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## The Construction of Secret Intelligence as a Masculine Profession

**Abstract:** The vast majority of intelligence history focuses on operations and executive decisionmaking rather than attending to, among other topics, analytical work or day-to-day organizational activities in the full (hierarchical) breadth of agencies. Especially in the studies on the Cold War period, one of the major implications of this research focus is that women, in so far as they are not part of top leadership or critical to operations, are excluded from analysis. This article argues that, during the Cold War period, security and intelligence services were constructed as a masculine profession. The article advances three professional standards that were constructed as masculine: a sense of responsibility, female support, and full-time availability. Empirically, this research focuses on the Dutch Security Service (in-depth interviews and archival research).

*This is just a male-dominated environment. The nature of the work, I guess.*<sup>1</sup>

For decades, the character who played the head of the Secret Intelligence Service in the James Bond films, M., was a man, and Miss Money Penny was

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the only woman within MI6. The American film industry in the 1950s, including earlier films by Hitchcock, portrayed a similar image of a male-dominated intelligence environment.<sup>2</sup> In close collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the carefully crafted image of intelligence as a professional environment centered on intelligence officers as “morally irreproachable, authoritative, white, male, and heteronormative” figures.<sup>3</sup> These men lead adventurous and narcissistic lives, “focused on high consumerism and casual sexual conquest.” By contrast, in espionage fiction throughout the Cold War period, women occupied secondary, superficial, or negative positions.<sup>4</sup> The 1990s were a turning point for both intelligence fiction and reality. In 1995, in the James Bond films, M. became a woman, portrayed by Judi Dench. And in the forthcoming James Bond film, *No Time to Die*, James Bond will retire, and a woman will be assigned his 007 number, effectively taking over his role. As such, the professional environment of secret intelligence, as portrayed in the James Bond films, has become less masculine: key positions and professional standards in the agency are more diverse regarding gender. During the same period, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) leadership made similar attempts to diversify its workforce in higher hierarchical ranks, notably via its “Glass Ceiling Study” in 1992.<sup>5</sup>

While gender diversity may be a remarkable change to the average James Bond film watcher and it may not be a completely novel thought in the American Intelligence Community, the topic of gender has received strikingly little attention in the historical, academic literature on intelligence. Most research focuses on operations and executive decisionmaking in the Anglo-Saxon world rather than attending to, among other topics, the rest of the organizational activities in the full (hierarchical) breadth of agencies.<sup>6</sup> Especially in research on the Cold War period, one of the major implications of this focus is that women, in so far as they are not part of top leadership or critical to operations, are excluded from analysis. Often, the women who appear in scholarly research on intelligence are recruited agents (spies), usually described as objects of desire, rather than service personnel.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the omnipresence of men within the services, considered as natural, is not questioned, nor a topic of analysis that merits an evaluation of cause and consequence. As such, Shahan observes, “[G]ender is both an ever present and missing aspect of intelligence studies.”<sup>8</sup>

During the Cold War, professional standards in secret intelligence were constructed as masculine, suggesting that a specific ideal type of man was the best fit for work in intelligence. The construction of these so-called masculinities occurs in day-to-day interactions between men and women, and among themselves, on the work floor. They can be observed in particular tacit or well-considered actions, in writing or in informal norms and procedures. This restricted the positions of women and men who did not abide to this dominant image of masculinity.

Empirically, this research relies on original in-depth interviews with former personnel from the Dutch Security Service (DSS) and archival research in the service's internal staff magazine. It unravels debates within the DSS across different levels of the organizational hierarchy on the topic of gender diversity, between the 1960s and 1990s. These debates consist of a dialogue between those who defended intelligence as a typically masculine profession and those who opposed this view. The tenacious construction of intelligence as a masculine profession contributed to restricting women to specific departments and sections of the service, such as administration, counterintelligence, and surveillance, while excluding them from others, such as political extremism.

This article builds on a specific body of literature in intelligence studies and advances a conceptual framework that explains how professional standards in intelligence and security services were constructed as masculine. The methodological section addresses the empirical data collection. The empirical analysis of this article discerns three professional standards that were constructed as masculine, and how a dialogue on this topic unfolded between men and women within the DSS.

