not simply looking for a way to support themselves until they get married." As a consequence, managers should see the great potential in developing and promoting female and non-white employees: "Among the women and minorities in the CIA are untapped reservoirs of talent and ability lying idle for lack of the opportunity to move out of dead-end jobs." The paper also suggested making a more personal appeal to agency supervisors based on their hopes for their own daughters. "What kind of careers do you want for them [your daughters]?," it proposed asking. "Do you want to see their opportunities limited to the GS-07 or GS-08 level where the majority of women in the Agency remain today?" The Board recognized that more conservative members of the agency might be resistant to any changes perceived to grow out of the "women's liberation movement." Noting that equal treatment in employment was a legal requirement for federal agencies, it concluded one statement with a simple observation: "Women's lib is open to debate, the law of the land is not." Other themes addressed the inclusion of women on promotion panels; the goal of upholding fairness and justice in management decisions; the possible public image problems tied up in EEO ("a potential trouble spot for any government agency"); and the latest research showing that "there are only minor variations in intelligence and aptitudes between the sexes."

A routing slip attached to the FWPB document indicates that DCI Stansfield Turner was sufficiently interested in these themes to ask for a copy to be sent to his office as well. This attention to EEO issues was in line with that of the man who appointed Turner, President Jimmy Carter. On August 26, 1977, Carter had issued a memorandum "requesting the Attorney General and all the Federal agencies to cooperate in eliminating sex discrimination from the laws and policies of the United States."[39] This mandate included the creation of a Department of Justice Task Force on Sex Discrimination, for which Congress had already passed appropriations. In October 1977, CIA representative Edith Schneider, the agency's Deputy Director of EEO and Federal Women's Program Coordinator, met with members of the Justice Department task force and identified several specific questions it had with regard to the agency. Two months later, Schneider requested a meeting with Michael Malanick, Acting Deputy Director for Administration, so she could be prepared to "tell DOJ what procedures the Agency will be using to comply with sex discrimination laws and regulations."[40]

Records from this meeting, which occurred on January 4, 1978, are not included in the document release. Yet one note appended to the file indicates how some in the directorate felt CIA was doing just fine on EEO issues:

> *I don't see it as a "problem"…rather a response to the Justice Task Force that our hands are clean and have been for some time. Others may need to redo regulations, et al, but we have been working on [the] whole matter at least since 1973.*[41]

Of course, "working on" improving employment opportunities for women at CIA was not the same thing as achieving a measure of equality. The newly released documents include a detailed account of one sex discrimination complaint brought by Harritte T. Thompson, an officer in the Directorate of Operations (DO).[42] The included report documents in detail how Thompson, who had received numerous positive performance reviews, was passed over for promotion from GS-14 on several occasions, even when she had been assigned to jobs designated at the GS-15 and GS-16 levels. The investigation into her case found that, while Thompson had served under one supervisor who "was blatantly biased against women being assigned to responsible positions," her career at CIA had been "damaged primarily by unwitting, subliminal, unconscious discriminatory procedures which have become institutionalized by practice" in the DO.[43] Thompson was hardly alone in her experience of discrimination. In 1977, there was a demonstrable glass ceiling for women at the GS-13 and GS-14 grades. While 18 percent of GS-12 employees at CIA were women—not a great percentage already—77 percent fewer women were appointed to level GS-14 than to GS-12, a remarkable drop-off that reflected the difficulty women found achieving promotion into the agency's more senior positions. By comparison, there were actually 6 percent more men at GS-14 than GS-12 in 1977.[44]

Agency leaders continued to try to change this institutional culture throughout the late 1970s. When DCI Turner met with members of the Congressional Women's Caucus in July 1978, he was both welcomed as "the first Administration member of his rank to appear before the Women's Caucus," and questioned about CIA practices regarding women, especially in recruiting.[45] Remarkably, one high-profile member of the Caucus, Pat Schroeder of Colorado, noted that she had interviewed for a job with the agency in the 1960s. Despite being a college graduate who could fly an airplane and speak Mandarin, she reported that her interviewer at the time merely wanted to know, "Can you type?"[46] (Of course, female members of Congress knew what it was like to work in an unequal institution: in 1978, only 21 of Congress's 535 members—4 percent—were women, and all three female senators had been appointed rather than elected, two to serve out the remaining terms of their deceased husbands.[47])

The day after his visit to Capitol Hill, DCI Turner wrote to CIA's Deputy Director, Frank Carlucci, explaining that the Women's Caucus had been "in general favorably impressed with Agency efforts and progress" on equal employment, and that he would like to explore their suggestions, especially in three areas: hiring more women recruiters, recruiting "from the science/engineering department faculty of women's colleges," and in general improving "the recruiting approach made to women."[48] Turner's interest in these efforts remained acute, and, after receiving a response from his Deputy Director for Administration about recruiting, he followed up with a detailed memorandum indicating that he "would like to see our recruiters with specific goals tailored to our shortages and specific guidance as to where in their geographical areas they are most likely to find the type of women we need."[49]

Despite Turner's attentions, the overall numbers for female employees at CIA changed little during his tenure. By 1980, women still represented only 35 percent of agency employees overall, and only 18 percent of those employees graded at GS-12 or above—the same percentage as in 1977.[50] Turner's successor as DCI, William Casey, fared no better during the first Reagan Administration, leading Casey's DDCI John McMahon to write in December 1983 that he was both "appalled" and "embarrassed" by the statistics on agency women in senior grades. He noted that, while by this point 37 percent of CIA employees were female, only 5 percent of GS-15 employees were women. In a memorandum to the CIA Executive Director, he laid down instructions to "scratch your head and those of the Deputies to see what immediate remedial action can be taken to address this woeful imbalance."[51]

