

THE MICRO-POLITICS OF BORDER CONTROL:  
INTERNAL STRUGGLES AT CANADIAN CUSTOMS

KARINE COTE-BOUCHER

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the remaking of Canadian customs from the point of view of border officers tasked with processing trucks and commodities. Historically employed for tax collection, border authorities have gradually been incorporated into security provision and trade facilitation. This has entailed the pluralization of public and private actors who have a stake in border regulation as well as the design of a series of organizational reforms, new customs programs, border technologies and intelligence-led policing strategies. As a result, there has been a disembedding of borderwork and a displacement of decision-making away from ports of entry. Frontline security professionals negotiate these changes in ways that have consequences for our understanding of border priorities. In response to the consequences of this new division of labour, including their loss of clout in the security field, customs officers attempt to maintain their hold on border responsibilities by relying on their discretionary powers. Meanwhile, they emphasize the potentially dangerous aspects of their work over the more administrative by deploying an enforcement narrative—one that has recently found its concrete application in their union's successful campaign to obtain arming for its members. While an analysis of the "pistolization" of borderwork indicates the progressive adoption of a policing sensibility by border officers, an examination of their restructured professional socialization reveals the emergence of distinct generational approaches to borderwork. Hiring and training play a central part in shaping "old ways" and "new ways" of doing borderwork. Anchored in divergent temporalities of border control, these internal categorizations of skills and

attitudes point to the new registers of distinction mobilized by officers as they negotiate a transitioning security field.

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## **Introduction: Doing Research in a Transforming "Secret Social World"**

### **Introduction**

Not that long ago, customs served two major purposes: tax collection and economic protectionism against unwarranted foreign competition. Building on a research conducted with Canadian border officers, this dissertation explores the implications of the gradual remaking of customs authorities into security providers and trade facilitators for the everyday work of border officers—what I describe as their gradual entry into the security field. I suggest that this process is particularly characterized by the decline of customs officers' traditional hold on decision-making at the border. In fact, since the 1990s, border officers have had to contend with an increasing pluralization of actors having a stake in border regulation. They also have experienced how a series of customs programs, border technologies and intelligence-led policing strategies displace significant elements of the customs decision-making away from ports of entry. Therefore, this dissertation presents border officers as low-level security officials whose action remains, in many ways, shaped and constrained by a range of institutional limitations. However, while I tell the story of the loss of influence by frontline border officials in this recomposed North American border space, I pay particular attention to how these security professionals have not only been standing at the receiving end of these changes. They are actively negotiating and engaging with these transformations, at times even collectively placing themselves at the forefront of the restructuring of frontline border control.

Accordingly, I contend that border officers' complex forms of engagement with customs reform carry important consequences for thinking the competing spatialities and temporalities of border control in the security field. Students of security are prone to point to the deterritorialization and diffusion of borders in the 21st century through a series of policies, programs and technologies that de-center the regulation of cross-border mobilities away from ports of entry. This diffusion of borders creates important theoretical and political challenges for scholars who attempt to better comprehend the new geographies of border control. They question the role of border actors and the strategies they use in promoting new patterns of global inequality that ensure the deregulated movement of capital, commodities and privileged persons yet restrict that of underprivileged and vulnerable people. They also sometimes present compelling cosmopolitan alternatives to contemporary border regimes.

These analyses are timely, useful and necessary. However, the research project that led to this dissertation was developed out of the conviction that it is important to consider *border control as an everyday practice* if we want to better understand the effects of current disembedding processes at borders. I ask a series of questions in this regard: What are the concrete practices of particular groups of security professionals that police borders? How do they work? How do they speak about and conceive of this work? As a result, my research delves into the places where border control is enacted by frontline border workers: in ports of entry spread along the Eastern Canadian borderland. In the following chapters, I present the changing organization of borderwork in ports of entry, describing and analyzing the transforming work routines, professional sensibilities and

professional socialization of Canadian customs officers.<sup>1</sup> By doing so, I illuminate, amidst tendencies towards disembedding the border, *new articulations of the local in frontline border policing*.

In addition, my research joins a fascinating body of recent scholarship interested in temporalities of security. This has arisen out of a concern regarding the increasingly common tendency among global policing and security organizations to resort to risk calculations, legislation, procedures and surveillance technologies that respond to a pre-emptive logic. As such, anticipation in security illustrates how security actors of all hierarchical levels, by virtue of being dressed in technical and bureaucratic clothes, and working in un-regulated and unaccountable transnational policing spaces, are empowered to make decisions that can disregard fundamental civil liberties and human rights as well as challenge the rule of law in the name of risk prevention.

Nevertheless, the manners by which officers in my study engage with complex modes of representation of work methods and technologies complicate this view of the temporality of security and point beyond this future orientation. Interviewees portrayed security means and procedures via temporal tropes that stressed their avant-gardism, their grounding in the present or even, their downright anachronism. Border officers' portrayals of each others' "old ways" and "new ways" of doing borderwork, I discovered,

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<sup>1</sup> Rumford (2008: 2) conceptualizes "borderwork" as "the role of citizens (and indeed non-citizens) in envisioning, constructing, maintaining and erasing borders". In this dissertation, I take a related but slightly more orthodox approach by using the term in reference to the daily labour of regulation, taxation, administration, policing and risk management performed by frontline security professionals in border spaces.



stem from the different modes of professional socialization (that is, their hiring and training) experienced by career and rookie officers who now work side by side in ports of entry. But they also have concrete, material consequences upon the decisions taken by border officers in ports of entry, sustaining the distinct bodily dispositions that shape these officers' conduct. This is what I propose to call *generational approaches to borderwork*.

In a stimulating field of studies which offers sophisticated theoretical considerations on sovereignty, the state of exception and the ontology of the biometrical body while conceptualizing the simultaneously enabling and hindering effects of border control upon global mobilities, there are surprisingly few investigations scrutinizing, with some level of sociological detail, the daily labour required for implementing border security policies. Interested in the rationalities, discourses and technologies of control, the border and security literature nevertheless has overlooked the question of their incorporation within the concrete daily practices of security professionals. Accordingly, this dissertation advances this literature by underscoring the social character of security. By shedding light on the work of frontline border officials, this research brings into focus the *micro-politics of border control*. It presents a friendly challenge to current conceptual models regarding security and global policing in order to advance our conceptualizing of security.

### **An Ethnographic *Parti Pris* on Border Policing**

In many ways, this dissertation has an exploratory character. Few fieldwork incursions have been made into the daily practices of security professionals in post 9/11 North

America. Therefore, research preparations for this unexplored terrain were extensive and challenging, especially since the terrain itself has undergone profound transformations over the past two decades. I have been privileged to undertake fieldwork during a fascinating time of transition for Canadian border authorities. Indeed, interview by interview—and from one port of entry to another—I began to see the story unfold of Canadian customs' passage into the security field. The magnitude of this change was impressive given the role of taxation and protectionism that had defined customs for a century. Border officers provided concrete, often unexpected details regarding how these changes impact their work routines, challenge their occupational identity and create internal tensions, as officers sometimes disagree on how borderwork should be done, what purpose it serves and who is the most qualified for the job.

Accordingly, this dissertation adopts an ethnographic *parti-pris*, building its theorization from the ground up. This may be a bold intervention into border and security studies, dominated as it is by sophisticated theoretical interventions and sparse in empirical material. Indeed, research on border regimes remains uncommon, even in the otherwise rich ethnographic tradition of the sociology of policing. Despite remarkable pioneering studies of transnational policing in border spaces—see Gilboy (1991) and Heyman (1995; 2001) on U.S. border bureaucrats, and Sheptycki (2002) on the policing of the Channel—“the day-to-day experiences of state official continue[s] to be a crucial missing piece in the growing number of scholarly discussions of [...] border-zone processes” (Chalfin 2010: 9). Loftus (2013: 3-4) recently passed a similar judgment, stating that “our understanding of the multiple ways in which border policing is accomplished remains

opaque. In particular, we have deficient empirical knowledge of how developments in border policing have been realised and enacted on the ground. [...] understanding border policing is not only a matter of exploring the broader social, political and legal context. It also invites examination of the culture and practices of those involved in the daily upkeep of border priorities."

In the burgeoning scholarship on security practices there exists a small range of scholars from geography, criminology, anthropology and sociology who nevertheless take on the task of shedding light on the cultures and practices of border control. These researchers aspire to pay "direct attention to the work routines and organizational culture of [bordering] officers. Such practices are submerged in aggregate statistics and rarely admitted to in formal policy; furthermore, they are only partly visible even to the officers who perform them, since they quickly become normal operating procedures" (Heyman 2004: 306). Favouring ethnography and interviews as the research strategies best suited to grasp the everyday and practical aspects of borderwork, these researchers seek to incorporate the "institutional memories" and "the voice of civil servants" in analyses of border control (Mountz 2010: xx).

A focus on the micro-politics of border control underscores the importance of grounding our observations within specific border bureaucracies and border spaces (such as government ministries, ports of entry, visa offices, airport waiting zones or maritime ports) in order to provide detailed sociological analyses of the local practices of security and immigration actors (Infantino and Rea 2012). From these contextualized analyses, it has been possible to develop renewed theories concerned with the intricate connections

between sovereignty and neoliberalism (Chalfin 2010), the privatization of security governance in border spaces (Berndtsson and Stern 2011) and the relationships between contemporary policing, citizenship and the state (Weber 2011; Light 2010). For these researchers, qualitative social science research allows for a reconceptualization of security as a set of mediated processes, tensions and negotiations that is situated, on the one hand, at the intersection between discourses, practices, technologies and policy and, on the other hand, between security agencies, security professionals, bureaucrats, and major decision-makers.

Following the path traced by these authors and anchored in Canadian land border ports of entry, this dissertation presents a sociological investigation into the everyday practices characteristic of governing the mobility of transport workers and commodities at a time when customs administrations around the world are remodelled following a securization logic.<sup>2</sup> In order to illuminate the specifics of this process for Canadian customs, this research project privileged the point of view of a particular occupational group of security professionals—namely, the border staff responsible for the processing of truck drivers, trucks and commodities at ports of entry along the Canada-U.S. land border in Québec and Ontario. Taken together, these frontline border officials revealed themselves to be a fascinating category of civil servants. As tax collectors and international trade regulators,

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<sup>2</sup> As further explained in chapter 2, since its creation in 2003, the Canada Border Services Agency is responsible for all taxation, customs, immigration and border enforcement in the country's ports of entry. Since the basic training of all frontline border officers is now related to the regulation of travelers (either as car, bus and air passengers) and, with a slightly more specialized training, frontline immigration assessment, my conclusions can often be extended to the immigration and traveler control aspects of borderwork. I make the necessary distinctions between traveler migration control and cross-border trade regulation when required.

they contribute to the classification, inspection and taxation of commodities entering Canada. But because they enjoy broadly legislated enforcement powers, they also act as what some of my interviewees called "a police of the border". Building an analytical bridge between the daily micro-practices of customs officers, the contemporary overhauls in security, the liberalization of trade in North America and the power struggles between institutional actors, I revisit the domain of border control as a site of competing—and sometimes contradicting—policing actors and strategies that are part and parcel to the reconfiguration of the ways in which we govern the circulation of people and things in border spaces.

### **The Inquiry**

The fieldwork leading to this dissertation took place between September 2010 and June 2011. Initially, I had in mind a broad question: How do security and economic imperatives play out in everyday border control? Since their work is mainly geared to the regulation of cross-border trade, it seemed appropriate to centre my research on customs operations at the land border—what Canadian border officials call "commercial" work—where transport workers, trucks and commodities are processed. Consequently, I spent between one to three weeks in each of the regions surrounding five land border ports of entry that offered importation services.

This thesis takes into account the different local contexts revealed to be essential for understanding the importance of each port in its regional economy, the workcourse details of the officers employed by these ports as well as the acquaintance of these officers with local truck drivers and their mobility patterns. Taken together, ports of entry

of varying sizes and diverse settings in Eastern Canada provide a rich site for studying the changing local dynamics of border policing. The small ports along the Québec-New England border are located in rural areas. They handle a few locally-produced commodities, especially lumber cut in American forests that is then trucked north of the border and processed by mills in Canada. The finished product often crosses the border south once again. Each time, both Canadian and U.S. customs officers process the shipments. Meanwhile, villages and small towns in this region are experiencing difficulties in keeping their inhabitants and services. Facing the competition of cheap foreign lumber on the Canadian market, the forest-based industry also struggles to provide employment to locals after decades of lumber dispute with the U.S. (Zhang 2007).

In contrast, the major ports of Southern Ontario are found in or close to urban areas, channeling truck traffic through bridges that connect the region with Michigan and the state of New York. The products that cross the border at these ports range from car parts manufactured by the cross-border automotive industry to personal consumption and farming products hauled by a variety of small, medium and large carriers. Furthermore, these ports are immersed in regions harshly affected by the economic downturn, a general trend towards de-industrialization and rising unemployment rates. As further analysed in chapter 5, these structural economic difficulties and the social insecurity generated in both borderland regions explain in part the pull exerted by stable employment with border services.

*Methods: on-site interviews and archival research*

I employed two distinctive methods in this research: semi-structured interviews undertaken onsite and illuminated by field notes, as well as online archival research. After this project was evaluated and approved through the York University Ethics Review Board, I carried out interviews with 32 border officials, including two clerical workers (responsible for paperwork and customs-related administrative duties), one data analyst, one chief of operations (the main local management figure for a major port or a series of smaller ports), 5 supervisors (border services officers' immediate superiors) and 23 border services officers. Included in the latter were two targeters and one machine-release officer (low-level intelligence analyst and customs compliance analyst) as well as others who had held these positions in the past. Mainly in order to preserve the confidentiality of my interviewees (for instance, there are few targeters, who are low-level intelligence analysts, in each region), I refer to all those I quote in this dissertation as "border officers". Interviews were generally held in the "commercial" sections of these ports—that is the separate buildings in border compounds for processing commodities, trucks and truck drivers. I was also generously offered guided visits of each ports by a supervisor. I met each interviewee during regular work shifts but behind closed doors. Interviews were based upon an interview schedule distributed in advance to officers by the supervisor or administrative assistant who was my point of contact in the port. Each interview was recorded. I kept fieldnotes on the setting and circumstances surrounding each interview, which proved to be useful during transcript analysis.