## SCHOLARLY RELEVANCE

By singling out the construction of gender identities in relation to professional standards in intelligence, this article builds on a recent and exciting body of literature that shifts research interests from operational processes to people, social and organizational identities, and organizational cultures in intelligence.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, this article further substantiates a line of argument in the field of critical intelligence studies that combines gender studies with intelligence studies, emphasizing diversity and inclusion in intelligence.<sup>10</sup> As a forerunner to this specific body of literature, various publications have singled out women spies during the two world wars.<sup>11</sup> Noteworthy is the work of Tammy Proctor, who relates cultural images of the woman spy with the realities of women working in intelligence during World War I, both inside the services and recruited by the services as agents (spies).<sup>12</sup> Only a handful of publications have singled out gender and, more broadly, diversity within intelligence and security services, clearly distinguishing between those who work within the services and those who are recruited by the services. The work of Jess Shahan and Damien Van Puyvelde focuses exclusively on women (and ethnic and racial minorities) in the services. Shahan uses women's narratives in British and American intelligence to explain how gender influences career progression and experiences in intelligence; for instance, by restricting women to specific types of work.<sup>13</sup> Innovatively, her work takes stock of individual experiences and memories of women to analyze the organizational cultures that shaped their

professional opportunities. Van Puyvelde gives important insights into the organizational culture of the CIA, by outlining how the agency has struggled with the position of women and black employees since its foundation in 1947.<sup>14</sup> These publications construct more humane and convincing images of the social fabric that shapes intelligence and security services. By analyzing the construction of masculine professional standards in intelligence, this article demonstrates how gendered professional standards impact both men and women. This theoretical approach provides a useful basis to think about the impact of specific masculine professional standards on a variety of men, although the available empirical material for this research is mostly on women within the DSS.

### **GENDER IDENTITIES AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

Gender theory offers important tools to better understand the construction of gender identities in professional environments and their relation to professional standards. While sex differences in psychological traits are nonexistent or minor, their social implications—based on the cultural belief in psychological difference—are major. In professional environments such social implications may include unequal responsibilities, unequal incomes, and the restriction or concentration of men or women to specific positions.<sup>15</sup> Gender theory can explain the gendered construction of professional standards, how they normalize and reinforce themselves and, consequently, why the pace of social change is generally slow in this area.

The process through which minor sex differences result in major social gender differences is, according to Connell, “a reproductive arena.”<sup>16</sup> Categorizing individuals as either men or women produces these same categories: individuals will feel as either “men” or “women,” they will build their identities on these notions, and they will, in turn, reinforce received notions of masculinity and femininity. As such, the construction of gender identities is a performative act; repetition materializes its effect, which consists of the normalization and naturalization of the essence of a specific gender. Widespread, repeated expectations of gender coherence produce these same genders. Judith Butler argues that people are motivated to behave and feel in accordance with what is expected of them because, as such, they live up to a coherent and convincing gendered self that is understood and appreciated by others. These are “the bodies that matter,” Butler argues, of which the performativity of gender consists.<sup>17</sup>

Coherent notions of what constitutes a “man” and a “woman,” based on various attributed “male” and “female” characteristics, potentially overshadows other individual personality traits, such as cultural, political, and social constituents. Consequently, the process of attributing various “male” and “female” characteristics to individuals simplifies the complexity

of an individual's identity and, in professional environments, contributes to restricting an individual's potential to what supposedly befits his or her determined gender: individuals are reduced to their gender.<sup>18</sup> For instance, gender-biased assumptions may consist of the belief that women are less suited for management positions than men. Consequently, in certain professional contexts they are overrepresented in administrative positions.<sup>19</sup> Constructions of gender coherence are usually empirically viable, although theoretically incoherent, according to Butler, when they conform to a binary understanding of gender that restricts gender to men and women only, and to the hierarchical relations between men and women.

The gendered construction of professional standards is from the perspective of masculinity. Masculinity is part of gender theory because it rejects the assumption of predetermined and innate male and female behavior and explains how gender is constructed by means of conformity to cultural norms.<sup>20</sup> It explains the process by which people, both men and women, construct specific personality traits as masculine. This article focuses on the plausible empirical mechanisms that underlie three important conceptual arguments on which the process of masculinity construction is based. First, masculinity is not just a personal idea, but a socially constructed public convention, embedded in institutions, such as families, schools, and (professional) organizations.<sup>21</sup> Second, masculinity has a relational character. It is the product of a dialogue between men and women, and masculinity exists only in relation to its supposed opposite, femininity.<sup>22</sup> This dialogue produces multiple masculinities, which may exist next to each other<sup>23</sup> or which may have one type of masculinity that dominates others (hegemonic masculinity).<sup>24</sup> Finally, masculinity has a dynamic character. It is subject to historical change prompted by, for instance, social movements or organizational leadership.