Given the long and difficult history of efforts to increase women's representation at the agency, it is not surprising that the "woeful imbalance" persisted into the 1990s. In March 1991, DCI William Webster initiated, at the suggestion of women members in the Senior Intelligence Service (SIS, a professional level above the General Schedule/GS ranks), a study "to determine if career advancement barriers exist for Agency professional employees, particularly women and minorities."[52] CIA hired two outside consulting firms to collect both quantitative and qualitative data—including employee surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews—on employment discrimination at the agency. Their final report, *The Glass Ceiling Study*, was published in January 1992. It found that "glass ceilings do in fact exist for the gender and racial/ethnic groups studied."[53] For example, while the percentage of female employees had increased to over 40 percent overall, women accounted for only 10 percent of SIS positions.[54] (These numbers were not so different from those in the broader federal government, where in 1991 women made up approximately 12 percent of the equivalent Senior Executive Service.[55]) Importantly, the Glass Ceiling Study showed specific differences in how women and men perceived the performance evaluation and promotion system at the agency. For example, both women and minority employees were more likely to feel they received insufficient feedback from their superiors, compared with their white male colleagues. These groups were also more likely to feel that they were hired at lower grades than appropriate, and women especially were more likely to feel that "networking" and "politics" were important aspects of the assignment process.[57] The study also found disturbing levels of sexual and racial harassment at CIA: nearly 50 percent of women reported experiencing sexual harassment (compared with less than 10 percent of men), and more than 50 percent of black employees reported racial harassment in their work at the agency.[58]

It fell to Webster's successor, DCI Robert Gates, to review the Glass Ceiling Study and implement any required changes. In April 1992, Gates issued a memorandum to all CIA employees encouraging them to read the report, and noting that "[o]ur employees are our greatest resource, and we must create an environment that provides opportunities for each employee to develop his or her potential regardless of gender or ethnicity."[59] In August, a follow-on report, *Intelligence Excellence Through Diversity*, was produced by a task force charged with proposing reforms in response to the original Glass Ceiling Study.[60]

This implementation report was generally well received by agency leaders, although the agency's deputy directors were skeptical that certain reforms would be desirable or even possible. For example, the report recommended several changes to the assignments process, such as including women and minority employees on all selection panels, reporting for each assignment "what consideration was given to female and minority applicants,"[61] providing "shadowing" assignments to women and minority officers, and tracking the record of each directorate for assignments of women and minorities. Frank Ruocco, Deputy Director of Administration, echoed the sentiments of several colleagues when he commented that such changes would "impose a degree of administrative overload on the Agency which…would create a bloated and inefficient bureaucracy producing few real benefits."[62] Several deputy directors were also skeptical of the report's proposals to create a new position of Deputy Director for Human Resources and to expand the role and scope of the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity. For example, James Hirsch, Deputy Director for Science and Technology, felt that the same objectives could be achieved under the existing organizational setup, and that "more layering" was hardly justified.[63] E. Page Moffett, Deputy Director of Congressional Affairs, worried about the requisite costs associated with such changes, noting that "'[i]n this era of tightened budget restraints, additional positions will be very difficult to find."[64]

Over the next several months, senior CIA leaders continued to discuss the results of the Glass Ceiling Study in Executive Committee (EXCOM) meetings.[65] Through this process, many of the report's recommendations were implemented. On several controversial topics, such as assignments and promotions, guidance was given to the directorates to develop plans that adhered to "common Agency principles" but that "could be implemented according to local needs."[66]

Breaking the Mold: The Modern CIA

Due in part to initiatives such as the Glass Ceiling Study, the overall percentage of women employees at CIA came to exceed 40 percent throughout the 1990s, and by 2000 the figure was 44 percent.[67] Even so, the underrepresentation of women persisted at the highest levels of the agency. In 2002, just over 20 percent of SIS positions were held by women—more than double the number from 1991, but still far short of equal representation.[68] Ten years later, overall female employment at CIA was 46 percent, and SIS representation of women had climbed to 31 percent.[69] A November 2011 *Washington Post* article noted that "five of the agency's highest-ranking jobs"

were then held by women, including the positions of Executive Director and Director of the Directorate of Intelligence.[70] Despite these gains, in April 2012, Director of the CIA (DCIA) David Petraeus was left to observe that "we still are not where we should be in terms of the number of women reaching the point where they would be considered competitive for promotion to SIS."[71]

In a further attempt to remedy this imbalance, Petraeus tasked a new body, the Director's Advisory Group (DAG), to "answer the overarching question of why women at CIA from the GS-13 level and above are not achieving promotions and positions of greater responsibility in proportion to their overall representation in the workforce."[72] The group would be headed by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and would consist of other outside advisors and experts as well as CIA representatives.

DAG submitted surveys to CIA employees in September 2012, and followed up with focus groups, interviews, and even a blog regarding their activities.[73] Like the 1991 Glass Ceiling Study and previous investigations into the status of women at CIA, DAG found significant discrepancies in employment, but also that there was "**no single reason** why CIA women are not achieving promotions and positions of greater responsibility," and that "organizational and societal challenges factor into the issues affecting women."[74] To improve the status and development potential of women at the agency, the group provided ten recommendations that covered a range of human resources topics. Several of these, such as "Provide actionable and timely feedback to all employees," and "Provide relevant demographic data to panels,"[75] had also been recommended in earlier studies. Others, including "Establish clear promotion criteria from GS-15 to SIS," and "Expand the pool of nominees for promotion to SIS," reflected improvements in women's advancement at the agency. Previously, female employees had encountered significant glass ceilings at GS-8 (per FWPB in 1977) or GS-12 (per both FWPB and the Glass Ceiling Study in 1991); the DAG study's focus on GS-13 and higher is itself a statement of CIA's progress in developing better representation of women through the middle-officer ranks.

What Next?

For many fans of spy films and television, women have become the face of the CIA. The award-winning series *Alias* (ABC, 2001-2006) and *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011-present), for example, are centered on fictional female operations officers. The feature film *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) portrayed the killing of Osama bin Laden largely through the story of "Maya," a composite character based on what former DCIA Michael Hayden has called the "band of sisters" at the heart of that operation.[76] (Hayden noted that "[m]ost of the people who briefed me on Osama bin Laden were women officers of the CIA.")