Each interview was semi-structured, following participants' input and the direction they gave to our conversation. Through the interviews I conducted at the first port of entry, I was introduced to "customs speech"—a term I use to represent the specific jargon of border workers, composed of administrative, technological and customs-related terms and acronyms. During these first interviews, I often brought as props different customs forms and asked interviewees to explain how they were connected to their work. As I wrote early on in my field journal, this first part of my fieldwork also suggested a few themes that I continued investigating in other ports:

Research has started. I am overwhelmed with unexpected themes and language that are practically absent from the literature on border security. No mention in my interviews of risk management, critical infrastructure protection, algorithms or facial recognition, not even of "security". Since I began conducting interviews, I picture myself as one of those classical anthropologists flown to exotic community who started by learning how to communicate with locals. Slowly acquiring the language of ports of entry, I have started calling "customs speech" this proliferation of abbreviations, acronyms and bureaucratic designations: B3s and E29Bs forms, EDI, ACROSS, CPIC, in-transit goods, inland customs office and sufferance warehouses, PAD, PARS, and other endearing administrative and technological terms...

A variety of elements mentioned by officers are quickly shaping into themes that seem to deserve further attention: increased powers, the boredom of administrative and booth work, the occasional welcomed and unexpected changes



in work routines, the willingness to accommodate truck drivers with paperwork problems, compiling statistics, training on the job, training at "Rigaud", the countless times when situations arise that require a senior officer's experience, etc.

Accordingly, the validity of the data and analysis presented here does not lie in the number of those interviewed nor in the sampling method used to speak to my interviewees (I speak further to the issue of access to interviewees at the end of this introduction). Rather, on-site interviews, guided visits in ports of entry as well as weeks spent doing fieldwork in the vicinity of these ports were first meant to offer comparative material in order to investigate differences and commonalities between ports, the urban and the rural, and Québec and Ontario. This material revealed some distinctions but, in the end, it was most useful for addressing context and investigating whether and how the local remained significant in border control.

As the research developed, new avenues of inquiry opened, pointing beyond my preliminary interrogation of the paradoxical relationship between economic and security imperatives in border spaces. Through fieldwork, I shifted my analytical scope as interviews gave strong indications that border services were undergoing a historic transition that was felt from headquarters to ports of entry. This realization inspired a closer consideration of the social tensions generated by the recent integration of customs services into the security field and this gradually became the thrust of my research project and dissertation. More specifically, fascinated with the details given by interviewees about their professional socialization, as well as the passion with which they discussed the introduction of firearms into their work lives, I became interested in the processes

entailed in the construction of a policing subjectivity. This discovery encouraged a deeper investigation of the ways in which the structural changes in the security field were inescapably linked to the reworking of the occupational sensibilities of border workers.

As these themes came up, interviews took on a descriptive turn about everyday work practices. Indeed, given my limited research access—which prevented a more extensive foray into the daily life of ports of entry—much interview time was spent asking interviewees to provide details about their hiring and training, their daily shifts, their past and present work tasks. Through these descriptions, interviewees further specified their interactions with each other, with management and with the public. The interviews also invited research participants to reflect upon the transformations they saw happening in border security since their hiring, and the consequences for their work routines and their local port of entry. The interviews encouraged officers to think about how they saw themselves amidst this transforming environment and how they had been affected by these changes (see Annex I).

Prior to this research project, I had conducted a discursive analysis based on policy documents regarding border security and cross-border trade (Côté-Boucher 2008; 2010). Accordingly, archival research for this research primarily aimed at finding specific clauses in customs regulations and records of decision-making at the policy or governmental level, as well as confirming details about particular security policies and programs mentioned by officers. Archival research was not a substitute for field research but a complementary data collection strategy (Beaud and Weber 2010) undertaken post-fieldwork and guided by a preliminary analysis of interview transcripts. Unfortunately,

much statistical data that could have been useful remained unobtainable—for instance, the gender and age of frontline officers as well as the proportion of officers performing customs duties as opposed to immigration or traveller processing. The CBSA did not agree to reveal this type of information to me.

However, some border-related governmental archives are public and available online and offer particularly useful records, including a wide-variety of planning, audit reports and other policy documents. Other records have been found in unexpected online governmental corners, including the federal Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal that reviews cases submitted by border officers or by their union. Official documents have also been procured through the website of the Customs and Immigration Union—including professional magazines, letters to members, Members of Parliament and CBSA management as well as appeals to the public and media releases.

Finally, I also conducted 9 interviews with individuals active in the truck driving industry, and had many more informal meetings and conversations with truck drivers, owners of small trucking companies as well as with individuals involved in logistics and customs brokerage. While the results of these interviews and conversations are not recorded in this dissertation and have been set aside for a later research project, they presented an invaluable background for the analysis of the research material collected in ports of entry.

## **Overview of the Dissertation**

This dissertation tells the story of the internal tensions, struggles and negotiations accompanying the passage of Canadian Customs into the security field—that is, the replacement of their former taxation and economic protection mandate with market-based standards in the regulation of commodity flows and a parallel shift away from a relative ambassadorial logic towards a strong commitment to border enforcement. I relate this story through the eyes of border officers employed by the "commercial" sections of land border ports of entry. By shedding an ethnographic light on the impact of these transformational dynamics upon their working lives, it becomes possible to consider border control as an everyday practice. The critical analytical issue becomes one of expanding the register of variables conceivably at work in contemporary border control beyond surveillance technologies, security-related discourses and governing rationalities. In addition, such an approach permits inquiring into the understudied—yet transitioning—organizational cultures of global policing agencies in the wake of contemporary changes affecting border regulation and security governance.

The first two chapters articulate the theoretical and historical insights on which this dissertation is built. In chapter 1, I revisit border and security studies in order to outline a sociological understanding of border control better attuned to the work practices and daily experiences of security professionals. By doing so, it becomes possible to highlight how competing deployments of temporalities and spatialities can be found in everyday borderwork. For this purpose, I build on Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus, and particularly on the ways in which these heuristic conceptual tools have been taken up and reworked by scholars interested in globalization, security and policing. In doing so, the

practice of security reveals itself to be thoroughly caught up in security actors' concern with access to resources in the security field and the juridical, political and administrative limitations inherent to their work as well as their different interpretations of the purpose of border control and of how it should be achieved. The prescribed legal, institutional and policy-based modalities for a disembedded border governance can thus be read in conjunction with how they are concretely integrated, dealt with and even opposed by security professionals who are responding to oft-changing—sometimes competing—institutional demands. Accordingly, this approach allows us to pay attention to the global diffusion of borders, while treating its consequences upon the local and the institutional with equal specification.

As interpretive actors, border officers make sense of these contemporary changes in border control. In this work of interpretation, they rely upon what I refer to as *generational approaches to borderwork*, debating the relevance of work methods and technological tools stemming from two different hiring and training trajectories. Officers from different generations cast the affective dispositions of their colleagues, their attitudes, skills and know-how along a temporal distinction scale ranging from the avant-gardist to the downright anachronistic. From this perspective, it becomes possible to expand prevailing depictions of security as primarily anticipatory to a fuller understanding of the various temporalities in which security actors situate themselves.

Chapter 2 relates the trajectory of Canadian Customs. Close attention to Customs history reveals the radical character of the recent transformation in its mission. Until recently, Customs represented a major source of public revenue and a significant regulatory

institution for the Canadian economy, from its contribution to French and British mercantilist policies to its role in the building of the modern Canadian political economy after Macdonald's protectionist National Policy in the second half of the 19th century. Taking into account an international context characterized by shifts in the institutional governance of commodity flows worldwide, the chapter examines the progressive restructuring of border authorities since the 1980s through open-market policies, cross-border transport and trade deregulation. It also points to the concurrent securization of Customs mandate, as border authorities take on anti-smuggling and counter-terrorist responsibilities and adopt increasingly sophisticated technological means in the process. Customs shares these concerns with multiplying security agencies claiming a stake in border policing, as well as non-state actors to whom regulatory and policing responsibilities are devolved.

Against this backdrop of theoretical and historical understandings, the remaining chapters approach these developments from the perspective of border officers. Frontline security professionals have carried the brunt of these changes and seen their role profoundly reshaped during the course of their careers. In order to ethnographically contribute to a field of study lacking information of that kind, these chapters provide much detail about how borderwork is actually done. Particularly descriptive is chapter 3, which takes as its point of departure the impact of disembedding on the division of labour in and between ports of entry. I examine how customs and border enforcement technologies, as well as preclearance programs, are profoundly reshaping the work routines as well as the division of customs labour within and between ports of entry with important consequences upon

border officers' perception of their work and worth as security professionals. I was surprised to find that this re-organization of borderwork in Canadian customs offered fewer opportunities for officers to use their discretion—a finding that will be of particular interest to students of exceptionality and discretionary power in bordering operations. While many authors have argued that discretion represents a central aspect of the work and occupational identities of border officers, I discuss how this discretion is deployed as a complexity-reduction strategy and as a way through which customs officials negotiate their loss of clout in the security field.

I wrote Chapter 4 in an attempt to answer a question that troubled me for months: Why did border officers who had experienced profound organizational transformations that significantly altered their work routines and occupational culture contend that the introduction of the gun was the most significant change they had witnessed during their career? This question is carefully unpacked by examining the symbolic significance given to the firearm by border officers endeavouring to recast their work as one of law enforcement in an effort to reposition themselves as noteworthy security actors. The chapter insists on the inherent masculinization of officers' representation of borderwork that comes with arming. The chapter brings to the fore the discourses and strategies deployed by the border officers' union—a skillful yet unexamined actor in border and security studies—in its successful campaign to achieve arming. Finally, I highlight how the progressive introduction of firearms into ports of entry already shows signs of the emergence of new sets of bodily and affective dispositions that challenge established

borderwork routines and habits while suggesting borderwork's progressive "pistollization".

It is my contention that these new dispositions emerge from recently altered hiring and training strategies that are changing the ways in which officers work and think of their role. Interestingly, it was not an intended objective of the present research to inquire into how recruits learn the know-how as well as the sensibility that allows them to integrate into border services. In fact, I stumbled by a fortunate accident<sup>3</sup> upon the little explored issue of the professional socialization of border officers, the topic of chapter 5. While pointing to the ways in which new hiring strategies are reshaping the local in border policing, this chapter argues that recent changes in professional socialization, intricately tied up with the passage of Customs into the security field, are the basis for the emergence of two distinct generational approaches to borderwork. At the same time, I underline some of the continuities in this socialization, particularly the ways in which the position of border officer is predicated upon an apprenticeship in techniques of listening and examination, as well as in the proper display of authority.

Finally, chapter 6 takes intergenerational relations in ports of entry as its point of departure, sustaining my claim that generational approaches to borderwork contribute to

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<sup>3</sup> The first two questions included in the interview questionnaire regarding the origin and hiring of officers (see Annex I) were designed to set in motion the conversation with officers. But unexpectedly, answers proved to be remarkably consistent. Most officers explained that they grew up in the region where they were employed and described with vivid details how they had been selected and trained. Those hired after 2004 were particularly forthcoming in their descriptions of their demanding training at Customs College. In contrast, older officers drew attention to the subtleties of their on-the-job, experiential field training. After a few interviews, I realized that this serendipitous finding warranted more attention and I began exploring with my interviewees their professional socialization in more detail.



the constitution of the security field by introducing simultaneous—yet competing—temporalities of border control. It brings into focus how generational approaches to borderwork emerge out of the disagreements between officers hired and trained during two distinct moments of the history of Canadian customs, regarding the effectiveness of their work methods and, ultimately, what it means to perform border control. The chapter also pays attention to experienced officers' narratives in order to tell the story of the marginalization of their protectionist outlook on border control, and of their downward social mobility in the security field as new scales of distinction are promulgated that recognize different skills and credentials.

### **Negotiating Research Access in a Closed Security Environment**

Discussing the respective merits of interview and ethnography, Marks (2004: 870)—whose research work on South African policing deserves praise—claims that "interviews alone may not provide an adequate tool for understanding deep-level organizational culture [...] (G)aining insight into deep-level culture requires a more intensive and continuous engagement with respondents and their environment". This is an apt observation. However, research with policing and security professionals may be less predicated on a concern for the appropriateness of the chosen methodological approach than on the likeliness that research access of any kind will be granted. I carried out my research in one of the most secretive state organizations in Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency. Not held accountable by any independent public review body, the CBSA is judge and party in evaluating its own methods and programs. Its activities are subject to dependable periodic audits by the Auditor General, which primarily show a

preoccupation with sound spending practices by governmental agencies and departments. Consequently, before getting to the heart of the matter, it is important to reflect on how my research access in this "secret social world" (Sheptycki 2011) has been exceptional yet in many ways restricted and partial.

*Dynamics of secrecy and publicity in security research*

Dynamics of publicity and secrecy have been inextricably at work in this research project, from conception and fieldwork, to data analysis and writing. These dynamics present themselves to the sociologist studying any bureaucratic milieu characterized by the duty of non-disclosure, but this is particularly true of security and policing agencies. Outlined in internal regulations and codes of conduct, and taking the form of legal restraints on divulging protected information or framed by the obligation to comply with privacy and confidentiality guidelines, the duty of non-disclosure curtails access to data for social sciences researchers. Unencumbered by institutional mechanisms of democratic accountability, they wrap their methods and activities under a shroud of secrecy. At the same time, however, while they generally resist scrutiny and external evaluation of their practices, state-based security and policing agencies nevertheless find themselves a frequent topic of public debate and critique—in the media, as well as by politicians, NGOs and social movements. As a result, these organizations are part of "a general economy of contemporary secrecy" that responds to a paradoxical, "uninterrupted and contradictory process of non-disclosure and revelation" (Dewerpe 1994: 15-16; personal translation).

Claiming to know what no one else knows—the power that comes with the capacity to use such information or with the simple unsubstantiated claim that such information exists in the first place—while playing with the popular fascination with spies and the clandestine, security and intelligence organizations skilfully practice the art of dissimulation as a strategy of public relations. On this matter, Ericson's (1989: 206) observations with respect to the police applies well to other enforcement organizations: "we tend to forget that the police are also out to patrol the facts, to reproduce various symbolic orders [...] This shielding, protecting and glossing takes place not only on the street-level of police work, but also on the administrative-level of producing organizational and occupational ideologies. [...] What do the police themselves regard as fit for public consumption and what do they think should be kept secret?". In its role as a federal security agency financed by taxpayers and overseen by elected politicians, the CBSA engages in exercises of image management through communications services (i.e. through its media room as well as national and regional spokespersons). These public relations activities also depend upon the online posting of audits and internal evaluations, the coordination of Access to Information Requests, as well as interventions on diverse governmental committees regarding security-related issues. With these attempts at monitoring the publicity surrounding their activities, security agencies generate recognition for their achievements, while defining securitized objects (terrorism, organized crime etc.) for public consumption. They thus are deeply involved in the production of public narratives about security, its aims and privileged methods.