These three conceptual arguments provide focus to the empirical analysis in this article. The analysis centers on the arguments made within actual historical circumstances that contributed to the survival of a specific type of masculinity in the DSS, built on three characteristics: a sense of responsibility, the need of female support, and full-time availability.

## **HISTORICAL SOURCES**

The extent of empirical historical research—the extent to which we can reach into the past—is shaped by the historical primary sources. This article focuses on sources that prioritize individual narratives, either oral or written ones, rather than official sources that are unlikely to explicitly attend to the topic of gender in the organizational culture. The two main types of historical sources are oral history interviews and the personnel magazine of the DSS. In contrast to some of the theory discussed, this article does not engage with how the historical actors related to their assigned gender emotionally and personally,

or allow for effective and meaningful nonbinary gender identification. As such, inevitably it partly reproduces the binary categories that my historical actors advanced, and it gives a simplified impression of the gender identities that have existed in the agency. This directly results from the sources potentially available, or any other historical source for that matter. Few would effectively enlighten us on identifications that were straightforwardly “unthinkable,” let alone discussable, in these historical circumstances. However, while the available empirical data do not give us access to the gender identities of our historical actors, they give us plenty of information on how gender was constructed within the agency and how this construction was intertwined with the professional standards of the agency. Consequently, my empirical focus is on the use of language and the exchange of arguments.

The most relevant historical source is the internal personnel magazine of the agency, *het Spionnetje* [*The Little Spy*]. Its relevance is based on its strikingly informal character until the 1990s, when it became more formal and presumably more controlled. The magazine contained a great amount of discussions between management and staff, and between employees themselves, often signed or, when opposition was fierce, sometimes anonymously. A recurring discussion related to the position of women in the agency, to which contributed both men and women, management and staff. A most valuable source on the position of women in the DSS is a 1990 internal report on the topic, containing quantitative material on gender distribution in various departments and sections and changes over time. However, these available quantitative data are fragmented, not longitudinal. Therefore, observations may include the attributions “many” or “some” when this corresponds to the findings in the personnel magazine and the interviews.

The second historical source consists of 37 recorded and transcribed interviews. The author conducted them in 2010 in the framework of a sociocultural history of the agency, which addressed gender as one of the many constituents of the organizational culture of the agency. While these interviews addressed some memories on the role of gender in the agency, most interviewees did not have specific recollections on the topic and gave short, factual, sometimes contradictory answers to my questions. This little yield from the oral history interviews does not correspond with the recurring discussions in the personnel magazine. References in this article to the empirical material from the anonymized oral history interviews mention a book of the author on the sociocultural history of the DSS, published in 2012, which includes the analysis of this material. References to the empirical data from the personnel magazine indicate the date and/or edition of the magazine. Both the transcribed oral history interviews and the personnel magazine are in the currently classified archive of the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service.

## WHERE WERE THE WOMEN AND MEN IN THE SECURITY SERVICE?

Based on the theoretical literature, this article argues that the specific positions of women and men in the DSS was both the cause and result of the construction of intelligence as a masculine profession. Mainly based on the quantitative data from the 1990 internal report on women in the DSS, it is possible to paint a picture of where women and men in the DSS worked.

Women and men were unevenly distributed in the DSS, both horizontally over various departments and sections, and vertically over hierarchical ranks. To a certain extent, this is little surprising in the related historical and geographical context, in which women were relative newcomers to the government labor market. For instance, until 1955, women employees in The Netherlands were forced to resign upon their marriage and, up until the present day, a disproportionately large percentage of women employees in The Netherlands work part time.<sup>25</sup> In the 1970s, more women in the Dutch labor market continued working until the birth of their first child, and in the 1980s more women continued their employment until after their first child's birth.<sup>26</sup> To meet the fast turnover of women employees, the DSS made several attempts to create a daycare center for women employees' children. However, these attempts failed in 1965, again in 1973, and finally came to nothing. Consequently, young, married women without children were considered a liability when applying to a position at the DSS. In 1990, the DSS had considerably fewer women (27.3%) than its (parent), the Ministry of the Interior (40%),<sup>27</sup> while its percentage of women was in line with the general Dutch labor market (27.4%).<sup>28</sup>