While these characters hardly embody the experience of most women at CIA (or, in the cases of *Alias* and *Homeland*, of any actual employees at CIA), the representative image of a female CIA officer is far closer to reality now than at any time in the agency's history. Even though the number of women in senior agency leadership still lags overall, in 2013 two of CIA's core directorates are headed by women: Fran P. Moore at the Directorate of Intelligence, and Susan M. Gordon at the Directorate of Support (formerly Administration). A woman, Meroe Park, serves as Executive Director of CIA, responsible for day-to-day management of the agency.[77] The Directorate of Science and Technology has had at least two female Deputy Directors.[78] A woman is scheduled to become Deputy Director of the agency in the coming months, as President Obama has named Avril Haines to replace retiring DDCIA Michael Morrell. While the chief position at CIA has remained the province of men—as has leadership of the National Clandestine Service, which is often considered first-among-equals across the agency directorates—there are signs that this could change. Women currently serve as top leaders elsewhere in the U.S. intelligence community, including at the National Reconnaissance Office (Betty J. Sapp), the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (Letitia Long), and, until recently, at the Department of Homeland Security (Janet Napolitano, who left office in July 2013 to head the University of California). In 2012, Jane Harman, the former Democratic ranking member on the U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, was frequently mentioned as a possible replacement for outgoing Director of the CIA David Petraeus. Perhaps most important, the initiatives undertaken at CIA to recognize and promote its female employees have finally created a substantial group of accomplished, long-serving women leaders at the agency. Not only do these women represent the great strides made by the agency in its treatment of female employees, they also suggest the deep pool of talent that CIA failed to utilize in its early years due to sex discrimination. The documents included in the *Typist to Trailblazer* release provide ample evidence of both the agency's progress and its failings on these counts.

Note that the footnotes for this article are not included here for reasons of space. The full version, with footnotes, can be found on the *Typist to Trailblazer* Microsite: **https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/historical-collection-publications.**

Timeline

1916
Jeanette Rankin becomes the first woman to serve in the U.S. Congress when elected U.S. Representative of Montana.

1923
Alexandra Kollontai is appointed the Soviet ambassador to Sweden, becoming the first woman ambassador in modern history.

1933
Frances Perkins becomes the first woman appointed to a presidential Cabinet when President Roosevelt names her the U.S. Secretary of Labor.

1941-1945
WWII opens up a wide range of jobs to women. Seven million women enter the workforce, including two million in heavy industry.

1920
The 19th Amendment gives American women the right to vote.

1947
The Central Intelligence Agency is founded as the nation's first peacetime intelligence agency when President Harry Truman signs the National Security Act of 1947.

1939-1945
World War II

1953
The Panel on Career Service for Women (aka "The Petticoat Panel") submits their final report to the CIA Career Service Board.

1960
Sirimavo Bandaranaike is elected prime minister of Sri Lanka and becomes the first woman in history to head a government.

1963
The Equal Pay Act is passed, making it illegal to pay men more than women for doing the same job.

1958
The British House of Lords admits women as members for the first time.

1964
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, and sex.

1965
Labor laws restricting womens' work hours & conditions are repealed; jobs once available only to men are now opened to women.

1967
President Johnson's Executive Order 11375 broadens affirmative action policy of 1965 to include discrimination based on gender.

1969
Golda Meir becomes the first woman prime minister of Israel.

The Federal Women's Program is established to advise on matters affecting the employment and advancement of women. Purview is placed under each agency's Director of Equal Employment Opportunity.

1979
Margaret Thatcher is the first woman to become prime minister of Great Britain.

1966
Indira Gandhi becomes the first prime minister of India.

1982
More women than men graduate with bachelor degrees for the first time.

1987
Congress proclaims March as National Women's History Month.

1981
Sandra Day O'Connor is the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

1978
President Carter tasks all Federal agencies and departments to "initiate a comprehensive review of any regulations, guidelines, programs or policies which result in unequal treatment based on sex."

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act bans employment discrimination against pregnant women. Women cannot be fired or denied a promotion because they are or may become pregnant.

1972
DCI William Colby establishes the Women's Advisory Panel.

Title IX bans sex discrimination in schools.

1988
Benazir Bhutto becomes prime minister of Pakistan. She is the first woman leader of a Muslim country in modern history.

1990
Dr. Antonia Novello becomes the first woman (and first Latino) U.S. Surgeon General.

Women serve in combat for the first time in the Gulf War.

1993
Janet Reno is the first woman to become U.S. Attorney General.

1997
Madeleine Albright becomes first woman U.S. Secretary of State.

1992
The CIA completes the Glass Ceiling Study. In 1991, Senior Intelligence Service (SIS) women recommended the Agency "determine if career advancement barriers exist for Agency professional employees, particularly women and minorities."

1994
Aldrich Ames is arrested, thanks to a task force that was led by Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandra Grimes.

1998
The Supreme Court rules that employers are liable for sexual harassment.

1999
Nancy Ruth Mace is the first woman to graduate from the Citadel.

2006
Nancy Pelosi becomes the first woman Speaker of the House.

?
First woman to become Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

?
First woman elected President of the United States.