This tendency of policing and security agencies to protect themselves and their public image, together with the duty of non-disclosure that must be followed by security professionals, complicate obtaining research authorizations. Accordingly, "the policing institution (...) is typically what we call a 'closed field of research' (*terrain fermé*)" (Pruvost 2007: 131; personal translation). At this point, students of security and policing are presented with different options. A popular possibility given the ease with which such data can be accessed, rests with discursive analyses of the proliferating official texts, policies, regulations, audits, laws and media reports circulated by state authorities with regards to their security activities. If these analyses say little of the relation between this world of discourse and actual security practices, they remain valuable as they shed light on—to paraphrase Deleuze (1989)—what can be seen and said in a security regime at a particular moment of its history. Researchers may also choose to work around research access impediments by revealing, in the manner of scholarly journalists, undisclosed details about security activities that state authorities wish to conceal from the public eye. Serious investigative work by social scientists adopting this methodological posture has recently been published in Canada (Larsen and Walby 2013; Monaghan and Walby 2012). Using the Access to Information Act, these studies provide us with an archival analysis of the implementation of security policies, hence illuminating decision-making processes in intelligence settings that are too often closed to inquiry. Such studies are essential, as little scholarly work has been written about the detail of security operations and the workings of discretionary power at the higher levels of intelligence-led policing

agencies—if not for the rare article written by a reflexive security professional (Lowe 2012).<sup>4</sup>

However, these investigative works adopt a logic of denunciation that might foreclose unexpected findings, which may illuminate practices that are not necessarily condemnable yet are nevertheless worthy of sociological study. Such research requires another methodological sensibility—a difficult endeavour given the fact that sociologists of policing and security are not only confronted with difficulties related to undertaking research in a closed field, but also with the very logics of disclosure typical of research in the social sciences. If the researcher is sometimes enticed with finding yet undisclosed and sensitive information while researching security organizations, it can be asked whether the search for secrets is not in itself a defining element of the sociological research process. This is Marmoz's (2001: 11; personal translation) position, suggesting the purpose of interviewing consists in finding that which has been hidden from public sight: "The interview in human and social sciences (...) is a contradictory practice: with the help of a specific instrumentation, it aims to shed light on what was hidden, what would have stayed so without this intervention and, in general, what the interviewee was

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<sup>4</sup> The significance of such archival research might very well reside not in what this type of inquiry reveals but in the fact of the revelation itself. Revealing protected information sometimes amounts to unveiling an open secret. Disclosing what is hidden does not necessarily mean that no one knew about that which is disclosed in the first place. As Žižek claims regarding the WikiLeaks experiment, the very fact that revelation occurs carries an unsettling effect: "There has been, from the outset, something about its activities that goes way beyond liberal conceptions of the free flow of information. We shouldn't look for this excess at the level of content. The only surprising thing about WikiLeaks revelations is that they contain no surprises. Didn't we learn what we expected to learn? The real disturbance was at the level of appearances: we can no longer pretend we don't know what everyone knows we know. This is the paradox of public space: even if everyone knows an unpleasant fact, saying it in public changes everything. (...) What WikiLeaks threatens is the formal functioning of power" (Žižek 2011).

not disposed to divulge outside of this created situation".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Adler and Adler (1995) suggest that reluctant interviewees often apprehend researchers' ability to make public what they wish would stay hidden. In this sense, does the sociological process look for that which is concealed and thus mirror, in an isomorphic fashion, interrogation methods? For Pruvost (2007: 137), who did extensive fieldwork research with the French police, it seems that the choice offered to us stands beyond the secret/public binary: "We have abandoned quite quickly the idea (besides entirely characteristic of police thought) that police officers are adepts at cover-ups and that one needs, in one way or another, to provoke them in giving birth to a hidden truth, more tormented or more sinuous."<sup>6</sup>

Along these lines, the sociologist of security should not be looking for what is hidden but for what is readily available, at the surface of everyday practice, by privileging methods of research such as interviews and ethnography. Acknowledging that the manipulation of information is "an organizational principle of control of policing activity", Chauvenet and Orlic (1985: 456) nevertheless warn us against the lure of the secret information and against losing sight of the object of research readily negotiated with security professionals:

In fact, searching for the hidden thing is abandoning the sociologist's position. It is to have nothing left to say but from the sole point of view of denunciation, by

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<sup>5</sup> "L'entretien est en matière de recherche en sciences humaines et sociales (...) une pratique contradictoire: à l'aide d'une instrumentation spécifique, il veut mettre au jour ce qui était sans cette intervention caché, ce qui le serait resté, ce que, d'une façon générale, l'interviewé n'était pas disposé, en dehors de la situation créée, à divulguer" (personal translation).

<sup>6</sup> "On a assez rapidement renoncé à l'idée (tout à fait policière du reste) que les policiers sont des dissimulateurs et qu'il faut, d'une manière ou d'une autre, les faire accoucher d'une vérité cachée, plus tourmentée ou plus sinieuse" (personal translation).

betraying secrets or otherwise becoming complicit of those secrets. The sociologist thus has to overcome situations that would have her lose sight of her object and, therefore, bring her to an impasse since this could lead to an abandonment of her identity, distinct from that of a police officer. This distinction is a necessary condition for the circulation of information between researcher and police officer as well as between the researcher and those located outside the research process regarding the objects of knowledge negotiated at the beginning and at every step of the inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

Adopting a methodological stance inspired by Chauvenet's and Orlic's suggestion, this dissertation focuses on security as practice by exploring the organizational culture and professional routines of border officers in Canadian ports of entry. This vantage point allowed me to differentiate the project from a journalistic one, an approach which needed to be affirmed, explained and actively shown throughout fieldwork when my presence in ports of entry raised questions on the part of interviewees. Indeed, not only was the object of this research negotiated at each step of the way, but the research access obtained at the onset of this project proved to be in constant need of confirmation in each port of entry and with each interviewee.

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<sup>7</sup> "En effet rechercher la chose cachée c'est quitter la position du sociologue et n'avoir plus rien à dire sinon du seul point de vue de la dénonciation, en violant des secrets; c'est, sinon, s'en faire les complices. Le sociologue doit donc déjouer les situations qui lui feraient perdre son objet et le mèneraient dans une impasse parce qu'à s'y prendre il abandonnerait son identité propre, distincte de celle du policier. Cette distinction est la condition nécessaire d'une circulation de l'information entre chercheur et policier ainsi qu'entre chercheur et l'extérieur sur les objets de connaissance négociés au départ de la recherche et à chaque pas au cours de l'enquête" (personal translation).

### *Getting research access*

Given the lack of transparency characteristic of security agencies' operations, it comes as no surprise that obtaining research access at the CBSA represented a challenge. However, it has proven possible with the right amount of tenacity, a judicious use of one's personal networks and, one has to admit, a bit of luck considering that research permissions are extremely difficult to obtain in North American security organizations.<sup>8</sup> Rather than attempting to acquire high management approval from the start, I developed a research access strategy based on personal networks. Stubbornly looking for a connection with a frontline border worker for about two years, that person was finally found through my extended family. After writing to this border officer, explaining our somewhat stretched kinship connection and describing my research project, he put me in contact with his superior. Expressing great interest in my research project, this chief of operations—acquainted with fieldwork research because his friend had done a PhD in anthropology—kindly supported my efforts in obtaining official authorization for my study. As months passed, this manager became the gatekeeper for this research—that is, a mid-ranked official with entries within the Agency, both locally and in other administrative regions, who came to trust me enough to facilitate my access into his world.

The first formal approval for my project came from a since-retired regional director who, I learned later, had himself worked his way up the hierarchy after starting his career as a border officer. I suspect my project's focus on the everyday work of frontline officers

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<sup>8</sup> But see Bradbury (2010); Thompson and Pratt (2008) and O'Connor and de Lint (2009) who interviewed CBSA officials (either management or rank-and file), but without the type of access granted for the present research project.



appealed to him for that reason. I then had to submit my interview schedule for review along with a request to obtain ethnographic research access in order to undertake participant observation. It remains unclear who was involved in this review process within CBSA management, but the email sent back to me was copied to someone I later learned was the manager for the whole sector under which my gatekeeper was working. My application for participant observation was denied. Furthermore, I was asked to remove one question from my interview schedule aimed at discussing issues of discretion with officers (i.e. "How do you decide to refer someone for secondary inspection?"). Given this request, I omitted this question from interviews in visited ports in that region. Local port management in another administrative region did not oppose any element in my interview schedule—which I always submitted as a first step—and this question was included in interviews at those ports.

This decision to resubmit this question to management in other ports did not correspond to a desire to reveal anything "secret" about borderwork by extorting an otherwise concealed truth about discretion at the border from individual officers. As reviewed in chapter 3, the use of discretion by state officials in border-related decisions, including immigration, is covered by a solid scholarly literature based on fieldwork research as well as publicly available legal decisions. However, the ways in which this specific interview question was received simultaneously as both a sensitive topic and as a theme not bringing about any objection cued me to *the ambivalence of security professionals regarding that which should be regarded as protected information*. This finding was highlighted when it became clear that—with or without this question—interviewed

border officers were ready to volunteer many details about their decision-making processes, including matters relating to secondary inspection but also a wide-range of routine aspects of their work. That which was deemed sensitive by management was seen by rank-and-file as a source of pride and something worth discussing and sharing.

Consequently, these different groups of security professionals assumed distinct understandings of what should be hushed and what is fit for public consumption. At times, part of this work of simultaneous non-disclosure and exposure seemed less geared at ensuring security than a public performance of secrecy in order to symbolically imply, even legitimate, one's prerogatives as a security professional. An anecdote further illustrates this point. Taking a pause between two interviews, I stepped outside the commercial compound at the port of entry where I had been doing research for a few days and decided to take pictures of the surroundings. An officer stormed out of the port, ran towards me and demanded I stopped using my camera. She explained that for security reasons, taking pictures of security infrastructures was prohibited—to this day, regulations to that effect are still to be found. A supervisor who was also taking a break nearby—and who had seen me come and go for a few days—approached us and reassured her colleague: "She's a student, let her". Another supervisor apologized later on for this officer's zealotry. What fascinated me during this whole incident was the fact that nobody mentioned how satellite images of ports of entry, across Canada, are readily available online through Google map.

*Between reluctance and openness: the challenges of building rapport*

As authorizations were received, research began. My gatekeeper generously facilitated access to other ports in Quebec and in Ontario through his professional networks. Visits to each port, however, required a previous email contact with a manager, as well as an in-person presentation of my project, generally to a supervisor. During these meetings, which provided an opportunity to assess my trustworthiness, I was asked to explain my project again, describe the intent of the research and give details as to my academic credentials. In short, as a researcher at this stage, I was subjected to a "genuine interrogation which allows the interviewee to complete his image of the researcher and to know to whom he 'offers' his talk" (Chamboredon and al. 1994: 117).

Passing from one port of entry to another required deploying constant efforts at building rapport with interviewees and with those who facilitated my stay in those ports. Ethnographers of policing institutions often limit their research to a single site, thus being able to establish trust and to demonstrate insider knowledge on which they can build during the entirety of their fieldwork (Hunt 1984). However, building such deep familiarity has been impossible during this research. To start with, the choice of interviewees was not left to me, carrying important consequences for my ability to build trust with research participants. In each visited port, a supervisor or an assistant to the director was put in charge of finding interviewees for me. From the echoes I received, politics of non-disclosure and exposure were at stake in this selection process as supervisors clearly filtered potential interviewees. While I was touring a port's facilities with the supervisor in charge of my stay, he entered into conversation with another

officer. They both commented on how a particular officer would not be a good choice for my project because they deemed him too critical—of what in particular was left unsaid. Much of this selection process thus aimed at presenting a positive image of the port and of its employees. It is probable that in every port, those considered more likely to reflect negatively on their work practices, on management or on the CBSA were excluded from interviews.

At other times, officers refused to meet with me. In one particular port, a day of interview was cancelled because the supervisor could not find "volunteers" despite what I believe to be his genuine efforts to convince his colleagues to speak with me. These issues of trust on the part of border officers manifested themselves a few times. In another port where my presence met with the most resistance, the supervisor presented my project during a weekly port meeting that I did not attend. He reported to me afterwards that I was perceived by some officers as "having been sent by Ottawa"—that is, by headquarters. Resistance to the researcher in the form of suspicion that he or she is a "spy" for management has been met time and time again by sociologists of policing—see for instance Hunt's (1984: 288-89) early review of this long-standing issue.<sup>9</sup> This distrust at being an envoy of headquarters reveals the existence of tensions between management and rank-and-file. I examine with more details in chapter 3 this issue of distrust as a primary mode of relation with management, which emerged in various ways during

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<sup>9</sup> However, it appears important to note that French sociologists of policing Pruvost (2007) and Chauvenet and Orlic (1985) write of having experienced a high level of cooperation from the rank-and-file once official research authorizations had been obtained.

fieldwork. I particularly recall an instance when an officer, after a third of her interview had been completed, disapproved of the implementation process for a particular customs program, closing her remarks by confessing "I did not want to sell out the bosses [before coming to this interview], but...". In addition, some interviewees met with me but were reluctant to answer my questions; a rookie officer showed up to the interview and answered every question with yes and no, while another expressed reservations at the start of his interview about the "bosses'" decision to welcome a researcher in their port of entry. Finally, those in supervisory positions—with the exception of two people—treated their interviews as an exercise in public relations, commenting less on actual borderwork practices in their port and more on the official CBSA position on security and cross-border trade concerns.

Did this occasional reluctance and the effort deployed in each port of entry by management to overview my presence affect my results? Of course. The constant work required to maintain research access and to establish trust with each interviewee trickled down to data analysis and dissertation writing. Not only did it probably prevent me from having access to some useful data, it also had an effect on my attitude as a researcher throughout the project. Those I interviewed were not part of a social elite and thus did not create an overtly unequal power relation during the interview (Chamboredon and al. 1994). However, in view of maintaining research access during fieldwork, I constantly checked my behavior and worried about whether this access would be revoked. While writing this dissertation, this concern continued to accompany me.

Despite these issues, most interviewees were very willing to exchange with me and explain the details of their work. This was particularly true of experienced officers and those nearing retirement. These officers appreciated the opportunity to reflect on a long career. In the majority of cases, the interview was the first moment of contact, which required me to clearly explain the goals of the research. Generally, officers had read the consent form that had been distributed beforehand and came in with a few questions. Reserving time for these first exchanges has been essential in creating a relaxed atmosphere for smooth and detailed interviews. In one case, an officer working in the port where I had been labelled a spy from "Ottawa" was uneasy about being interviewed. After a 90 minute meeting, she accepted to meet again to finish what had been a fascinating description of the changes she had witnessed in her career over 35 years. The supervisor then gently mocked this officer for her former reluctance.