In the DSS, women, who amounted to 39% of the workforce in the DSS, were overrepresented in the administrative sections, while they were nearly absent in higher hierarchical positions and many operational functions. This corresponds to the situation of women in the CIA who, in the early 1990s, constituted nearly 40% of CIA personnel while holding 10% of senior positions.<sup>29</sup> The large administrative section Afdeling Centrale Documentatie (ACD; Central Documentation Section) had a relatively large proportion of female staff, among whom a disproportionately large percentage originated from the former Dutch East Indies. In 1967, the head of the section ACD explained that "work at the section ACD is specifically female in nature. It consists of producing punch cards, punching and check-punching. It consists of the production of punch concepts, coding, administrating, etc. Personally, I cannot imagine any male employee working at our section, although men are most welcome."<sup>30</sup>

The section EJ, which was responsible for translation and audio work, also attracted women. These administrative tasks belonged to the lower echelons of the organization, while women were "a rarity" higher up the hierarchy.<sup>31</sup> Three notable exceptions were the deputy head of direction C for



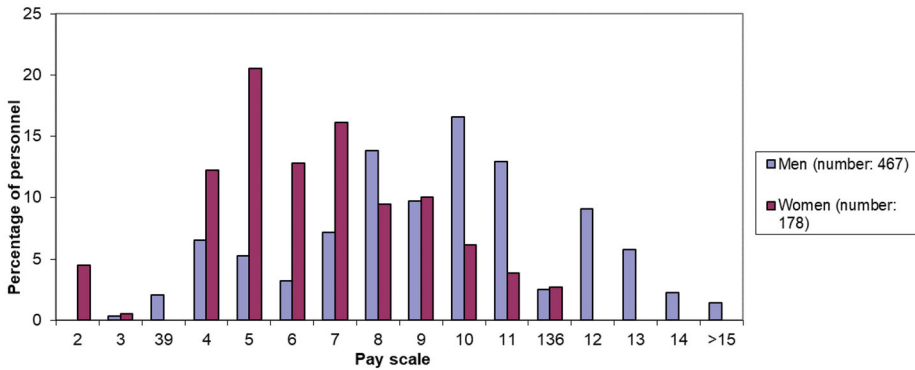


Figure 1. Comparison of men and women by pay scale.

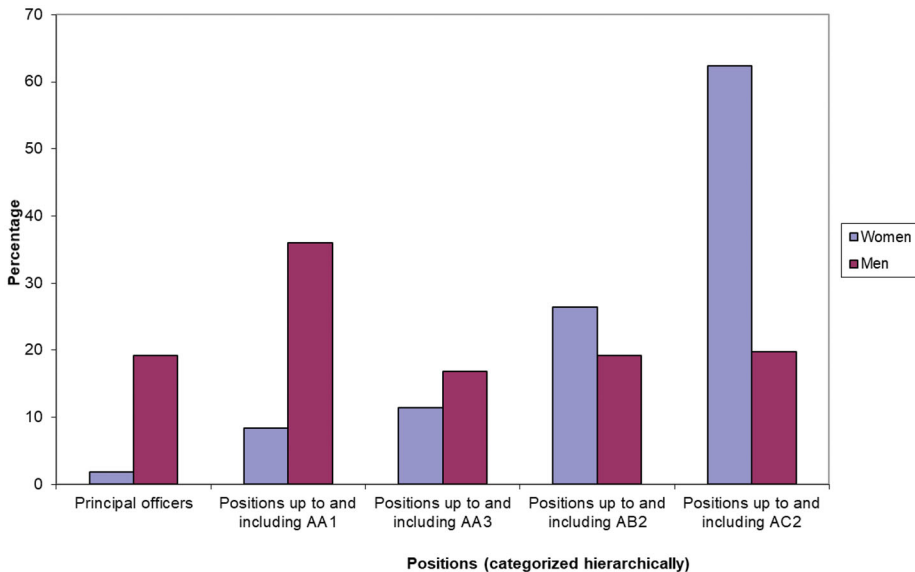


Figure 2. Comparison of men and women by hierarchical level.

Counterespionage and the heads of the sections East German and Russian counterespionage, who were both women during a certain period.<sup>32</sup> A comparison between the distribution of men and women by pay scale and hierarchical level in 1977 and 1990 shows in more detail that there was little change over this period (see Figures 1 and 2).