■ Significant dates in American Women's History

■ Significant dates in Global Women's History

■ Significant dates in Agency History

1950s Excerpts

THE PETTICOAT PANEL

A 1953 STUDY OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CIA'S CAREER SERVICE

Prologue

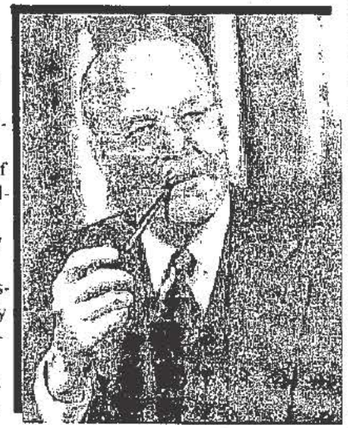
No history of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) can be considered complete without properly placing the activities studied within the context of the time. The historian must take into account, for example, that early Cold War CIA operations were a direct outcrop of the attitudes and expectations of the policy makers of the 1950s, all of whom had been tempered by the Depression and World War II. Discussion of these defining factors is always useful—no matter how outmoded some historical attitudes might appear to today's audience—because lessons learned can be extrapolated for use in the future. Thus, for example, there is merit in studying the covert operations of the early 1950s, because covert operations of today's war against terrorism had their genesis in the operations of the past. ~~(U)~~

In the same way, it is worthwhile to include in the annals of intelligence studies analyses of the changing ethos of the CIA and how this change has reflected the evolving mores of mainstream America. In recent years, emphasis has been placed upon the need for diversity in the work force. Current statistics indicate that while the optimum has yet to be reached, the ethnic and gender composition of today's CIA is far more diverse than that of the Agency in 1953. This change has been a long time coming, however, and arguably has occurred only because of federally mandated policy and legal pressure exerted by individuals who felt they were disenfranchised. Nevertheless, since the earliest days of the CIA, the organization's senior management—albeit traditionally a bastion of white males—has periodically addressed various aspects of the issue. It is worthwhile analyzing these occasional deliberations because the changing attitudes of the leadership of the CIA reflects and simultaneously influences the shifting focus of the work force itself. ~~(U)~~

The 1953 women's panel is an early, if not the first, example of this organization's efforts to analyze the female component of its work force. The panel was mandated by the newly appointed Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen W. Dulles and consequently, the role of women in CIA received the full (though somewhat fleeting) attention of the CIA leadership. The women chosen to serve on the panel were picked because they had worked for the CIA since its earliest days and thus had a good understanding of the business of intelligence. They were representatives of a relatively new phenomenon in the federal government—career women. Each had served in some capacity during World War II, that period when many American women first entered the work force. While some of the panelists had worked for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and simply transferred to the CIA when it was formed in 1947, others came from the outside civilian world. In a good reflection of the times, several of the panelists had lost their wartime jobs to returning male veterans. Rather than returning to traditional female professions, they gravitated towards the new espionage organization. In short, the panelists are excellent examples of the types of women hired by CIA at that time, a period when the ethos of the organization was first beginning to evolve. The panel's deliberations offer a fascinating window into 1953 attitudes toward women in the workplace. Although it took decades for full fruition, the seeds of today's diversity were first nurtured by this 1953 panel. ~~(U)~~

THE PETTICOAT PANEL

On May 8, 1953, shortly after Allen W. Dulles was sworn in as the fifth Director of Central Intelligence, he addressed a group of Agency personnel at the Tenth Agency Orientation Course. Pledging to do everything he could to develop CIA as a career service, Dulles said he would "devote the balance of my time to doing what I can to build up the Agency's esprit de corps, its morale, its effectiveness, and its place in the government of the United States." Following his brief introductory remarks, Dulles opened the floor, wryly noting that he had been told that much of the audience had come "to fire" questions at him. The subsequent question and answer session covered a broad range of issues, many of which are as relevant today as they were in 1953. Topics included not only queries about personnel and training matters, but also discussions on the role of the relatively new agency within the US government. Several audience members posited whether there would be a permanent need for the CIA, particularly if, as one interlocutor phrased it, "the USSR had a modified change of heart and began to behave itself." Another questioned the necessity for a separate CIA paramilitary force, while others expressed concern about the potential for the politicization of Agency analysis—Dulles stated he was adamantly opposed to the latter. During the wide-ranging discussion period, several women audience members—or "wise gals" as a senior member of management later called them—raised a series of questions about the role, if any, of women in the CIA. They asked: "(1) Why are women hired at a lower grade than men? (2) Do you think that women are given sufficient recognition in the Central Intelligence Agency? (3) And as the new Director of CIA, are you going to do something about the professional discrimination against women?" ~~(U)~~



"I think women have a very high place in this work, and if there is discrimination, we're going to see that it's stopped." — Allen W. Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence, 8 May 1953.

Dulles responded to the women by saying that he would ask the Inspector General (IG) to study their questions on the alleged gender disparities in grade levels; he would also request a report on professional discrimination against women. As for the query about the degree of recognition for women, Dulles ruefully acknowledged that he was inclined to agree that women were not sufficiently recognized, although he added: "I think women have a very high place in this work, and if there is discrimination, we're going to see that it's stopped."[1] ~~(U)~~

Thus was the impetus for the formation of the task force—subsequently known as the "The Petticoat Panel"—which produced the first-known study of the status of women in the CIA. Less than three months after the DCI's remarks, the panel of thirteen primary and nine alternate members—all women—was appointed. By November of 1953 the panel had submitted to the CIA's Career Services Board (CSB) an extensive report titled

[1] CIA Office of Training Bulletin, Number 7, 30 June 1953, Matthew Baird, Director of Training. Subject: "Remarks of Allen W. Dulles," with attachment "Remarks of Allen W. Dulles at the Tenth Agency Orientation Course," 8 May 1953. [redacted] The Bulletin stated "It is believed that Mr. Dulles' remarks and his answers to questions will be of general interest throughout the Agency and are attached hereto for the information and guidance of all concerned." ~~(U)~~

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6. ~~(U)~~

> **“Quite a few [panel members] were multi-lingual, several had doctorates and/or masters degrees, all had histories of prior employment.”**

"Career Employment of Women in the Central Intelligence Agency." The report systematically analyzed the situation within the Agency and included a statistical comparison between women professionals in the CIA and those employed by other federal agencies.[3] (C)