My reception in one specific port was particularly warm. During the time spent researching contacts at the border, a colleague of my mother came forward with suggestions. She urged me to contact her soon-to-be-retired father who had spent his entire career working as a border officer at the same port of entry. After writing to him, he put me in touch with his supervisor who was eager to facilitate my stay. I ended up visiting the region twice, spending nearly three weeks in the area, and taking advantage of my sojourn to interview people working in the local trucking industry and to learn more about the regional economy. Such a reception was due to a number of circumstances. This was a small port garnering little public attention and with infrastructural needs that had been ignored by "Ottawa" for years. My presence provided

workers with the possibility to discuss their concerns. I had come equipped with the authorization from a regional director at the CBSA, a fact which seemed to impress and reassure my interviewees. In addition, my internal connection with one of their colleagues rested on locally anchored personal networks. In addition to being connected to this officer's daughter, I was staying over in the neighbouring village with family friends who had multi-generational roots in the area and were long-time acquaintances of this particular officer. With such introduction, I was able to carry out revealing and personalized in-depth interviews that were particularly significant in pointing me to the issue of intergenerational competition over promotions and generational approaches to borderwork in ports of entry.

After spending a few days in each port, officers, supervisors and clerical staff were warming up to my presence. When I needed to understand some particular internal positions in more details, it has been possible to request specific research participants. This is how I met targeters, analysts and machine-release system officers. Finally, while short stays in ports of entry certainly created challenges in establishing rapport with frontline officers, bringing my investigation to 5 ports provided the possibility to test the impressions and heuristic conclusions developed elsewhere. Visiting a handful of ports thus provided invaluable comparative material that allowed distinguishing between local border control dynamics, work routines and organizational cultures characteristic of small and remote, medium size and major ports of entry.

## **Conclusion**

Before I begin to tell the story of contemporary changes in borderwork at Canadian Customs, I wish to introduce a caveat. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to officers by a fictional name. These names have been carefully chosen to avoid referring to whether my interviewee was French-speaking or English-speaking, which generally meant they were from Québec or from Ontario. However, since I quote my interviewees more than once, I realized that taken together, these quotations could reveal someone's identity to a careful reader—such as a colleague or an immediate manager. Given that some of my interviewees asked for a copy of the dissertation when it would be finished, I still wished to make sure they would not recognize each other in it. Therefore, in order to further protect the confidentiality of my research participants, I sometimes chose not to name them in a few strategic sections of this thesis when I had to provide more personal details about these individuals. When this happens, the designation "officer" is employed.



# **CHAPTER I. The Contentious Spatialities and Temporalities of Border Control**

## **Introduction**

The Canada-U.S. border emerges from my research as an extended social space where relations between security actors are transformed by the redistribution of the responsibility for border control away from local ports of entry. These changes in the governance of border security have had profound consequences upon the working lives of border officers. As shown throughout this dissertation, the introduction of information technologies and organizational change in what has recently become known as "border security" have put in question taken-for-granted work routines, established divisions of labour and recognized distributions of authority in ports of entry. I suggest that the social dynamics shaping the security field respond, at least in part, to these disembedding and distanciation processes—that is "the "lifting out" of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space"—currently at stake in border security (Giddens 1990: 21).

The governance of borders has recently passed into what Bigo (2008), borrowing from Bourdieu, designates as the "(in)security field".<sup>10</sup> Confirming the insights of the critical border and security literatures, this remaking of customs into a security endeavour is produced by the devolution and redistribution of security responsibilities across a series

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<sup>10</sup> I recognize the security field may also produce insecurity for those subject to policing and surveillance practices. However, the use of the term reflects this dissertation's emphasis on the internal dynamics produced by security professionals' practices, and not on their consequences upon those subject to these practices.

of public and private actors interconnected by information exchange through bordering technologies. Seen as providing more objective and efficient security, these technologies transform officers' work routines and minimize the importance of face-to-face interactions as an investigative and risk assessment tool. Meanwhile, the pluralization of industry and governmental actors dedicated to security governance introduces competing regulating rationalities in border control. However, the level and manner of integration of these disembedding technologies and rationalities into the everyday practices of frontline security professionals is not properly addressed by the critical border and security studies literature and as such, remains an open question. As demonstrated by the sociology of policing, reworked reporting formats, internal accountability frameworks, organizational and technological challenges, variegated valuations of different tasks, organizational subcultures and occupational identities all shape how security actors "do" security in specific locals and organizations.

Furthermore, this chapter reviews how the critical border and security literature points to the consequences of the disembedding of border control from physical interactions between security actors, travelers and things (luggage, commodities) upon the temporality in which border control is deployed. According to these authors, given its concern with pre-emption, precaution or probabilistic calculations, contemporary security is primarily future-oriented. However, my interviews suggest that the practices of security bureaucrats are deployed on a continuum between past and future where security actions are represented as belonging to different temporalities. More specifically, border officers categorize their practices and those of their colleagues through references to what I call

*generational approaches to borderwork*. The sociology of generations can be relied upon in order to shed light on how workers interacting within a specific social space depend on generational ways of thinking, feeling and acting that can be traced back to their professional socialization. These years of habituation to the role of border officer thus shape their divergent appraisals of security practices as well as their generational interpretations of security policies, mandates and regulations. Finally, generational definitions of competency permit or further restrict access for security professionals to resources and advantages within the security field.

Consequently, my research uncovers the contentious temporalities and spatialities of border control that emerge from the integration of border control within the security field. By combining critical border and security studies with insights taken from the sociology of policing and the sociology of generations, I present new analytical perspectives that not only allow the study of security as the result of an increased technologization and of the devolution of security to non-state actors, but also as *a concrete activity and as a social relationship*. By doing so, my research illuminates the unintended consequences of disembedding processes in border control for security provision.

### **Thinking Sociologically about the Security Field and its Habitus**

Many researchers are interested in developing empirically-informed analyzes of border control. Some of these researchers are concerned with the experiences of those whose lives are implicated, willingly or unwillingly, in border spaces. They analyze the ease with which privileged travelers move across borders (Amit 2007; Gössling and Nilsson 2010; Sparke 2006). Others emphasize the difficulties of mobility and, in some cases, the

violence to which undocumented migrants and refugees are subjected. They also consider how these subjects may resist or circumvent border surveillance.<sup>11</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, however, only very few researchers adopt an ethnographic approach to the experiences of security professionals.

Perhaps because of this scarcity of empirical research about bordering practices, few studies interested in border security fully grasp the theoretical and empirical significance of the struggles of security bureaucrats and the political pressures under which they work, as well as the responsibilities, resources and work methods they mobilize while performing borderwork (but see Gilboy 1992). Yet those struggles and work patterns are constitutive of the security field and are central for understanding "the internal economy of the field" and its transformative dynamics (Bigo 2008).

Why use the notion of field when writing on border control? The notion of field presents a heuristic resource for political sociologists to speak of social relations away from traditional political and social divides that are too often still mapped onto border lines. In fact, sociology has traditionally circumscribed the study of society to national borders while paying little attention to the role played by these limit spaces in differentiating these societies: "While many of its key concepts such as class, gender, social structure and culture, transcend state borders, in practice most sociology in the post-war period has routinely taken 'national' state-bounded societies as its focus... This state-centric frame is

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<sup>11</sup> Authors interested in the damaging effect of border surveillance upon these migrants are too numerous to list, but the legal works of Canadian jurists Sharryn Aiken, François Crépeau, Audrey Macklin and Catherine Dauvergne, the social sciences studies of Gilberto Rosas and Jonathan Inda on the Mexico-US border and the contributions to the collection *The Deportation Regime* (de Genova and Peutz (eds) 2010) are good representatives.

increasingly being challenged within the discipline...but not in ways which make the problematization of borders central to the enterprise" (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson, 2002: 5)

Taking up the challenge, sociologists interested in the historical workings of colonialism, internationalization and globalization have recently drawn to the notion of field in order to examine power relations under colonialism and contemporary globalization (Dezalay and Garth 2002; Steinmetz 2007). Relinquishing inside/outside binaries through which International Relations made its name, the concept of field can be used to explore the internal dynamics of a social space without being constrained by national borders (Leander 2010). It allows one to analyze how, in a given socio-political space (e.g. the border, regional immigration policy, global policing, financial markets, etc.), specific logics and ways of thinking predominate over others partly because of competition between actors unequally endowed with a variety of resources they strategically mobilize within that space (Zimmermann and Favell 2011). Beyond dominant-dominated dichotomies, these authors demonstrate that a field approach fosters an analysis that, while shedding light on how social actors are positioned within stratified but heterogeneous and situated relations of power, is attentive to a diversity of social relations, practices, dispositions and sensibilities.

But what exactly is a "field"? Designating the myriad of autonomous spheres that shape our social life, the field, Bourdieu (1979: 271) tells us, is a configuration of interacting and historically inscribed social positions, "a structure of objective social relations" between these positions. A field constitutes a symbolic and hierarchical social space

whose economy is based on the distribution of objective relations between positions and where agents, unequally provided with diverse forms of resources or "capitals" (social, symbolic, economic), enter in conflict around specific stakes and interests. Chan (2003: 25; emphasis in the text) suggests that: "In policing, the field reflects the social, political, and legal capital available to police—both *individual* resources such as rank, experience, physical strength, skills, knowledge, discretion, autonomy, information, connection and reputation; and *organizational* resources such as promotional opportunities, public support, budget allocation, legal powers, and political independence". As seen in chapter 6, rookie, mid-career and experienced border officers are competing for more prominent positions within the security field by advancing their diverse academic credentials, their youth and physical strength, their experiential knowledge and technological know-how. Little explored by both the policing and security literatures, however, are the ways in which officers collectively intervene in this field through union-based politics (further examined in chapter 4).

Since Bourdieu's work has been severely criticized for its lack of attention to historicity (Dosse 2012 [1992])—a relevant concern if historicity is equated with an interest for the event—it might seem paradoxical to turn to the concept of field for addressing transition in the organizational cultures of security agencies. Bourdieu's work has often been taken as an invitation to reflect on social reproduction mechanisms or, more precisely, to contemplate how dynamics of social transformation are often translations of relations of domination that ultimately maintain their stability. In addition, the "logic of practice" (*sens pratique*) is sometimes lost on social actors for Bourdieu (tellingly, he writes of

agents rather than actors) and he minimally recognizes individuals' capacity for critique and reflexivity—a shortcoming underscored by the pragmatists. Finally, Bourdieu's lack of attention to social relations mediated by information technologies and "complex administrative organizations as well as by markets and other self-regulating systems" (Calhoun 1993: 83) might keep away anyone interested in the organization of transnational policing institutions and in their reliance on bulk data collection, risk management algorithms, identification through biometrics and other sophisticated hi-tech schemes.

Taking these criticisms seriously, this dissertation does not present a purely Bourdieusian argument but sparingly employs his concepts when they appear useful and sometimes extends their reach. In fact, despite its shortcomings, Bourdieu's sociology offers valuable tools for shedding light onto the dynamics of a transforming professional milieu like contemporary borderwork, with its changing dispositions, emerging occupational sensibilities and novel patterns of professional socialization. Through power struggles, but also a process of socialization specific to the field, actors shape their subjectivity and embodiment. More specifically, to interact and understand each other within a field, actors must learn a specific *habitus*, an incorporated and sometimes unconscious "system of durable and transposable dispositions": "A product of history, the habitus produces individual and collective practices (...); it ensures the active presence of past experiences which—deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action—are inclined, more surely than all formal norms and explicit norms, to guarantee the conformity of practices and their consistency throughout time" (Bourdieu 1980: 91;

*personal translation*).<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu developed a relational understanding of the social as produced through the meeting of field and habitus or "history made thing" and "history made body" (Bourdieu, 1982). This "methodological relationalism" invites a study of the border as a context-specific set of social relations unfolding at a moment of significant historical transformation.<sup>13</sup>

There is no field without a recognition of its stakes. No stakes, no field, or conversely, one needs to adopt the habitus of a field—as Bourdieu (1980: 111) widely quoted turn of phrase denotes, "a feel for the game" (*un sens du jeu*)—in order to be part of it. This is where habitus and field meet. This feel for the game has both a subjective meaning (an "investment" by actors in the direction taken by a field) as much as an objective one (an "anticipation" of the future of the field given actors' knowledge of the field's "regularities" that emerges from their practices). When a person enters a field, she accepts, consciously or not, the rules and stakes of the game played within in.

This dissertation lays out how the meaning of the game has significantly changed in the past three decades as the mandate of border organizations passed from a tax collection logic to the securing of flows. Many experienced officers I interviewed have not adapted well to this new approach to their occupation. Chan (2003) remarks that Bourdieu

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<sup>12</sup> "Produit de l'histoire, l'habitus produit des pratiques, individuelles et collectives, donc de l'histoire; il assure la présence active des expériences passées qui, déposées en chaque organisme sous la forme de schèmes de perception, de pensée et d'action, tendent, plus sûrement que toutes les règles formelles et toutes les normes explicites, à garantir la conformité des pratiques et leur constance à travers le temps" (*personal translation*).

<sup>13</sup> In contrast to a structure/agency dichotomous approach, Corcuff (2011: 15-16) suggests that methodological relationalism (*relationnalisme méthodologique*) is constitutive of sociological programs taking *social relations* as their object of analysis, "allowing to treat in a same frame the individual and collective dimensions of social life" (*personal translation*).



recognized that actors' reflexivity about their habitus may be triggered by the experience of displaying misplaced attitudes and inappropriate behaviors within a field. But emphasizing how professional socialization is a process where dispositions specific to the security field are acquired by border officers still requires somewhat of an adjustment to the meaning of the term "habitus" as defined by Bourdieu. There is no thorough analysis in this dissertation of border officers' childhoods, of how class is closely related to their professional dispositions or to their general cultural tastes and preferences. Consequently, one could think it preferable to refer to an "habituation" rather than to the adoption of an habitus by border officers. However, the literature on policing and security has found the notion of habitus useful on a few occasions. My use of the term particularly builds on how it has been taken up by Bigo (2011) and Chan (1997; 2003; 2004). Both authors suggest that the habitus provides orientation for action. Their insights are particularly helpful for those studying how flexible a policing habitus can be, especially in conditions of social and organizational change.