Operational functions—“the rough outside work”—also attracted few women. It is important to note that operational work had a higher professional status than all other positions in the DSS: it was considered the hard core of the DSS. The operational directions B (for political extremism) and C (for counterespionage) competed for which direction was the most important one for the DSS.<sup>33</sup> Operational work included, for instance,

running agents, countering foreign espionage, speaking with people for security vetting and clearance procedures, and surveillance.<sup>34</sup>

The surveillance team had its first female member in 1952 already, although she encountered some initial obstacles related to her gender that prevented her, for a while, from doing the job she was supposed to do.<sup>35</sup> At the end of the 1970s, about half the surveillance team consisted of women, which related to clear operational benefits: a man and woman waiting in a car attracted less public attention than two waiting men, and gender diversity in the team allowed it to tail individuals inconspicuously in all kinds of places. For instance, “[I]f someone bursts into a lingerie shop, it would be tricky to go after him or her as a guy alone.”<sup>36</sup> Another operational function—running agents—remained entirely male until the first woman appeared in 1989. And the section that was responsible for security vetting and clearance procedures had its first two female interrogators, meaning those who did outside operational work, in 1978.<sup>37</sup> The specific gender distribution within the DSS shows that a great amount of the operational work was male-dominated. The following analysis explains how this gender distribution in the DSS was related to the construction of three masculine professional standards.

### MASCULINE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The personnel magazine and, to a lesser extent, the oral history interviews, reveal several professional standards that were specifically needed for working with the Dutch Security Service. These were constructed as masculine in their opposition to what was considered feminine. This article discerns three professional standards, unequal in the amount of attention they received, that were constructed as masculine: a sense of responsibility, the need for female support, and full-time availability. These standards remained structurally in place between the 1950s and 1990s, although they became less naturalized throughout the 1970s and 1980s as a result of societal and political changes. In particular, the emancipation policies of the government Den Uyl, implemented by the subsequent government Van Agt, encouraged those employees in the DSS who aimed for change.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, change was slow: in 1978, the personnel magazine still stated that women “simply had their shortcomings in our men-oriented world. That’s just the way things are.”<sup>39</sup>

#### *A Sense of Responsibility*

Working with the DSS required a sense of responsibility that women were not willing to assume, according to both men and women who expressed their views in the personnel magazine. Particularly related to management

positions, women were less eager to accept the necessary responsibility and pressure, and “they were simply more prone to prioritize their private life.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, they were assumed “to report ill more often and easier,” according to various managers in 1990.<sup>41</sup> More importantly, the combination of “work and children causes many women too much physical stress,” someone argued in the personnel magazine that same year.<sup>42</sup> And women were supposed to suffer from “oversensitivity to criticism,” which made them unfit for responsible work.<sup>43</sup>

The debate on a sense of responsibility as a professional standard started at the occasion of governmental measures in 1962 that aimed at increasing the percentage of women in government agencies. This positive discrimination, which demanded higher qualifications for men than for women, stirred emotions. “Although we support the principle of making government positions more attractive to women,” a male contributor wrote indignantly in alleged name of all his male colleagues, “in such a way ... NO!”<sup>44</sup> A survey for an internal report on women’s emancipation stirred even greater emotions on the same issue of positive discrimination. It would lay the blame with men, according to some, which would be unfair. After all, men in the survey argued, women did not desire any changes in the current division of labor, “because women were unwilling to assume the related responsibilities.”<sup>45</sup> One of the first female handlers in the service remembered how, in the 1990s, she was repeatedly set aside each time the handling of her agents “became a bit more difficult or trickier and interventions were needed. In such instances they did not acknowledge my responsibility, because I was a woman, so I was not competent enough to say anything about such issues.”<sup>46</sup> In 1990, the internal report on women’s emancipation expressed itself on the “unfair” preferential treatment of women in job openings. Discouraged, the female authors of the report concluded that this policy would risk a “boomerang effect” if problems occur with the female candidates. Their solution was to require women to be “at least 10 to 15% better than their male competitors.”<sup>47</sup>

### *Female Support*

The support of women, particularly good-looking women, increased the status of men’s work. “There were many beautiful girls at the Service,” a former employee recalls, who entered the DSS in 1951.<sup>48</sup> Positive discrimination for women in vacancies at the DSS, in combination with a greater degree of independence for women, would impact “private circumstances. The existing division of tasks [at home] will not be obvious anymore.”<sup>49</sup> Female support at work, rather than at home, received more attention in the personnel magazine. Such support was tied to women’s physical appearance. For instance, the 1959 Christmas edition of the

personnel magazine *The Little Spy* commented on the advantages to men of good-looking “girls” in the DSS:

For the men in our firm, the start of the month was always particularly nice, because of all these youthful beautiful little faces of our new girls that we encountered in the corridors. [...] We will do our best to find female enthusiasts [for our firm]. Otherwise, we will miss them dearly, those sweet little faces on the first floor.<sup>50</sup>

The advantages of the presence of the “girls” went further than bringing mere joy to the eye. In September 1968, *The Little Spy* commented on the work of “Eva,” meaning all female employees, which presented an important incentive for the work of male colleagues:

Besides showing us statistics, the performance and appearance of the ladies greatly influences the mood, and therefore indirectly the work performances of the employed man in their environment. These ladies can make or break a male civil servant, without being aware of it.<sup>51</sup>

This excerpt implies it should be a source of pride for women to be of such influence on their male colleagues, who, in turn, were framed as the driving force of the DSS. In this context of the significance of women’s physical appearance we should understand the “Miss BVD” beauty contest in 1965. It was won by the direction Counterespionage. “Congratulations!,” *The Little Spy* cheered, while adding that the editorial board had observed “an alarming shortage of high heels” in direction D, which was responsible for internal security.<sup>52</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, the personnel magazine ceases to refer to “girls” and “sweet little faces,” and there is no trace of any beauty contests. However, in 1988, a female employee calls for a “women’s excursion”:

Don’t you think that it is our turn now, after a men’s excursion to the [car manufacturer] DAF, to organize a real women’s excursion? For instance, we could go to a Beauty farm. The ultimate beneficiary of such an outing is the Security Service, with all those beautiful, relaxed ladies in the buildings, don’t you think? Please send me your reactions.<sup>53</sup>

This call shows how the construction of masculine professional standards was the product of a dialogue between men and women. Women contributed to the masculine professional standard of doing work that needed female support.

While women’s good looks were an asset to men’s performances at work, they could be a liability from a counterintelligence and operational perspective. Of special concern were the marriages of “our girls” with “outsiders.” From a counterintelligence perspective, the “girls,” gullible as

they may be, risked sharing confidential information with their husbands, who might have seduced them with this purpose in mind. These “girls” caused the counterintelligence officer “sleepless nights.”<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, male employees who married with someone outside the DSS did not seem to be of any counterintelligence concern. From an operational perspective there was also cause for concern. Women in an operational function “would give rise to provocative looks that had to be ‘consumed’, if necessary,” someone warned in the personnel magazine in 1978.<sup>55</sup> The first female member of the surveillance team, young and unmarried, remembered her acquaintance with her ten male colleagues in 1952:

Back then, Jan [...] had to set up the surveillance team. It consisted of only men, [...] and he [thought] that women should be part of it, too. That’s when I was hired as the first woman of the team. [...] And I started my job—you won’t believe it! [...]—by sewing buttons to the trousers of these men. Just for the fun of it because I had nothing to do. [...] So, I was sitting there, sewing jackets and buttons. Can you believe it? I thought “what a tomfoolery.” [...] There wasn’t anything for me to do because those guys refused to hit the road with a woman. [...] What else should I have done, my dear? [...] As a starting female member of the team, these men did not accept me because they were married. [...] And they were annoyed that they had to walk outside with me. [...] In the end, after I had spent my time like this for some months, I think, one guy dared to set off with me.<sup>56</sup>

A couple of years later, a second woman joined the surveillance team. It was the earliest operational section of the DSS to welcome women, although hesitantly at the start. Women as agent handlers encountered greater reluctance until the 1990s, and it is unclear whether this was due to their physical appearance. Both MI5 and CIA experienced similar longtime reluctance to welcome women as agent handlers.<sup>57</sup> As Pieter de Haan, head of service, explained enigmatically and firmly in 1977:

As far as I know, it has not been proven that we need any women in operational work. Sometimes agents express their preference for an elder civil servant. Never has any agent, not even female agents, expressed any preference for a female agent handler.<sup>58</sup>

The 1990s were a turning point when, surprisingly, various managers argued in *The Little Spy* that agent handling would be to the advantage of women. More easily than men, women were supposed to be inquisitive without raising suspicions.<sup>59</sup> The 1980s, and especially the 1990s, were also a period of progress for women’s opportunities in the CIA. For instance, in the mid-1980s women as agent handlers were increasingly valued for their different and effective approach to recruiting agents.<sup>60</sup>