Formation of The Panel

It is clear from the record that it was Allen Dulles who personally mandated the IG to study the issue, perhaps—as one panel member suspected—because of the influence of his sister, Eleanor Dulles, who was then serving as an International Relations Officer at the Department of State. Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr., the CIA IG at the time (Kirkpatrick was IG from 1953 to 1962), subsequently acknowledged to the Steering Group of the CIA Career Service Board that the questions at the May orientation course were "rather critical of our efforts in that particular direction." Therefore, it was decided—after discussion with the DCI—to convene a panel of women employees. Kirkpatrick said there was an effort to identify representatives from "across the Board" although not every office was represented. The panel was charged "to study the problems of professional and clerical advancement to determine for themselves whether they believe there is any discrimination as such against women for advancing" professionally.[4] (C)

The panel was deliberately composed of women who had worked for several years in the new Agency and ranged from Grades GS-11 to GS-14 (at that time there were no female officers who had obtained the grade of GS-15 or higher). Several had been commissioned as military officers during World War II—one woman served as the WAC Staff Director for the entire Mediterranean Theater. Many had served in the precursor services of the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI) and the OSS. Most were in their 30s and 40s, although the oldest panel member was born in 1893. Clear effort was made to include representatives from the Agency's clerical corps. No woman case officer served on the panel, however, perhaps because of the rarity of such an officer. Panel members came from the northeast, south, or mid-western regions of the US. Some came from wealth, others did not: one woman's father had been a bargeman on the Ohio River while another was the daughter of a general. About half were married, some were part of a tandem couple, at least one was a single mother, and several supported aging parents, a fact that prevented them from serving overseas. Quite a few were multi-lingual, several had doctorates and/or masters degrees, and all had histories of prior employment, ranging from being a stenographer in Salinas, Kansas, to an archeologist in Greece; from a teacher in a Tennessee mountain school, to a representative in the Vermont State Assembly.[5] (S)

[3] The official title of the panel was "Career Service Board Panel on Women in CIA." See Memorandum, Dorothy Knoelk, Chairman of the Women's Panel to The Women's Panel, Subject: "Miscellaneous Information," 17 August 1953, [redacted] (C). However, members of the Panel referred to it as the Petticoat Panel. See Memorandum, Dorothy Knoelk to Petticoat Panel, Subject: "Other significant findings on the subject of women's status," 20 April 1954, [redacted] (C); and Mary Hutchison, interviews by [redacted], tape recording, Washington, DC, 6 August 2002 (C), and 13 November 2002 (U) [hereafter cited as Hutchison Interview].

[4] Hutchison Interview, Washington, DC, 13 November 2002 (U). William X. Slany, Editor in Chief, "Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, Volume VII, Germany and Austria", Part 1 (Washington, US Government Printing Office, 1986), p. xiv. (U). "Transcript of Steering Group, CIA Career Service Board, 10 August 1953," [redacted] (C). See also "Transcript of Steering Group, CIA Career Service Board, 10 August 1953," p. 1 and Minutes, "CIA Career Service Board Meeting, 27 July 1953," [redacted] (C)

[5] See Appendix A for specifics on individual panel members as gathered from their personnel files. (U)

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Security Information

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Career Opportunities for Women

In order to increase career opportunities for women in the Agency it is recommended:

1. That the DCI issue a policy statement to encourage maximum utilisation of women in the Agency.

2. That the DDA establish a procedure for

a. The review of all formal and informal recruitment requests which state that male applicants are desired, and

b. Corrective action when the preference is not justified.

3. That Agency officials be encouraged to consider more women for positions in administrative support, analysis, liaison, training, legal work, operations, and translation.

4. That more opportunity be given to qualified women to advance into positions of executive responsibility at all grade levels.

5. That a full-time counsellor be assigned to the Interim Assignment Branch in the Personnel Office.

6. That special attention be given the clerical personnel by the appointment of a qualified person in each major component to deal with problems of clerical personnel.

7. That supervisors provide continuous orientation to employees at the section or unit level, particularly for the clerical personnel.

8. That career opportunities for clerical personnel be explored and publicized and that a member of each career service board be designated to give special attention to career planning for clerical personnel.

9. That supervisory training be required for all supervisors towards improvement of management and morale in the Agency.

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1970s Excerpts

19 December 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Meeting with Department of Justice Task Force on Sex Discrimination

1. (U) The President has charged the Attorney General with reviewing all federal laws, regulations and policies for sex discrimination. To carry out these responsibilities, a special Task Force on Sex Discrimination has been formed in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice for a period of two years.

2. (U) As the CIA representative to this task force, I met on 28 October with two members of this group at the Department of Justice, attorneys Susan Cornelius and Stewart B. Oneglia, the Task Force Director. They explained the requirements being levied on each Federal agency, including CIA. Each Agency is to review the U.S. Code for laws pertaining to its operation, or the programs for which it is responsible. The objective is to identify those which have a disparate sex impact and to draft changes. The next step is to review Agency policies, regulations and guidelines which affect employees or prospective employees. I explained that legislation pertaining to this Agency is minimal and that we have no programs involving the general public.

3. (U) Specific points which the Task Force raised concerning CIA were:

a. Personnel. Since we do not come under the Civil Service Commission, our regulations and policies on personnel areas should be carefully reviewed - including recruiting, selection, testing, (are guidelines published, is a test score cut-off utilized?) promotions, and other action.

b. Security. All policies affecting employment. Are these policies written? How are they applied? What is the record over the years for actions taken against men vs women, for both employees and prospective employees.

c. Spouses. Do policies exist affecting the employment of spouses overseas?

d. Occupations. Are there any job categories prohibited to women?

e. Simplification of Agency Regulations. Coordinate these efforts with anyone in this Agency working under Executive Order 11030 (5 Oct), Improving Regulatory Practices.

f. Training. Do any policies or guidelines on training adversely affect women?