Speaking of the transitioning professional socialization of Australian police officers, Chan (2003: 25-26) argues that a policing habitus guides rather than determines behavior: "habitus allows for creation and innovation in police work. It is a 'feel for the game'; it enables an infinite number of 'moves' to be made in an infinite number of situations. It embodies what police officers often refer to as 'common sense' (...) and what is commonly known as 'policing skills' (...). Long-term members of an organization tend to take their habitus for granted (...) Where there exists a stable organizational culture, most recruits learn consciously or otherwise to adapt to the sensibilities and cognitions of peer

groups". It might be exaggerated to think, like Chan does, that there is an "infinite" number of possibilities for action offered to policing and security personnel by their habitus. In fact, as we shall see throughout the following chapters, a security approach to social and political issues (e.g. terrorism, irregular migration, political dissent etc.) rather limits the valid statements border actors can make about these matters and how they can respond to them. For instance, a commonly known illustration of habitus in police settings concerns the recourse of frontline security professionals to their "sixth sense", that is to a set of more or less conscious dispositions acquired throughout their careers. Such policing habitus would tend to make security actors suspicious of what they come to see as abnormal behavior, a judgment grounded in that which is deemed threatening by their border organization at a specific point of its history (e.g. drug traffic, tobacco smuggling, terrorism etc.).

But Chan is right to point to the suppleness of habitus in the workplace and to how a police-specific habitus can be acquired by trained security actors. As she underlines elsewhere (Chan 2004), however, contemporary security environments are characterized by organizational instability. Therefore, the adaptation of both recruits and experienced officers to their new environment encounters challenges that have consequences for theorizing what counts as a policing sensibility. In such circumstances of social change, habitus and field do not neatly correspond to each other. Actually, maybe they never did. Bigo (2011) expresses his discomfort with Bourdieu's deterministic understanding of the "structural homology" of fields, that is of the identical organization of positions within different fields. Such appreciation of fields confers a predictive quality to behavior. In

contrast, approaching the field as a space which orients and opens possibilities for action requires "an understanding of habitus [which] is related to the idea that it is an imperfect grammar of practices full of ambiguities, not a set of (predetermined) practices (...), [the field] gives orientation to these practices, but is not determining them" (Bigo 2011: 238). As a result, the habitus can also be conceptualized as a terrain of conflict—for instance regarding what is considered an appropriate security practice or the role that security professionals should be playing and for which purpose. While it is open to innovation and interpretation in the everyday practice of security professionals, the habitus also "resists the evolving conditions of the field, creates tensions, and is shaken by new experiences" (Bigo 2011: 242). We will later see that such tensions particularly arise when border officers mobilize divergent generational approaches to borderwork in ports of entry.

The field is thus conceived as a relation of power within which positions are enunciated, and the habitus constitutes a set of dispositions acquired within this field and structuring practices and representations. From this perspective, security may be analyzed in terms of the frictions and negotiations between actors, as well as in the ways in which these tensions problematize the very notion of "security" and open it up to analysis. Striving to preserve their influence within the field, security professionals do not necessarily agree on the significance and meaning of different acts of security. These disagreements play a significant role in their competition, that is, in the "game" these actors play in the security field. Taken together with the actions of agents situated outside the field and intervening in it, the struggles of security professionals are also vectors of social change capable of

modifying a field's boundaries.<sup>14</sup> My research underlines the *social* character of security by paying attention to everyday borderwork processes and to the ways in which the competition between border actors over specific stakes in the policing of global mobilities transform the substance and location of borderwork.

### **Disembedding Border Control**

As I will further demonstrate in the next chapter, the recent history of border control in North America is partly one of incorporation into the security field through a progressive disembedding of border functions from the land border. There are different interpretations as to how and for which purpose this transformation occurred. I have reviewed elsewhere how the Canada-U.S. border has been spatially "diffused" inside and outside the continent through counter-terrorist and immigration-related legislation, surveillance devices targeting "risky" travelers, refugee interdiction measures, transnational intelligence exchanges and advanced identification procedures based on information and biometric technologies (Côté-Boucher 2008). Other works have shown that this sophisticated system which extends borders beyond their traditional geopolitical location is not particular to North America but also deployed by European and Australian authorities: "the actuarial logic of risk management, which pervades the governance of

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<sup>14</sup> The notions of field and habitus are often portrayed as static and unvarying, too focused on the mechanics of reproduction of domination hence unfit to speak to what many assume to be the fluid and transformative character of security practices, rationalities and subjectivities. However, Bourdieu has always been aware and attentive to processes of rupture and disruption. As Wacquant (2004) reminds us, his early ethnographic work in Algeria with Abdelmalek Sayad showed the force of rapid transformation of Algerian society in the transition towards the post-colonization period, and inquired into the mechanisms involved in these major shifts and their impacts upon social representations of time. In the words of Bigo (2011: 237), "a relational approach in Bourdieusian terms has to examine change and transformations of specific processes, and a specific time (and duration)".

developed states under globalisation, has also pushed borders outwards, both legally and physically, through visa regimes, carrier sanctions, overseas liaison officers, transnational disruption operations and information exchange networks, all aimed at preventing unwarranted arrival" (Pickering and Weber, 2006: 9). There is a substantial multidisciplinary scholarship that theorizes border security as a set of techniques and rationalities that diffuse border spaces, and the governance of mobility, beyond and inside national territories (among others, Balibar 2009; Weber and Bowling 2004; Walters 2006; Squire 2011).

This proliferation of interest and concurrent research on the governance of mobilities of persons has arisen partly out of this global delocalization and remodelling of border spaces over the past two decades. For some, it is possible to explain this disembedding of border control away from ports of entry and physical reviews of commodities and persons as a function of the emergence of new mobile and global threats. This reasoning is often adopted by border-related policies and security discourses that portray the growth and spatial diffusion of border policing as a direct response to a putative rise in transnational threats—a discourse critically reviewed by Côté-Boucher (2011) and Sheptycki (2011).<sup>15</sup> This teleological justification is far from innocent; it forms the rhetorical basis for validating billions of dollars in global spending on border security measures and technologies—including the massive hiring of new personnel in security agencies as well as the expansive purchase of drones for patrolling land borders and of automated customs

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<sup>15</sup> Other scholars invert the equation. Andreas (2009) reviews the escalation of policing and military interventions at the U.S.-Mexico border since the 1980s. He convincingly argues that this process has set in motion a deeper criminalisation of cartels inside Mexico while generating high levels of police corruption.

risk assessment systems and body scanners for airports—with little evidence of their effectiveness and too often, without any accountability for human rights and little budgetary transparency.<sup>16</sup>

Questioning the rhetorics and "affective dynamics" pertaining to border security (Salter and Mutlu 2012) that play with anxieties about crime, terrorism and irregular migration is no easy task. As aptly suggested by Sheptycki (2007a: 71) regarding the security-control paradox: "the irony is that the undeniable increase in surveillance and security practices is only congruent with the multiplication of insecurity and fear". Critical border and security scholars alike have analyzed the contemporary dynamics of "policing at a distance" (Bigo and Guild 2005). Their research pays attention to the technological means of providing security and questions the underpinning assumption in much security policy regarding their putative neutrality. These authors also shed light on the multiple actors engaged in the transformation of borders into spaces for the securisation of movement and the extent to which their use of competing rationalities complicates the provision of security. The operations of the security professionals do not directly follow alleged increases in global threats; they are rather inspired by their particular definition of what represents a threat and of which political problems should be viewed as security risks.

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<sup>16</sup> A recent report of the Auditor General revealed that \$3.1 billion spent in public safety and counter-terrorism between 2001 and 2009 are unaccounted for. Galloway, G. and D. Leblanc, "Ottawa loses track of \$3.1 billion meant to fight terror", *The Globe and Mail*, 30 Apr. 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-loses-track-of-31-billion-meant-to-fight-terror/article11629983/> (last consulted 7 May 2013).

### *The alleged neutrality of border technologies*

The first image that likely comes to mind when thinking about border control is that of the uniformed officer sitting in his booth asking questions about length of travel and citizenship, or inspecting the contents of a piece of luggage. Activities of identification, search and evaluation—or of "confession and examination" to quote Salter (2007) — constitute the core of border officers' work (Gilboy 1991). Developed by modern states in order to establish their territorial sovereignty through the "monopolization of the legitimate means of movement" (Torpey 2000), these activities continue to be performed daily in ports of entry around the world. However, border security has become intricately linked to its technologization (Ceyhan 2008) with significant consequences for thinking the work processes of border officers.

The critical border and security literature points us in a heuristic direction by questioning the alleged neutrality of border technologies. It demonstrates that border control has been partly disembedded from the traditional identification methods and investigative activities of border workers, that is, the physical review of shipments and the face-to-face readings of "indicators of risk" by border officers. Because they are increasingly removed from direct human interactions, risk management strategies and technologies can easily be presumed to have neutral outcomes. This is a questionable conclusion according to Amore and de Goede (2008: 8; authors' emphasis): "risk-based screening is offered (...) as being more objective, neutral and expert led than the potentially discriminatory and prejudicial decisions taken by airport security personnel and border guards. (...) In the process, however, decisions concerning *which* passengers need 'a closer look' and *which*

qualify for 'faster service' are displaced inside bureaucratic and technological spaces that are difficult to understand, and even more difficult to challenge".

Whether taken as a "social sorting" strategy by Lyon (2003) or as a "dividing practice" by Amoore (2006; quoting Foucault), when applied to border spaces, risk management allows for the classification of individuals and commodities into mobilities that must either remain unimpeded or be proscribed (Aas 2011). Security professionals regulate access to specific territories and modes of transportation by separating "risky" (for instance, asylum seekers or persons with criminal records) from "trusted" individuals (think of business travelers). By doing so, border security limits the exercise of full citizenship for many categories of "risky" travellers and extends that of others. It therefore creates novel dynamics of exclusion and privilege that promote in/security by means of a new regulation of people's access to the freedom of movement (Rygiel 2010).

The use of mathematical languages such as data-mining, risk quantification and algorithms in data management practices contributes to this perception of neutrality. Amoore (2009: 52) examines how algorithmic analyses produced by intelligence-led border policing offer the potential to "translate *probable* associations between people or objects into *actionable* security decisions". In this way, border organizations associate the regulation of cross-border flows with risk calculations—rather than seeing it, for instance, as an ambassadorial activity fostered by a cautious cosmopolitan outlook (Benhabib 2004). As discussed by Salter (2008a), performance measurements of risk procedures remain impossible to establish. There are no statistics about the total number of objects that escaped the attention of border officials. In the absence of this data, variables such as



the number of prohibited items found say little about overall detection rates—in short, it is impossible to establish the percentage of detected objects. 1%, 10%, 20%? We do not know. Salter (2008a) suggests that the "fetish of quantification" in risk management obscures this lack of evidence as to the efficacy of risk-based strategies.

Another border control technology, biometrics, has received much critical attention by authors interested in the development of novel techniques for verifying the identity of cross-border travelers (for some of the finest examples in this line of works, see Browne 2010; Epstein 2007; Rygiel 2011; van der Ploeg 1999, 2003). Such level of interest might overstate the relative importance of biometrics when compared to more commonly used border control tools—think of firearms, x-rays and ion-scans, databases, cameras and interviewing. While effective as unique identifiers, biometrics do not always serve an identification purpose. For instance, Canadian customs services—the focus of this dissertation—collects biometrics for investigative reasons.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, amidst a wider range of surveillance methods that support the port of entry interview, biometrics offer a valuable entry for analyses interested in re-thinking the role of "confession" at the border. Biometrics, writes Aas (2006: 144), draws attention to an "inability to establish trust through speech and linguistic communication. When it comes to establishing the trustworthiness of strangers, an iris scan or a database of DNA samples and fingerprints, is quicker and seen as more reliable than a story told in an interview". Similarly, Rygiel

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<sup>17</sup> Biometrics are prerequisites for membership in preclearance programs such as NEXUS (where iris scans are collected and used to identify frequent travelers). But fingerprints are obtained from truck drivers who wish to become members of the FAST trusted trader program in order to be shared with U.S. counterparts for inquiring into prior criminal convictions.

(2013) suggests that biometrics, as well as other risk management technologies, limit opportunities for travelers to come up with more complex and contextualized narratives about their mobility patterns: "border controls are increasingly operationalized by employing particular forms of information and surveillance technologies, which privilege expert (particularly techno-scientific) forms of knowledge such as risk management (e.g. profiling) and biopolitical (e.g. biometric) forms of knowledge (...). The reliance on expert techno-scientific knowledge subordinates other forms of border knowledge based on "everyday knowledge" (...) that come from years on the job as a border guard or that depend on personal narrative and negotiation". As we shall see in chapter 6, border control technologies diminish the possibility for negotiations over these narratives between border officers and travelers and, as further demonstrated in chapter 3, narrows the possibility for these officers to draw on their discretionary powers.

#### *Devolution and pluralization in mobility governance*

Guiraudon and Lahav (2000) suggest that states respond to those aspects of liberal regimes that undermine their sovereignty, such as the freedom of circulation required by a global economy, by devolving decision-making upward to intergovernmental organizations, downward to local authorities, and outward to nonstate actors. This devolution allows the state to circumvent international norms that can judicially constrain state agencies at the national level, integrate actors with similar interests to those of these agencies as well as bypass instances when a national department has to negotiate with other ministries with different policy objectives. Accordingly, as is the case for other contemporary forms of policing (Dupont 2004), the devolution of responsibilities in the

control of cross-border commodity flows relies on a strategy of pluralization of security actors dispersed across different scales (local, regional, national, international, transnational) and organized in more or less loose networks.

Widely acknowledged by sociologists of policing (Johnson and Shearing 2003; Loader 2000; Stenning 2009), pluralization has not yet been adequately addressed by the border security literature which generally concentrates its analytical efforts on national state actors (e.g. immigration and customs authorities). Existing studies pay more attention to the devolution of travelers and migration management responsibilities and security policy implementation to a series of private and public actors than to these actors' role in the governance of commodity flows. Promoting a strategy of blame avoidance, immigration and customs administrations shift liability to nonstate actors (Infantino 2012), outsource border regulation through carrier sanctions (Sholten and Minderhoud 2008), devolve the administration of visa demands to a growing industry (Beaudu 2007; Infantino 2010), use private contractors specialized in immigration detention (Flynn and Cannon 2009), introduce cost-effectiveness and marketization strategies in mobilities management that "turn local actors or contractors into regulators" (Lahav 2008: 80). Meanwhile, the delegation of immigration enforcement responsibilities to local police enforcement authorities through executive orders, stop and search powers and revamped immigration legislation is a growing trend in countries such as the United States (Coleman 2009), Australia (Weber 2011) and even Russia (Light 2010). Effectively displacing borders inside national territories, this increased surveillance has been shown, at least in the U.S.,

to result in undocumented migrants' constant fear of deportation and compliance with exploitative working conditions (Harrison and Lloyd 2012).