### *Full-Time Availability*

A final professional standard, framed as masculine, was full-time availability to work for the DSS. Until the 1970s, part-time employment was only possible in several positions, mostly administrative ones, and only up until a certain hierarchical rank. Consequently, part-time employment was the domain of women. To illustrate this, the authors of the earlier-mentioned internal report on the emancipation of women interviewed 70 women, of whom 68 worked part time.<sup>61</sup>

In 1977, an interview in *The Little Spy* with Pieter de Haan, the then newly appointed head of DSS, addressed possibilities to expand part-time employment throughout the DSS. To set the tone, De Haan argued that there is no need for the DSS to keep up with “societal developments.” “We do not need to lead the way; in general, the government is not used to running ahead of things.”<sup>62</sup> De Haan thought that part-time work goes against the sense of belonging within the DSS, which he associated with the need of the DSS to defend itself.

“Within this house,” De Haan explained, “we should aim at a strong sense of belonging. This can be our backbone against attacks from the outside. A sense of belonging thrives in a group of people that is constantly in each other’s company.”<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, De Haan objected to part-time work in operational functions, especially in agent-handling. “You cannot tell an agent, who is trying to get in touch with the Service: ‘at this moment Mr so-and-so is not in, he only works in the mornings. The less routine our work becomes, the more difficult.’” This argument was in line with the internal reputation of direction C, responsible for counterintelligence, as rough, adventurous, risk-taking, and intimate.<sup>64</sup> The editorial comment at the end of the interview with De Haan concluded that “whoever has carefully read the above interview, will have to conclude that the arrival of our new head of service has not improved the chances for women in our service.”<sup>65</sup> As a result of this interview, De Haan received a great deal of outraged reactions, of both men and women, that were partly published in *The Little Spy*:

With increasing amazement and repressed anger, I read the interview with [the head of DSS] in our latest *The Little Spy*. It is unbelievable what kind of remarks our head of Service is tossing around in the year 1977. [...] The way he simply brushes aside various arguments does not exemplify, in my view, a realistic view on today’s (fortunately changing) society.<sup>66</sup>

This reaction was signed rather than published anonymously, showing the heated nature of the debate, the personal involvement of employees, and the

safe debating platform that *The Little Spy* provided for this topic. Among the many reactions to the interview was a reaction from several typists from the administrative section ACD. They expressed their “feeling of discomfort that has been present with many women typists” on the lack of appreciation for part-time work. The interview with De Haan showed them that “apparently, we are not considered full-fledged employees of the Service.”<sup>67</sup> Although the reactions to his interview slightly moderated De Haan’s views on part-time work, his arguments showed his belief that full-time availability as a masculine trait was required for the specific work of the DSS.

A later head of service, Arthur Docters van Leeuwen (1988–1995), thought that problems related to part-time work, which was still associated with women, were never “insurmountable.” Women were given the opportunity to reintegrate on a part-time basis after their children had grown up, and he assured his opponents that ambitious women did a whole week’s work in three or four days. “Therefore, part-time work is fine,” he concluded.<sup>68</sup> Docters van Leeuwen also encouraged the formation of a “women’s network” in the DSS.

To conclude, arguments on the possibilities of part-time work and its relation to a masculine professional standard of full-time availability changed in the 1970s and then in the 1990s. Those who expressed themselves appeared increasingly more aware of the social and political dimensions of the topic, possibly influenced by governmental emancipation policies during this period.

## CONCLUSION

During the Cold War, professional standards in the realm of secret intelligence were linked to masculinity. The DSS constructed the ideal type of male employee who had a strong sense of responsibility, who needed and was worthy of female support, and who was always available to do the job. This image gradually changed as a result of changes in management (most importantly, the arrival of Arthur Docters van Leeuwen), government emancipation policies, and collective action inside the DSS encouraged by comparisons with the (parent) Ministry of the Interior.

The theoretical and empirical contributions, which build on the conditional factors that determine masculinity, are threefold. First, this article has shown that the construction of professional standards intertwined with the construction of received notions of masculinity and femininity. Oral memories and written internal debates on the topic show that employees in the DSS believed in some universal, cross-cultural, unified, and structural basis for what constitutes a woman and a man. They also expressed arguments that showed a hierarchical and patriarchal relationship between men and women. For instance, the available sources show a widespread

assumption that women's main contribution to work in the DSS consisted of their support to the work of men. They were in the DSS, but not of the DSS. This confined women to specific positions in the DSS, leading to a long-term insufficient recognition and use of their professional potential. This article shows that, in particular, operational work was a gendered professional environment. And professional standards were constructed in such a way that operational work was more important than other work.