4. (U) The normal procedure is for the Task Force to review some of these regulations. I raised the issue that some of our material is classified and that this procedure could cause a problem. The initial agreement then reached was that if CIA shows a "good faith effort" to carry out the project, the Task Force will not pursue a review at this time. They asked for periodic reports on our activities and progress, citing examples of specific changes which have been made. Should they discern problem areas, they reserve the right to become more involved.

5. (U) The first report to the Task Force is due in December and is to address how the Agency plans to approach this project (the mechanics, time frame, etc.). It is also to include statistics on the status of women in CIA. They agreed to abide by our agreement with the CSC in that when citing personnel statistics we can provide percentages only and not actual numbers for security reasons. They also requested statistics on our record of converting clericals to professionals in Upward Mobility.

6. (U) [redacted] in the Office of General Counsel was unable to attend this meeting but was informed of the implications.

7. (U) On 7 December, [redacted], Upward Mobility Coordinator, OEEO and I briefed the Task Force on Upward Mobility Programs in the Agency.

Edith M. Schneider

Edith M. Schneider
Deputy Director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity
and Federal Women's Program Coordinator

1980s Excerpts

~~ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY~~

26 March 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Thomas B. Cormack
Executive Secretary

FROM: [redacted] Knapp
Deputy Chief, History Staff

REFERENCE: Executive Director's Memo of 15 March

SUBJECT: Career Opportunity for Women

1. One contributing cause of the small percentage of women in senior, and specifically supergrade, positions in the Agency is the entrenched image of male, action-oriented leadership. Career panels, engaged in what is essentially a co-option process, tend not to consider adequately the assets and insights that other types of people might bring to the top levels of Agency management.

2. The ultimate route to achieving a proportionate share of responsibility for women lies in an assignment process which will give women throughout their careers the same kind of opportunity to demonstate ability, gain experience, and win peer acceptance that has been the basis of the male career ladder. Progress is being made in this area, but it remains a long-term solution that does not address the current problem of image discrimination.

3. The record established in the Agency by women who have pioneered in positions previously reserved for males is already sufficient to demonstrate -- contrary to long-held views -- that competent female intelligence officers can command the respect of subordinates, work under difficult conditions, establish rapport with agents and liaison counterparts, handle complex technology, etc. Even so, more women who have won recognition and promotion have been in the fields of research and analysis where their contributions are tangible -- and hence more clearly competitive -- than in fields where evaluations have to be based on intangibles.

4. The suggestion that emerges from the above arguments is that a specific effort be made, when supergrades are being chosen or other personnel decisions at senior levels are being made, to stimulate awareness that simply reproducing the same kind of leadership will have the effect of excluding women, depriving CIA of the full use of its available talent, and perhaps cutting off constructive new ideas.

[redacted]

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~~ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY~~

1990s Excerpts

~~Official Use Only~~

Background

In March 1991 the Director of Central Intelligence approved a recommendation by SIS women that the CIA conduct a study to determine if career advancement barriers exist for Agency professional employees, particularly women and minorities. Such artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent minorities and women from advancing into middle- and upper-level positions are commonly called a "glass ceiling."

The CIA contracted with Professional Resources, Inc. and Hubbard and Revo-Cohen, Inc. to conduct the study. The Office of Personnel and the Office of Information Resources provided quantitative analyses of Agency demographic data. The Office of Medical Services provided technical advice and support throughout the study, and the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity managed the project under the guidance of the Deputy Director for Planning and Coordination.

Systemic Barriers to Success

The contractors identified five systemic glass ceiling barriers that prevent employees—particularly women and minorities—from achieving the model for success: less prestigious or less visible assignments, lack of feedback and communication, stereotyping, adverse work environment, and lack of work and family policies. These barriers reflect findings in focus group discussions, interviews, and the survey; the findings are supported, wherever possible, by the quantitative data from Agency personnel databases. The barriers are consistent across Directorates. The contractors believe that these barriers keep women and minorities from competing on an equal level with white men for advancement to senior levels at the Agency.

Assignments. Throughout the Agency there is a strong perception that the "right" assignments—line management positions or high-visibility, overseas, or rotational assignments—potentially make or break a career. White males traditionally have been given the career-making assignments in the Agency.

The top 11 Agency executives noted that assignment to line management was the critical turning point in a typical career. Repeated assignments to staff jobs were described as "death on wheels" for women and minorities. It was also mentioned by the top 11 that women and minorities were not given opportunities for key line assignments early in their careers that would position them for good assignments later in their careers. They indicated that one possible reason for this is that women and minorities may suffer from "risk aversion"—a reluctance to try new and different tasks or jobs. It may be, however, that the organization is also suffering from risk aversion—that is, managers might be reluctant to promote women or minorities for fear that the person might fail or not do as well in the new endeavor.

When asked to identify their first important assignment, SIS employees indicated that these included both high visibility and responsibility.

~~Official Use Only~~

White women in the SIS talked about their important assignments as "stretch" assignments, which had enabled them to establish a professional reputation and led to subsequent important assignments. SIS employees also talked about the importance of being picked for a high visibility/high responsibility job. When asked what advice they would give to a younger manager about succeeding at the Agency, all SIS employees agreed that substantive expertise, interpersonal skills, and developing networks are critical to getting key assignments.

Focus groups were asked if certain assignments were critical to career success. Out of all 53 focus groups, 35 percent cited line management as a critical assignment; 20 percent, high visibility assignments; 16 percent, overseas assignments; 16 percent, "hot" assignments; 16 percent, special assignments; and 15 percent, rotational assignments. Focus group and interview data also indicated that women might not be selected for certain assignments because of the perception that family responsibilities could interfere with their commitment to full-time work. This perception appeared to be true for women whether or not they were married or had children.

White females stressed the belief that men generally get better assignments than women and agreed with Hispanic and Asian Pacific American respondents that assignments for ethnic minorities are typically limited to specific geographic locations. The primary complaint among Hispanic respondents was that "Hispanics always get assigned to Latin America," and Asian Pacific Americans noted that they typically were given Asian-related assignments such as translation. Black males felt that they were held to a different standard in the assignment process and that criteria for assignment differed according to race. In general, white women in the DO felt that they did not get the "good" assignments.