However, the issues raised by the pluralization of security actors as they relate to the governance of commodity flows remain less well understood. More research is needed to understand the significance of this trend for public/private dynamics, market and regulatory logics and the combinations of indirect control and direct oversight in the securization of customs. Mostly focused on maritime ports, the few studies that examine the securing of commodity chains draw attention to the restructuring of customs authorities in the midst of the global adoption of free trade and open market strategies after decades of economic protectionism. This restructuring extends their mandate beyond tax collection to include smooth import processing through regulatory, legislative and technological standardization, regional trade agreements as well as closer relations with trade partners and business stakeholders: "the worldwide revival of Customs appears to reflect a neoliberal vision of government *minimis*, where states' regulatory capacities are consolidated within a single body geared to the promotion and management of international investments and commercial flows while other arenas of government are cut or streamlined" (Chalfin 2010: 28). Other authors point to the "Americanization" of the global governance of material mobilities through the diffusion of models of transport security (e.g. container security and pre-arrival processing programs) and the harmonization of regulations over trade inspired by U.S. customs security programmes (Eski 2011). Meanwhile, the involvement of private actors in securing commodity chains create indirect customs controls which contribute to remove these controls from

geopolitical borders (Chalfin 2007). In doing so, they follow the global re-localization of industrial production and the formation of extended supply chains. Chapter 2 presents an historical overview of this progressive delocalization of the border and of the introduction of various private and public actor in its governance, bringing to light the impact of these tendencies upon the organization and mandate of Canadian customs.

The involvement of public and private actors introduces competing rationalities of governance into the policing of cross-border mobilities in ways that redefine the meanings given to "security" and "economic efficiency". These new forms of security governance rework public/private dynamics, bring together governmental and market logics in the regulation of commodity flows and combine indirect market-based controls with direct state oversight. This pluralization points to the multiplication and blurring of policing rationalities—crime prevention, prudentialism, profit-making, disciplining of labour, risk assessment—in security settings (O'Malley 1996; Ericson and Haggerty 1997; Zedner 2003; Manning 2006).

In fact, it puts these rationalities in tension. On the one hand, far from approaching security under a rhetoric of danger and menace, private stakeholders (air carriers, transport and shipping companies, importers and exporters) are more likely to view security through profitability models. For instance, take maritime transportation companies and their need for insuring their commercial activities. Insurance acts as an incentive to adopt security practices. Walters (2008: 9) argues that "the insurance relationship [is] a powerful factor shaping the ways in which formally commercial actors like ship owners, port authorities and other carriers take up security functions normally

associated with public immigration authorities and police agencies". Insurantal risk models approach uncertainty in supply chains as an economic cost rather than a security problem. On the other hand, as maritime ports are reconfigured into nodes within a secured global supply system, customs authorities adopt logistics management strategies. Preoccupied with maintaining unimpeded commodity flows, interruptions in commodity distribution networks are approached by these authorities as a security issue (Cowen 2010a, 2010b). Cowen's work highlights the detrimental impacts of this securing of customs upon labour rights, inaugurating new forms of surveillance compelling port workers to provide scores of private information in order to receive clearance cards—an issue also affecting North American cross-border truck drivers (Côté-Boucher 2010a).

### **Disembedding and the Changing Practices of Security Professionals**

Critical border and security studies analyze how the multiplication of surveillance technologies and the different understandings of security promoted by a plurality of security actors have disembedded the governance of mobilities from geopolitical borders and incorporated border control into the security field. However, this literature generally avoids the question of the concrete integration of these surveillance means into the everyday practices of a variety of security professionals working in specific settings (e.g. airports, intelligence offices, land ports of entry, customs warehouses, federal police headquarters, etc.). As Haggerty and Ericson (2006: 4) argue: "Part of the power of surveillance derives from the ability of institutional actors to integrate, combine, and coordinate various systems and components". My ethnographic research reveals that this "ability of institutional actors" is precisely the crux of the problem for understanding

changing enforcement practices in ports of entry. Rather than investigating how different security tools are used by security workers, we often assume a smooth reliance on computers and data. But such ability in using particular enforcement and surveillance means should not be taken for granted but further explored. Throughout this dissertation, I thus make this reliance on intelligence systems a research question. I offer an ethnographic inquiry into the interrelated facets of enforcement technologies, tools and methods and the role they take in everyday border policing. I ask: How are surveillance technologies and other border policing integrated within the work routines of border officers and the organizational culture of ports of entry? Monahan's (2011: 496) invitation to approach surveillance through an everyday outlook is worth quoting as it stresses: "an orientation to surveillance that views it as embedded within, brought about by, and generative of social practices in specific cultural contexts." Given the various uses of border control and enforcement tools and internal debates between officers as to their respective value, security in ports of entry should be approached as a historically situated socio-cultural practice.

In this sense, border security cannot be seen as the direct, unmediated result of policy changes, of a technologization of surveillance or of the devolution of security responsibilities. The security field is also shaped by security personnel habituation to particular know-how and by their adoption of dispositions that are specific to the occupational cultures of policing organizations (e.g. federal police, customs agency,

multi-agency policing teams etc.).<sup>18</sup> By proposing empirical research into the work routines of security workers, their professional socialization as well as their occupational subculture and identity, the sociology of policing teaches us that security professionals actively interact with and shape these transformative tendencies in border security.

*Security professionals as "knowledge workers"*

Many authors appropriately worry about the scope of mass data gathering, processing and analysis by policing and intelligence agencies. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to analyze the political and social implications of this "surveillant assemblage" (Haggerty and Ericson 2000), it imports to briefly underscore that potential for abuse abounds in surveillance systems. The surveillance-related literature sometimes sheds light on how mistakes can be made in the collection, input and treatment of data in intelligence systems. Surveillance studies also documents the synergy between technologies and security professionals—such as the voyeuristic use of CCTV cameras by male security workers in Britain (Norris and Armstrong 1999)—or the racializing potential inscribed in biometric technologies (Browne 2010).

Surveillance systems intensify security organizations' profiling of travelers (Curry 2004) and marginalized groups as well as the suppression of social movements (Monaghan and

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<sup>18</sup> By occupational culture, I follow the definition provided by Manning (1989: 360): "An occupational culture is a reduced, selective, and task-based culture that is shaped by and shapes the socially relevant worlds of the occupation. Embedded in traditions and a history, occupational cultures contain accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are situationally applied, and generalized rationales and beliefs. Such cultures highlight selectively the contours of an environment, granting meaning to some facts and not to others, and linking modes of seeing, doing and believing". Relatedly, I refer in this dissertation to "occupational identity" in order to speak to the sensibility developed by border officers socialized within their specific occupation and within a border policing organization.



Walby 2012). They also offer the possibility of unregulated data transmission between law enforcement agencies for policing purposes and increases chances for mission creep, that is the use of data for another purpose than that for which it had been collected in the first place (Monahan and Palmer 2009). The combination of various surveillance systems and technologies favours privacy intrusions and the monitoring of citizens, going against values fundamental to liberal democracies: "As privacy is an essential prerequisite to the exercise of individual freedom, its erosion weakens the constitutional foundations on which democracy and good governance have traditionally been based" (Wright and al. 2010).

While the critical border and security literature acknowledges that communication systems and technologies based on the storing, analysis, mining and transmission of information present significant public concerns, studies in policing illuminate what security actors actually "do" with these technologies. In fact, a growing area of importance for those researching policing subcultures and occupational change in policing organizations—and of particular interest for students of border security—is the transformation of policing into "knowledge work" (Ericson and Haggerty 1997). Not only do these technologies and new regulatory methods contribute to the governance of mobilities; they also generate surveillance over security professionals themselves.

In addition to political pressures over specific decisions that may not receive approval by management and local political authorities (Gilboy 1992) or which are brought to the limelight by the media and public criticism, frontline border officers are also increasingly

submitted to varied types of organizational, political and public surveillance.<sup>19</sup> For instance, security activities are submitted to internal and external audits, performance reviews and public complaints watchdogs (Chan 2004). But a major change brought by knowledge-based activities in policing consists in how the activities of security professionals are managed and surveyed. Information systems create particular forms of organizational surveillance over security professionals. Security and policing activities are now organized and evaluated through what Ericson (2007b: 380) calls "communications formats": "Fixed-choice classification schemes, fill-in-the-blank forms, computer-based reporting systems and the like all embed regulations in the communication process. In doing so, they force organizational actors to simultaneously think, make decisions, act and report their actions in ways that appear procedurally correct and therefore accountable and legitimate". These schemes formalize the collection and treatment of data but also complicate data processing by adding multiple reporting procedures and possible classifications to data management responsibilities. Enforcing the "policing of narratives" produced by frontline security officials (Ericson and Haggerty 1997: 9), communication formats focus policing activities on the collection of information deemed significant by security organizations or legislated as necessary reporting requirements.

Furthermore, Bennett (2005) warns against inflated assumptions about a purported seamlessness between intelligence-gathering systems when studying surveillance

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<sup>19</sup> A recent instance of this surveillance at the CBSA concerns a new "integrity questionnaire" distributed to border services officers in 2012. With questions about gambling, violent behavior, solicitation, drug and alcohol use history as well as spousal and partner information, it could be answered on a voluntary basis. CIU-SDI, the border officers' union, recommended its members avoid filing out the intrusive questionnaire.

practices. What Sheptycki (2004) calls the "organizational pathologies" in intelligence systems create problems for security organizations in the collection, treatment, analysis and storage of information. Sheptycki's (2004) work clearly shows that information exchange encounters important challenges. Information does not easily flow in a hierarchical, multi-security agency environment equipped with different—and often incompatible—mass data storage systems that are overloaded with an ever-expanding amount of records. Meanwhile, intelligence-led policing agencies might not have the adequate resources and sufficient personnel to analyze such quantities of information. Variegated levels of security clearance, the withholding of information on the basis of struggles of prestige between policing organizations or following the "need to know principle" as well as constitutional and privacy rights regulations may also constrain information-sharing (Brodeur and Dupont 2006).

Dissimilar types of knowledge work receive differential valuations in security organizations (Proteau and Pruvost 2008). While some forms of data management work—such as intelligence analysis—obtain recognition, others, such as paperwork, provide little prestige to security workers. Moreover, as further developed in chapters 4 and 5, border policing carries entrenched gendered representations. For instance, clerical and tax-based tasks are sometimes portrayed by border officers as feminine activities. Finally, Ericson and Haggerty (1997) remind us that information technologies and knowledge work can be resisted by rank-and-file. My research confirms this insight. The Canada Border Services Agency's systems (especially 'legacy' ones developed before the creation of the CBSA in 2003) are notoriously arduous to use and filled with dated and

sometimes unreliable information. In those instances officers may be tempted to fall back onto their understanding of local context as well as their experiential knowledge and interviewing skills acquired over the years.

*Organizational instability and a changing habitus*

If one accepts that the security field is made of continuities but also of transformations, alterations and ruptures, one must investigate what this means for the habitus of security professionals. Knowledge work promotes organizational but also occupational change: "Technological change," writes Chan (2001: 147), "to the extent that it redefines the game of policing, can bring about changes in the field (through various constraints and resources) as well as transform the habitus (e.g. classifications, assumptions and sensibilities)". Transformations in border officers' ways of acting, thinking and feeling produced by this novel technological materiality of borderwork suggests a need for students of frontline borderwork to heed the notion of occupational subculture in policing organizations.

While it is important to acknowledge local differences between police organizations, according to Bowling and Sheptycki (2012: 82), "it is a staple finding of police research that certain values, experiences, expectations and behaviours are to be found among policing agents working in very different circumstances around the world". Frontline policing officials may experience cynicism and suspicion stemming from oft-occurring experiences of deception as well as verbal and even physical violence coming from those they police. But security professionals also benefit from a strong moral conviction that

they are fighting what a few of my interviewees called the "bad guys". This "sense of mission" as Reiner (2010) coined it, is connected to an action-oriented behavior facilitated by legally-entrenched coercive powers. Of course, security actors are not all provided with the legal powers that would allow them to use coercive force. But, as reiterated in his conversation with Brodeur (2007), Bittner reminds us that public policing actors belong to organizations, or networks of organizations, that have the legal and technological means to impose, prevent or enhance (that is, to "police") conduct.

At the same time, the current transformation in the social, political, legal and economic context of border security influences the reshaping of border officers' habitus: "In the present era of globalisation, marketisation and new accountability, however, the stability of organizational environment and organizational culture can no longer be assumed. Certainly, dramatic changes have taken place in the policing environment in recent years, not only in terms of social, demographic and economic conditions, but also in policing rhetoric and strategy, legal regulation, recruitment and training, technology as well as management and accountability. Any model that ignores such changes will not be able to adequately account for the dynamism and complexity of socialisation in modern organizations" (Chan 2004: 330).

Given these transformations, Chan (1996) suggests anchoring studies of organizational subcultures of policing and security agencies within the socio-political context in which they are deployed. For example, Chalfin (2010) argues that the neoliberal restructuring of customs, facilitated by a centralization of powers in border organizations and the devolution of authority to an array of public and private actors, has deepened the long-

established struggles between headquarters and ports of entry in Ghana. Chapter 3 analyzes a similar strain in Canadian border services where distancing processes bring about a re-arrangement of relations and competition within and between security organizations. But these relations can also be studied by analysing the impact of transformations in the professional socialization of security workers which, in turn, modifies work routines and occupational subcultures. These modifications reconfigure the security field by renewing struggles over influence and promotion, as well as engendering discussions regarding the desirability and effectiveness of different work methods. In Canadian ports of entry, these debates take the form of intergenerational tensions.

### **Generational Approaches to Borderwork**

In much of the critical borders and security literature, attention to the anticipatory temporality of security logics and interventions has taken many guises, including what authors have titled "risk", "prevention", "prudentialism", "precaution" and "preemption". For these authors, security rationalities are infused with a preoccupation for what may happen. Security, argues de Goede (2012: xxi), is "a technology of the future, one that works through a probabilistic comprehension, calculation and colonization of uncertain futures". As security makes contingency its preoccupation, this "presence of the future" (Anderson 2010) shapes risks into incidents that may be calculated and prevented. In fact, as I have noted elsewhere (Côté-Boucher 2010a), those tasked with apprehending risk attempt to prevent uncertain events from impeding cross-border flows through modes of

probabilistic calculations that are deemed to allow specific, targeted security interventions.

Though not particularly new, this future outlook of security governance mechanisms is a central feature of a liberal culture of danger preoccupied with what is yet to come, anticipating events, phenomena and populations through what Foucault (2004) labels *dispositifs* of security. One of the principal means through which governing actors intervene on uncertainties rests with mechanisms for the calculation of the aleatory and predictions, often induced from statistical readings of past occurrences (Hacking 1990). Consequently, an insurantal logic has long been intertwined with risk interventions (Ericson and Doyle 2004). In order to handle the social problems that gave rise to the 19th century revolutions as objects of risk governance, continental and Anglo-Saxon states introduced social solidarity strategies at varied rhythms and intensity (Castel 1991, Donzelot 1994, Ewald 1986). Spearheaded by the welfare state, many of these strategies were conceived as providing a social form of security that protected and compensated individuals against the risks generated by the modern division of labour (misery, work accidents, unemployment, old age).