Second, both men and women contributed to the construction of gendered professional standards. Not only men, but also some women in the DSS emphasized specific gendered roles that consolidated the hierarchical relation between men and women, such as the suggestion that women employees should go to a beauty farm with the aim to please and motivate male colleagues. Emphasizing such gendered roles reinforced and reproduced them, and sometimes mockingly challenged them. In some instances, this process even led women to propose greater hierarchical relations than did men, such as the women's response to men's criticism on positive discrimination when hiring new personnel.

Third, this research has shown that masculinity in the DSS acquired meaning only relation to what, presumably, it is not: femininity. In the recurring debates on the position of women in the DSS, masculinity was constructed as a neutral space, while femininity was framed as the exception. What employees said and wrote about why female colleagues were, supposedly, not suited for the job, reveals the supposed masculine traits as imagined by these employees that were part of the professional standards of the agency. For instance, male writers assumed women were unsuited for the job because they were unwilling to do responsible work, meaning that male employees are characterized by their willingness to do responsible work.

The conceptual focus of this article on masculinities in the organizational culture of intelligence and security services has various benefits. By analyzing the construction of a dominant type of masculinity, it provides tools to explain the position of women and, more in general, the marginalization of individuals who do not conform to this dominant type of masculinity. Empirically, this article has concentrated on the position of women in the Dutch context of the Cold War. Future research could explore how the construction of masculinity impacted other genders. For instance, a welcome addition to the literature would be the impact on homosexual employees, who were in the Cold War context considered vulnerable to blackmail and therefore a security risk in intelligence. Future research could also explore the validity of the construction of intelligence as a masculine profession in other (non-Western) services than the Dutch one, and whether we can observe similar professional standards. Finally, this historical research shows various slowly changing, structural patterns in the construction of intelligence as a



masculine profession. Future research could explore to what extent these patterns are still topical. For instance, Van Puyvelde observes that memoirs of female CIA employees who served in the 2000s describe the agency as male-dominated where women cope “with prejudices and sometimes harassment.”<sup>69</sup> If these memoirs of intelligence as a male-dominated professional environment are representative, can we observe a causal relation with noninclusive professional standards? And presuming that such professional standards prevent the services from capitalizing on the full potential of their employees, what can be practically done about it?

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- <sup>2</sup> While the spy novel originated from Britain, the genre of the spy film was mostly an American product. Among the few European exceptions is *Spione* (1928) from Fritz Lang, which gave importance to women in intelligence, in contrast to the American film industry. Alan R. Booth observes the persistently “ancillary, superficial and generally negative roles” women have played in the espionage film, both inside and outside the American film industry. Alan R. Booth, “The Development of the Espionage Film,” in *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence*, edited by Wesley K. Wark (London: Frank Cass, 1991), p. 136–160.
- <sup>3</sup> Simon Willmetts, *In Secrecy’s Shadow: The OSS and CIA in Hollywood Cinema, 1941–1979* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 128.
- <sup>4</sup> Booth, “The Development of the Espionage Film,” pp. 150, 157.
- <sup>5</sup> Damien Van Puyvelde, “Women and Black Employees at the Central Intelligence Agency: From Fair Employment to Diversity Management,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2020). doi:10.1080/09557571.2020.1853052, pp. 16–19; Amy J. Martin, “America’s Evolution of Women and Their Roles in the Intelligence Community,” *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Suppl., 2015), pp. 99–109.
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- <sup>9</sup> For example, see Hamilton Bean, “Rhetorical and Critical/Cultural Intelligence Studies,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2013), pp. 495–519; Eleni Braat, “Self-Reinforcing Secrecy: Cultures of Secrecy within Intelligence Agencies,” in *Transparency and Secrecy in European Democracies. Contested Trade-offs*, edited by Dorota Mokrosinska (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 118–134; Van Puyvelde, “Women and Black Employees at the Central Intelligence Agency.”
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- <sup>11</sup> The references in reference 6 mostly relate to women agents during the two world wars.
- <sup>12</sup> Proctor, *Female Intelligence*.
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- <sup>34</sup> Vetting and surveillance were not part of directions B and C.
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- <sup>39</sup> Personnel magazine *Het Spionnetje*, first quarter 1978, archive Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service.
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