2000s Excerpts

Four Senior Intelligence Service Officers reflect on their careers in the Directorate of Operations (now the National Clandestine Service). They offer some insight on the obstacles they faced, the personal sacrifices they made, and the "lessons learned" they give to younger generations of intelligence officers.

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Divine Secrets of the RYBAT Sisterhood: Four Senior Women of the Directorate of Operations Discuss Their Careers

Susan, moderator: I want you to think back to your first field experiences and think about what you remember about that. What are some of those early field memories you have?

Patty: It wasn't just a person, though; it really was a system. When I graduated from the farm—and I did very well at the farm, but we had a very small class. When we came back up to headquarters we were told to go around and see the various PEMS (Personnel and Evaluation Management Staff) officers. So I went around and I went over to NE division, and went to the PEMS officer and he said to me, "What are you doing here, Patty?" I said, "I thought it was pretty obvious: I'm looking for a job." And he said, with some horror, "Oh, no, we don't take women as case officers." There was some interesting things that went on in your career. I grew up in the Midwest in a Catholic background where you don't be proud, you don't take pride. But then my favorite saying is from Golda Meir: "Don't be humble, you're not that great." The fact is, none of us are sitting here because we didn't work hard and we didn't look for opportunity, because they weren't often handed to us as a woman. And to take sacrifices and to take risks and to step out of the box and to do all those things. We took them.

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Carla: I think the key was we took [those sacrifices]. I often tell the younger officers, male and female, it's not true that opportunity only knocks once, but that particular opportunity only knocks once. And you have to make a conscious decision—particularly women—okay, here's your chance. I can tell you, just having left Africa division, we offered lots of women senior assignments: COS jobs that would get them in line to come back and be a COPS (Chief of Operations) or a Deputy or even a Division Chief, whatever. And they turned them down for family reasons, personal reasons, whatever. That's fine, if that's a personal choice, but then you have to be comfortable with that decision. I think it's just critical that you take advantage of the opportunities if you're able to.

Susie: When I came back from my first assignment, I was older. I was 42 years old and, again, in NE, much to everybody's surprise, they called me in and said, "You've had only one tour, however, we're going to offer you [a] Chief of Station job." That, for NE, is very unusual for a female and this was in 1990. It was a heart-wrenching decision: do I go, or have I just come back and have my whole family together? A lot of family discussions. My husband said, you have got to take it because if you don't you will blame me for the rest of your life for not having—and it was true, absolutely true. So I took the job, second tour, Chief of Station [redacted] I did very well. Quite frankly, if I had not taken that job, I don't think I'd be sitting here [as a SIS]. I really don't. And, again, NE came through, and they said, we realize we are breaking up the family; every three months, every four months, we will bring you back for different conferences. So, again, it was NE that offered that position and that possibility.

Meredith: My point is, what people don't realize often is [that] it is in those tours and in those experiences that not only do you grow and you accomplish mission, but they're the most fun. That's where you learn your trade, that's where you learn all of that. So, step up to those very hard assignments and make sure that your track record includes that because that's where you're going to hit the mission, and that's what also is going to bring you the visibility if indeed you want to do that. The second thing I would say—I mentioned this before, but this is one of the biggest changes that I have seen in my career here—is more than camaraderie and collegiality, the absolute support and dependence women get from other women. It must, must, must continue to take place. It's a cultural change as well. I think during the 60s and 70s and early 80s, too, in the American culture, it was women trying to get ahead and so they would step over each other. We learned in the 80s that we needed to share experiences and consequently we became very close friends personally—not just in the office, but outside of that. I think we really are trying to instill that also in CSTs as we raise them in, I hope, the divisions we work in. But it is such a key thing. I think it's not—yes, among women, but also everybody—the networking and the support, competing with each other in terms of, "Let me do you in. It's not enough that I succeed but that my friends fail also." That used to be kind of the watchword for the DO. It isn't anymore, thank goodness.

Patty: That's been one of the biggest changes across the board.

Meredith: I really see this as a change. The other thing is, whether it's women and men, whether it's senior and less-than-senior officers, I hope we are also moving away from this "us versus them" mentality, perspective on things, and moving more toward mission and what we have to do corporately, whether you're a GS-9—nobody's a GS-9 anymore—or an SIS, what we have to do corporately to achieve that mission. That's why we're here.

Excerpts

"At CIA, not maximizing women's talents and expertise directly and negatively impacts the mission."

INTRODUCTION

In April 2012, then-Director David H. Petraeus, concerned by the unusually low percentage of women promoted to the Senior Intelligence Service (SIS) in 2012, commissioned an advisory group to examine why more women at CIA—from the GS-13 level and above—were not achieving promotions and positions of greater responsibility. Director Petraeus asked Madeleine Albright, the former Secretary of State and member of the D/CIA's External Advisory Board (EAB), to guide a group of CIA officers representing the four directorates, as well as the Director's Area, in this effort. Five other senior external advisors joined the effort: the 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen; former Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Fran Townsend; former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy; former CIA Deputy Director John McLaughlin; and former National Clandestine Service Deputy Director Justin Jackson. Each brought previous experience in implementing large personnel initiatives; four serve as members of the EAB; and two brought over a half-century of combined experience in CIA leadership to the group.

DAG Approach & Methodology

The Director's Advisory Group (DAG) on Women in Leadership[a] undertook a research-driven approach to address this problem set and considered three organizational areas associated with "system"—promotions, assignments, and career development—and one with "self"—choices made by the individual. The DAG's research efforts included an Agency-wide survey, more than three dozen focus groups, and interviews with SIS officers. The DAG also conducted a thorough review of prior Agency studies and relevant academic and business literature. The DAG also intentionally sought out the views of minority women. The DAG collected their views and perceptions through focus groups, engagements with employee resource groups, and analysis of survey responses of minority and non-minority women.