The literature concerned with the constitution of the contemporary security field points to a rupture in the modes of apprehension of a future-oriented temporality within security discourses and rationalities. Away from its redistributive and insurantal intent, security has become equated with public safety for many governing institutions restructured by market-based logics (Brodie 2009). At the level of social policy, this has meant the rise of "prudentialism" (O'Malley 1996), that is an individualisation of responsibilities and an

increased importance given to the private sector to protect against and compensate risk. In the meantime, security governance has been profoundly reshaped. Following the Cold War, internal and external security functions have become increasingly indistinct, bringing closer policing and military institutions and work methods (Bigo 2001). The emerging security field progressively assimilated complex global issues such as undocumented migration, terrorism and transnational organized crime, regrouped under a blurred risk management constellation (Bigo 2002). Adopting catastrophic thinking as their privileged risk rationality—particularly in the areas of critical infrastructure protection and counter-terrorism—the organizations undergoing this renewed version of "security" take on a "precautionary" or a "preemptive" approach to contingency stressing the radical indeterminacy of the future.

For Ewald (2002) precaution fosters an "attitude of doubt" which anticipates future events and trends through models derived from the worst case scenario. It is mainly the relationship to validity and knowledge that is reconfigured by the precautionary attitude. Decisions to act cannot be based on facts and calculations of past patterns as these do not exist for catastrophic events whose occurrence is rare and unpredictable. They thus rest on an anxious sensibility which dovetails with a zero-risk approach. Precautionary risk, write Aradau and van Munster (2007: 101), "introduces within the computation of the future its very limit, the infinity of uncertainty and potential damage. [...] The weight of the future is not simply that of contingency, but that of catastrophic contingency". Therefore, both precaution and preemption are not preoccupied with risk—which is calculable, preventable and has serious yet manageable consequences—but with an



unknowable uncertainty. But if precaution apprehends catastrophe through a preventative logic, preemption is rather concerned with how to act relative to unpredictability and drastic contingency. "Unleashing transformative events in order to avoid a rupture in a valued life" before a determinate threat has even emerged (Anderson 2010: 790), preemption thus works as a set of actions over an "indeterminate potentiality"—that is, over threats that may rise at any moment and whose nature may not always be known (Massumi 2007).

According to Aradau and van Munster (2007), precaution fosters a "politics of speed" in security decisions where urgency transforms the routines of security bureaucrats on the model of the ticking-bomb scenario, making them less dependent on procedural considerations. Similarly, Ericson (2007b) observes that the emergence of a "counter-law" in policing methods within the security field—where new security laws and an extended surveillance *dispositif* based on suspicion normalize the erosion of traditional standards of proof and individual rights—has been fundamental in the adoption of preemptive targeting against alleged threats. In this context, the preemptive reduction of the time allocated to security professionals for effective action fosters the "criminalization of association and acting on suspicion" (de Goede 2012: xxvii).

#### *Generational differences as a mode of classification*

Although I am deeply inspired by the literature on the anticipatory character of contemporary security, my research uncovers some unique dimensions of the temporalities in which security bureaucrats deploy their actions on an everyday basis. Far from being solely future-oriented, contemporary security professionals may long for a

past golden era when security interventions and border policies were supported by hard human intelligence data, no non-sense cross-border taxation regulations and good old paperwork. In contrast, others may respond to this nostalgia by insisting that security has now reached another high-tech historical moment—and by doing so, may exaggerate the significance of specific security transformations in their everyday work routines. Security actors might well think of computers, biometrics and risk targeting as fads that will not stand the test of time, or, inversely, throw into the dustbin of history work methods that do not include these innovations. Some may be suspicious of the enforcement skills of a few colleagues and doubt the risk analyses coming from a particular section of their organization, or even question the intelligence work produced by other agencies. Therefore, including security professionals' changing occupational culture within conceptual frameworks aimed at analysing the governance of mobilities allows an investigation of the ways in which disembedding processes in border spaces are mediated, resisted or embraced by officers who locate themselves in a range of temporalities. This approach acknowledges security bureaucrats as interpretive actors in their own right.

Consequently, these future, nostalgic and present-oriented temporalities are not "ontological" to contemporary security but central to its deployment as a social practice and can be examined with attention to the struggles that permeate the security field. From the point of view of security actors, to claim that a security practice is innovative or that another comes from a past era is always to pass a moral judgment on the efficacy and relevance of security strategies. It also involves an evaluation of these strategies and

methods following scales of distinction that serve to establish clout in security settings. Being in tune with the "future" of security can grant promotions and peer recognition. Insisting on the *avant-garde* character of a specific manner of acting, feeling or thinking security may further marginalize those associated with an anachronistic "past". Indeed, relegating other people, practices and ways of life to the past has historically been a powerful othering mechanism in Western thought (Fabian 1983; Pagden 1986). The continuation of this thought-process whereby differences between practices are "temporalized" and read as separating "those who are fully of our time and those who have yet to reach it" (Hindess 2007: 326), shows the striking endurance of modes of classification that distribute individuals along scales of success and failure or development and anachronism judged against a contemporary standard.

These modes of classification, I discovered, are deployed by border officers in Canadian ports of entry through what I call *generational approaches to borderwork*. Borders are performed and operated everyday by actors who conceive and experience them via historically-situated ethics and competing generational habituses. Far from being solely oriented towards the future, border control is constituted by contentious temporalities that can be studied at the level of social relations between security professionals. The generational talk in approaches to daily tasks and work ethics coupled with differences in officers' affect and bodily dispositions hint at the co-existing but distinct temporal worlds in which border officers work. "Generations" enunciates a mode of categorization through which officers organize thoughts, classify daily tasks, morally appraise colleagues, locate themselves and others on efficiency scales and evaluate what

constitutes a job well done. Generational differences matter when we try to understand border control. They may influence whether, when committing a customs infraction, a truck driver will receive a penalty that will go on record or be given a mere warning. They can also have bearing on whether information contained in databases about a driver, a shipment or an importer will be considered essential or partly disregarded in favour of an officer's skill at getting to this information by establishing an interview dynamic that facilitate disclosure.

In fact, as further analyzed in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the evidence of generational tensions within the commercial sections of Canadian border crossings visited during fieldwork represents one of the major findings of this research project. Throughout fieldwork, most interviewed border officers characterized the work routine of the commercial section in generational terms, often contrasting and comparing their practices with those of coworkers associated with another generation. Officers do not only "speak" generation; they embody it. They showed up at interviews performing lived ways of being a border officer that embodied their generational talk, ways that were also sometimes coloured by gender and at times contrasted based on whether one was Québécois or from Ontario. Experienced male traffic officers transferred to the commercial section for health reasons presented themselves at interviews fully geared up (vests, tool belt, handcuffs, radio, pepper spray), beaming with pride while telling stories of their feats at the traffic sections of busy ports. Experienced female officers—former clerks promoted to the position of officer when customs slowly abandoned paper-based clearance for computerized release systems—spoke calmly, at times even adopting a matter-of-fact tone and demonstrating a

much more administrative inclination towards their job than that portrayed by many of their colleagues—whether young or old. Younger officers, male and female, from Ontario or Québec, displayed a contagious eagerness for their work. In contrast, their experienced colleagues were more likely to reserve excited comments for retirement plans, even sometimes expressing disillusionment and a sense of powerlessness not shown by rookie officers.

As interviews accumulated, it became increasingly clear that speaking of "generations" has become a way for "commercial" border officers to make sense of the dynamics unleashed by the disembedding of the border—that is, by the recent organizational, technological, policy-based and legislative transformations following the incorporation of borderwork into the security field. As mandates are redesigned and the latest programs, regulations and technologies are rolled in, new recruits fresh out of Customs College and trained with the most recent understanding of borderwork are incorporated into work teams who have experienced the brunt of these transformations. "New ways" and "old ways" are clashing, transforming the organizational subcultures of ports of entry and the occupational identities of border officers in the process.

#### *Birth cohorts and generations*

What is the role of generational approaches to borderwork in the security field? Making sociological sense of generational relations at the commercial section of Canadian border services is challenging. Often, the literature on generations fails to address the relational and constructed character of generations. Those adopting a substantialist view of the

notion assume a direct relation between concept and reality. Generations are thus represented as "homogeneous, delimited and fixed realities" thought outside of the "social relations, historical processes and the plurality of social usages" which constitutes any social reality (Corcuff, 2011; personal translation). Methodologically predetermined according to designated age brackets prior to the collection of empirical data and thus, prior to analysis, these statistically pre-established groups often echo popular generational designations (e.g. the Silent Generation, the Veterans, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and the Millennials). Building on this methodology to delimit and define generations, authors from different disciplines question whether the notion of generation remains conceptually and empirically significant.

This is particularly the case within the management literature. Equating generation with birth cohort, it conceives of generation as an already constituted group. Equally distributed characteristics are meant to follow the members of this group throughout their careers notwithstanding promotional, technological and wider socio-historical changes. With this limited definition in mind, some authors question whether generational values, born from a collective sense of "social 'proximity' to shared events or cultural phenomena"—a definition inspired by Edmunds and Turner's (2002a; 2002b) sociological work on generations—may be a useful empirical tool for studies of the workplace (Parry and Urwin, 2011: 84). Horton and Kraftl (2008: 285) also echo such suspicion as they debate the analytical potential of the notion of *intergenerationality* for studies in the geography of age:

...we contend that the *analytical* power of "generations" (whether inter-, intra- or neither) feels vague and limited. ... generations (as concept, category and indeed as practice) become obscured by relations which—in our view—matter much more than "generational" differences. And this is the crunch: generational differences themselves can be ascribed to much more powerful, cross-cutting differences in attitude, education, assumption, morality, experience (themselves intersecting with gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) which evade any loose correspondence with a particular "generation" in whatever sense (*authors' emphasis*).

Part of the underlying problem with these critiques is their shared suspicion of the malleability of the concept, preferring a neat and definitive characterization of generations as a specific social group that can be limited demographically. The temptation is to objectify "generation" into tangible sets of individuals sharing particular perceptions and dispositions that remain over time and that can be objectively studied and analyzed at any given point in the history of a generation. As these groups have proven elusive to find empirically, this difficulty has lead critics to dismiss altogether the notion of generation. In her study of generational differences in ways of relating to paid and unpaid work, Foster (2011; 2013), like McDaniels (2001; 2004) before her, rightly finds problematic those approaches that assume an empirical foundation to generations in specific, objective groups of individuals. For her, this assumption leads to uses of the concept of generation interchangeably with the notion of birth cohort. In fact, most

sociologists acknowledge that the latter term must be distinguished from that of generation.<sup>20</sup>

For Foster, generation can be studied in its structure and effect as discourse. It is this discursivity inherent to the deployment of the notion in the social that gives access to a pre-established meaning (a "mental structure") of generation. Approached this way, generation is primarily a "matter of discourse", a "discursive form" which can be found in people's narratives about their work experiences: "The point is that generation's structure and effects depend very much on the dynamic idea of it, in overlapping scholarly and everyday discourses. I ask not 'what is a generation?' or even 'what are the characteristics of this or that generation', but rather 'what do people think it is, and what are the consequences of such thinking?' To operationalize these questions, I rely on the concept of discourse" (Foster 2013:197). This constitutes an exciting and fruitful take on generations, especially because it considers how that which people think and say about generations can have practical effects on their conduct.

In contrast with Foster, however, my concept of *generational approaches to borderwork* rather emphasizes the ways in which generations in the workplace are produced within concrete, everyday social relations. It is my contention that actors shape particular understandings of generation that are specific to the social space—in this case, the

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<sup>20</sup> Edmunds and Turner (2002a) define a birth cohort as: "a collection of people who are born at the same time and thus share the same opportunities that are available at a given point in history. These opportunities are called life chances by sociologists". McDaniels (2001: 197) adds that, in contrast to the chronology inherent to the notion of birth cohort, generational roles accompany us all our lives and thus, also carry gendered connotations: "we can be daughters at 80, grandmothers at 35, and mothers throughout our adult lives".



security field—in which they interact. It is the ways in which this space creates the conditions of possibility for the emergence of these understandings (while excluding others) that is of interest here. How does organizational instability in the security field become experienced through intergenerational tensions in security settings? How do processes of distancing in border control produce generational approaches to borderwork in ports of entry? I think of generational approaches to borderwork not as pre-existing and located outside any specific social situation but as constituted by the co-presence of actors within the border control space—actors who mobilize border-specific understandings of security practices as "generational".<sup>21</sup> As suggested by Leander (2010), taking seriously these many processes, while making room for rich ethnographic accounts of security practices as told by security actors, provides an open window into field-specific processes of social change.

In arguing for an understanding of generation as produced by the dynamics of change pertaining to the security field, I am inspired by Bourdieu's work on generations and its significance for the study of social change within fields. Bigo (2011) suggests that a

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<sup>21</sup> Some sociologists argue for a consideration of the weight of historical events such as wars, revolutions or political and economic crises, in the creation of distinctive generational trajectories. This type of thinking—which Mauger (2009) critically labels 'the scheme of the foundational event'—is well represented by Edmunds and Turner's (2002b) notion of "generational consciousness". Building on the Marxian model of class-for-itself and a case study of the so-called Sixties Generation, these authors claim that social groups qualify as generations only if they embrace it as a collective identity ("a generation for itself"). For these authors, such consciousness is likely to arise out of a traumatic historical event (for instance 9/11) and it is precisely this materialization of a collective identity amongst the members of a birth cohort that forms a generational consciousness. Edmunds and Turner suggest that their theory is inspired by Mannheim's (1952 [1923]) classic understanding of "generation as actuality" where generations actualize themselves only when they bond over key historical events or over intellectual and political movements. Yet, this bonding in a shared temporarily does not produce a homogeneous, quantifiable group in Mannheim's careful theorization of generations. In fact, for Mannheim, a generation is, analogically to the notion of class, a social location which does not require acknowledging by individuals in order to be presented for analysis.

relational analysis of security practices informed by Bourdieu's work on the logic of practice prevents a predetermined take on security actors (and their beliefs, attitudes and dispositions) as already fully formed outside of their everyday interactions within the security field. Indeed, Bourdieu (1979) invites us to consider a field's inner processes rather than the putative creation of generations through external historical events that would create "artificial cuts" foreign to the field's dynamic.<sup>22</sup> Such a relational approach does not assume that actors automatically bring to the workplace specific generational characteristics that may be recognized, managed and dealt with. Rather, it sheds light on the ways in which generational traits arise in a field and in relation to particular historical settings and spaces that shape, favour and discard certain types of relations in the workplace. As shown in chapter 4 and 5, training patterns favour certain types of behaviors, skills and credentials that are seen as more likely to fit contemporary understandings of border control. After going through training and integrating into frontline border teams, officers begin to compare, evaluate and typify ways of acting, thinking and feeling at work as generational. Officers slowly adopt practices that are more likely to correspond to the historical understanding of borderwork circulated in their first working years.