Mission Imperative

The percentage of female college graduates in the United States (58 percent)[3] is growing. CIA will lose out in the competition for talent if it is unable to attract, develop, and retain this critical talent pool. Additionally, many studies have highlighted the positive impact on organizational performance of having

[a] The DAG is composed of a diverse and dynamic cross-Agency group of managers, officers, and subject-matter experts (SME)–both male and female, both minority and non-minority. The DAG Steering Group established both the direction and the framework for this study, with the input of the six Senior Advisors. Members of the DAG Working Group participated in one of four Action Teams (Assignments, Career Development, Choices, and Promotions), assisted with focus groups and interviews, attended meetings, provided briefings, and contributed cogent and compelling insights about today's workforce.

a diverse leadership cadre. As noted in an extensive study in 2008 by McKinsey & Company, companies with three or more women on their senior management teams scored higher on nine important dimensions of organization—from leadership to accountability, from motivation to innovation—than those with no senior-level women.[4] At CIA, not maximizing women's talents and expertise directly and negatively impacts the mission. Increased flexibility and diversity cannot and should not be seen as inhibitors to the mission, but rather as the keys to attracting and retaining a dedicated and diverse workforce capable of meeting our increasingly complex and changing mission.

Women in CIA Today

Women make up 46 percent of CIA's workforce, up from 38 percent in 1980. Female representation at the GS-13 to GS-15 levels has increased from 9 percent to 44 percent over the same period of time.[5] CIA compares well against our Intelligence Community (IC) counterparts and private industry. As of October 2012, females constituted 31 percent of the Agency's SIS officers.[6] This percentage is proportionally higher than at other IC agencies, which have a combined average of 28.8 percent females in their senior executive ranks.[7] In 2011, women were 14.1 percent of Fortune 500 executive officers.[8]

While these overall statistics show real progress, the leadership pipeline for women at CIA narrows above the GS-13 level for most Directorates.[9] Agency-wide, female officers account for 43 percent of GS-14s and 37 percent of GS-15s.[10] The 2012 SIS promotion process resulted in 19 percent female promotions to SIS—a concerning difference from the 30 percent-or-higher average of female promotions since 2007. If the 2012 outcome were to be repeated in the coming years, such a trend would lead to diminishing representation of women at the senior ranks.

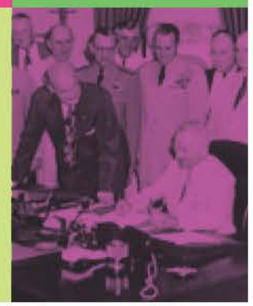
[The report] the DAG members came up with isn't a generic re-telling of where the Agency is, or just another study to put on the shelf…The most important point I want to make here is that the recommendations will benefits not just women of our workforce, but the entire workforce. These recommendations are about developing and managing all of our people in a way that optimizes talent.

– DCIA John Brennan

FIGURE 1:
DAG Recommendations

	Recommendations	Foster Intentional Development	Value Diverse Paths	Increase Workplace Flexibility
✔	1. Establish clear promotion criteria from GS-15 to SIS	●		
✔	2. Expand the pool of nominees for promotion to SIS		●	
	3. Provide relevant demographic data to panels	●	●	
	4. Establish equity assurance representative role on panels		●	
	5. Reduce and streamline career development tools	●		
	6. Create on-ramping program	●	●	●
	7. Provide actionable and timely feedback to all employees	●	●	
	8. Develop future leaders	●	●	
	9. Unlock talent through workplace flexibility			●
	10. Promote sponsorship	●		

The entire workforce will benefit as CIA continues to check off each recommendation and revalidates them over time.



CIA Trailblazer Award

The CIA Trailblazer Award was established as part of the celebration of the Agency's 50th anniversary. During the ceremony on 18 September 1997, DCIA George Tenet described the Trailblazers as officers who, by their actions, example, and innovations or initiative, have taken the CIA in important new directions and helped shape the Agency's history. DCIA Michael Hayden held a CIA Trailblazers ceremony in 2007 for the 60th anniversary, and announced that one or two new Trailblazers would be honored each following year as part of the Agency's annual birthday celebration.

CIA Trailblazer Award

The following women are among the officers who have received this honor:

Helene Boatner
Patricia L. Brannen
Janet V. Dorigan
Agnes D. Greene
Patsy Hallums
Bonnie Hershberg
Eloise R. Page
Carol A. Roehl
Betty Crawford Villemarette

The Collection:

The Historical Review Program and the Information Review Division of the Central Intelligence Agency's Information Management Services has reviewed, redacted, and released this collection of documents related to the evolving view of women in the CIA, ranging from the 1950s to the 2010s. The collection contains more than 100 documents and over 1,200 pages of material, most of them being released for the first time. The Typist to Trailblazer documents and the other Historical Review Program declassified collections can be accessed at **https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/historical-collection-publications**.

The document collection is ordered chronologically, with undated documents located at the bottom of the list. Documents include memos, performance evaluations, and studies and reports on workforce diversity and career opportunity. Those documents marked with an asterisk (*) denote collection highlights. A few photos, some of which are already available from the CIA's public website, can be found at the bottom of the document list.

The microsite also contains an annotated bibliography and a PDF of this booklet.

Agency Disclaimer





HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

The Historical Review Program—part of CIA Information Management Services—identifies, collects, and produces historically significant collections of declassified documents.

These collections, centered on a theme or event, are supplemented with supporting analysis, essays, and photographs, showcased in this booklet. Additional booklets are available for purchase through the Government Printing Office at **https://bookstore.gpo.gov/catalog/1581**. Each collection is also highlighted through an accompanying microsite the includes: video, audio, additional photographs, and links to declassified documents. These microsites can be found at **https://foia.cia.gov**.

All of our Historical Collections are available on the CIA Library Publication page located at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/historical-collection-publications.