Accordingly, during this research, I met with three cohorts of officers. Most interviewees were hired between 1976 and 1992; these are designated in this dissertation as "experienced officers". Hiring stopped after for a few years during a period of federal

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<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Michel Foucault has warned against all-encompassing approaches that reduce history to "zeitgeists" and "totalitarian periodizations" (Veyne 2008; Foucault 1969).

budget cuts. A few more officers, called in this dissertation "mid-career", were hired between 1997 and 2002. The remainder of my interviewees, "rookies", had been hired and trained since 2006. When referring to *generational approaches to borderwork*, I speak of the ways in which different experiences of professional socialization and occupational understandings of borderwork shape officers' subjectivities. Experienced officers are more likely to sport "old ways" (interest in taxation and trade regulation) of thinking and acting about the border and rookies to adopt "new ways" (emphasis on law enforcement). But the mid-career officers confirm the insights of the sociology of generations regarding the differences between cohort and generation. Depending on education, training and work experiences acquired inside and outside the border agency, these officers did not have their own particular generational approach but adopted either a policing sensibility or a regulatory attitude to borderwork.

#### *Generational competition in the security field*

Bourdieu suggested in most of his interventions concerning fields that we pay attention to the dynamics of social change induced by generational struggles since these can modify the configuration of fields: "Every field (...) has its specific laws of aging. In order to know how generations are cut within this field, one must know the specific functioning laws of the field, the stakes in the struggle and the divisions that this struggle creates (Bourdieu 1984: 144; personal translation)."<sup>23</sup> Focusing on the internal history of a designated field—that is, on the dynamics that inaugurate its transformation, ensure its

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<sup>23</sup> "Chaque champ (...) a ses lois spécifiques de vieillissement: pour savoir comment s'y découpent les générations, il faut connaître les lois spécifiques du fonctionnement du champ, les enjeux de lutte et les divisions que cette lutte opère".

stability or generate internal discontinuity—allows one to shed light on the ways in which fields are both perpetuated and generated (*modes de génération*). For Bourdieu, by producing a distinctive habitus through a set of specific social conditions, generations organize positions within a field at a certain moment of its history through mechanisms that facilitate reaching these positions, or reduce and even prevent their accessibility. Within the security field, generational actors relate and vie for influence and resources:

Thus, once the field of individuals is constituted by what is at stake for specific agents, it generates boundary effects by attracting some agents into it, by distributing and hierarchizing the struggles for positions inside the boundaries between the oldest agents invested in the field—often the ones who have accumulated power—and the newcomers who have succeeded in entering into the field, breaking the boundaries, and challenging the older dominant position.

Bigo, 2011: 240

This conception of power as accumulated by the old and challenged by youth echoes some of Bourdieu's considerations on generational struggles. In a 1976 public exposé, Bourdieu conceives relations between old and young as struggles in which the young fights the old for obtaining power, recognition and legitimacy (see also Bourdieu 1980).<sup>24</sup>

But such tensions are not always modelled on the dominant dynamics characteristic of

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<sup>24</sup> "But we know that in each field we will find a struggle, whose specific forms must be researched, between the newly entered who tries to break down the barriers put up by the dominant who tries to defend the monopoly to exclude the competition." ("Mais on sait que dans tout champ on trouvera une lutte, dont il faut chaque fois rechercher les formes spécifiques, entre le nouvel entrant qui essaie de faire sauter les verrous du droit d'entrée et le dominant qui essaie de défendre le monopole et d'exclure la concurrence") (Bourdieu, 1984: 113; personal translation).

1970s France. As argued by Chan regarding the professional socialization of police officers, "few models take into account the *proactive* role played by newcomers in the socialization process" (Chan 2004: 329). Rookie officers may themselves privilege certain types of know-how (for instance, the use of firearms) that are not favoured by their experienced colleagues.

In addition, institutional transformations in many sectors of society, including the security field, may reshape generational power relations in ways that do not necessarily favour mature individuals. Contemporary security institutions increasingly favour certain forms of knowledge associated with youth and novelty. Computer technology skills are assumed as well as the capacity to adapt to the frequent introduction of new programs and to integrate new regulations into daily work activities. These novel patterns of selection and training of border agents have an important impact on generational dynamics in border crossings. Chapter 6 analyzes how these patterns privilege, in everyday work situations and in career opportunities, the diplomas, attitudes, know-how and newly acquired skills displayed by younger officers at the expense of the experience accumulated by older officers.

Despite these differences, Bourdieu's (1984: 152; personal translation) following suggestion remains accurate: "What is found in opposition here are not juniors and seniors. They are different states of the educational system, two states of the differential rarity of titles. Not being able to say that they are chiefs because they are seniors, the old will invoke the experience associated with seniority, while juniors will invoke the

competence guaranteed by titles”.<sup>25</sup> The increased dependence upon scholarly and technologically acquired skills for climbing the hierarchical ladder point to the revision of what is recognized as legitimate expertise within the border control field: “In fact, the transformation of ways to gain access to the field is only an aspect of a more systematic change that also concerns the very definition of competence, ultimately precluding any comparison between generations” (Bourdieu 1979: 116; personal translation).<sup>26</sup>

Generational definitions of competence are mobilized in everyday borderwork when colleagues speak of differential perceptions of responsibilities, tasks and mandates. Generational approaches to borderwork appear as different crystallizations of knowledge and skills developed and fostered in different moments of the development of the security field. Everyday generational encounters thus shape, and are being shaped by, the multiple dynamics that allow or deny access to coveted positions in the security field. The generational categorizations produced within the field are deployed in the disputed distribution of resources, statuses and positions, privileging some and designating constraints for others along generational lines. In their everyday interactions, officers mobilize a variety of symbolic resources, rules, norms and relations along generational lines. Consequently, by being productive of—and being produced by—generational approaches to borderwork, the security field reveals its own logic of aging.

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<sup>25</sup> "Là, ce qui s'oppose, ce ne sont pas des vieux et des jeunes, ce sont pratiquement deux états du système scolaire, deux états de la rareté différentielle des titres et cette opposition objective se retraduit dans les luttes de classement: ne pouvant pas dire qu'ils sont chefs parce qu'ils sont anciens, les vieux évoqueront l'expérience associée à l'ancienneté, tandis que les jeunes invoqueront la compétence garantie par les titres".

<sup>26</sup> "En fait, la transformation des chances d'accès n'est qu'un aspect d'un changement plus systématique qui concerne aussi la définition même de la compétence, interdisant, à la limite, toute comparaison entre les générations".

Beyond the struggles for positions and resources, the tensions between generations may also be compounded by the speeding up and accumulation of changes in the security field. Therefore, and notwithstanding Irwin's (1996, 1998) caveat against privileging an antagonistic model of intergenerational relations, the organizational instability and disembedding processes characteristic of the security field may emphasize conflict between generations.<sup>27</sup> As Mauger (2009) aptly remarks, the contemporary acceleration in the pace of social change within a specific field likely creates gaps of understanding between working generations as their skills, aptitudes and ethics become shaped in close, but qualitatively distinct historical moments. Such accumulation and acceleration of changes creates difficulties, as former ways of hiring and training of border officers seem little adapted to these changes. For an older officer, showing an ill-adapted habitus to novel conditions within border control—what Bourdieu designates as the hysteresis effect—may bring about a lack of recognition of his dispositions and abilities. As illustrated in chapter 4 and 6, older officers react differently to this delegitimation of their work practices. They sometimes show resentment towards younger colleagues' attitudes and missed advancement opportunities or—as they think of their soon-to-be reached pension—are resigned at being "out of the game".

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<sup>27</sup> Of course, a field and habitus-based conceptualization of generations has its limits. It insists on the social disjunctures and everyday tensions between generations as the primary mode of interaction between security actors at the expense of the other ways individuals relate to one another. If the dominant mode of intergenerationality uncovered in interviews with border officers is conflict-ridden, it hardly represent the only way to conceptualize generational relations. Irwin (1996; 1998) reminds us that antagonistic understandings of intergenerationality may underplay intra-generational inequalities (of class, race or dis/ability for instance) and the many other types of intergenerational relations. From this perspective, she correctly insists that generations interrelate in a myriad of ways, from care, mutual support, solidarity and cooperation, to isolation, hostility and indifference. Following Irwin's suggestion, proper attention will be devoted to the few instances when these other modes of intergenerationality appear in interviews, especially when it comes to rookies' reliance on the regulatory knowledge of experienced officers.

Since Mannheim's (1952 [1923] classic *The Problem of Generations*, the interest for generations in the social sciences has often constituted a privileged entry-point for analyses of the swift pace of change in modernity and of its effects upon individuals. My notion of *generational approaches to borderwork* is no exception. It sheds light on how, through a generational reading of behaviors and attitudes in their workplace, border officers cope with instability in the security field and make sense of their individual experience amidst these changes. As a result, when applied to the security field, a generational approach points to the competing temporalities of border control deployed by security professionals in their daily practices.

### **Competing Temporalities of Border Control**

How are know-how, ways of thinking and practices transmitted and learned, passed on but forgotten, received but modified or even re-invented in the security field? For those who wish to render the concepts of field and habitus more dynamic, Sayad presents a more fluid approach to the social history of a field than one strictly inspired by Bourdieu's work. Sayad suggests a different inflection to the concept and a situated view of generations as "a particular class of social conditions which *engenders* a particular class of individuals, bearers of characteristics that confer a certain unity and, through them, a particular class of behaviours that define them in the situation in which they are located" (Sayad 1994: 159; authors emphasis; personal translation).<sup>28</sup> Broadly understood, generations emerge from distinctive socialization processes but also

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<sup>28</sup> "...une classe particulière de conditions sociales *engendre* une classe particulière d'individus porteurs de caractéristiques qui leur confèrent une certaine unité et, à travers eux, une classe particulière de comportements qui leur sont propres dans la situation où ils sont placés".



diverging daily practices, values, and ethics. They involve forms of subjectivation with their own historicity and can be situated within specific social conditions (Sayad 1999). This conception steers clear of a reading of generations that would emphasize the reproduction of social dynamics of domination within the security field. Rather, the problem of generation, located at the crux of reflections about continuity and rupture, brings to the fore "the very sense of history, even the possibility of history" (Sayad 1994).

The notions of field and habitus may appear too static and unvarying for this task and hence unfit for analysing the fluid and transformative character of contemporary security practices, rationalities and subjectivities. In contrast to Foster (2011) who usefully suggests that the intersection between biography and history are located at the centre of the making of generations, Bourdieu insists on the "periodization" of biographies within the field, and on the importance of following biographic trajectories over time: "The structural history of a field [...] periodizes the biography of agents engaged within it [...]; following this, generations may only be distinguished within a population on the basis of a knowledge of the specific history of a particular field; in fact, only structural changes that affect this field have the power to determine the production of distinct generations by transforming the distinctive ways fields are generated and by determining the organization of individual biographies and their aggregation in classes of orchestrated biographies and rhythmically following the same tempo" (1979 : 530; personal translation, author's emphasis).<sup>29</sup> This constitutes a quite rigid explanatory model.

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<sup>29</sup> "L'histoire structurale d'un champ (...) périodise la biographie des agents qui s'y trouvent engagés (...); par suite, on ne peut découper dans une population des *générations* (...) que sur la base d'une connaissance de l'histoire spécifique du champ concerné : en effet, seuls les changements structuraux qui affectent ce

Bourdieu's view of the social production of generations is based on sequential patterns of rupture that compartmentalize distinct temporalities—the meetings of history and biography. This prevents a flexible analysis of how generational encounters allow actors to experience and reflect upon their own generational actions and ways of thinking. For example, in ports of entry, border officers sometimes reinterpret and adapt their work methods because of this intergenerational contact.

The everydayness of intergenerationality in ports of entry suggests the production of different generational dynamics within border control, but also the synchronicity of these dynamics as they coexist, at the same time, within the border space during a certain historical period. It is these moments of coexistence that may teach us the particularities of the trajectories taken by border control in the past decades. Intermingling generational dynamics may in fact produce more than competition over status and access to resources. They also create moments that may cast doubt on an acquired habitus and where reflexive actors may come up with novel, innovative conducts. Working in the security field at this specific historical juncture is to be part of a social world where different imaginings of the border collide and, in doing so, shape the habitus but also the reflexivity of officers. In this sense, Giry proposes the "reflexive disposition of the habitus" as a way to grasp actors' reflexivity regarding the ways in which their subjectivity, practices and dispositions are shaped by the field.<sup>30</sup>

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champ possèdent le pouvoir de déterminer la production de générations différentes en transformant les *modes de génération* et en déterminant l'organisation des biographies individuelles et l'agrégation de ces biographies en classes de biographies orchestrées et rythmées selon le même tempo."

<sup>30</sup> I thank Johan Giry for suggesting this useful notion in a personal communication.

In order to better shed light on these reflexive dynamics, we need to pay attention to the daily interactions between what my interviewees designate as "old ways" and "new ways", that is, to the interactions between co-existing generational approaches to borderwork. In enacting generational roles, which are always gendered according to McDaniels (2001; 2004), actors align themselves, contest and play with expectations regarding how someone of their generation should act depending on the everyday situations in which they find themselves. Generation, in interaction with markers of social difference such as gender, is constructed, (re)produced and experienced relationally. In this generational coexistence, the different temporalities enacted by the everyday practices of agents shape the trajectories of border control in ways that a structural understanding of generations does not allow one to grasp. These micro-events shed light on the synchronicity of a myriad of social actions and events subjectively understood by actors as pertaining to different temporalities of action. These generational understandings meet, converse and even clash, and through them, security professionals ultimately make sense of the social and historical conditions in which they work as well as negotiate the meaning of what they do for a living.

Co-existing generations within the security field thus share common historical circumstances but generational actors experience them differently. To explain this synchronicity of diverse temporalities, Sayad (1994), borrows the following formula from Mannheim: "the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous".<sup>31</sup> A curious but heuristic notion which Mannheim explains succinctly: "Different generations live at the

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<sup>31</sup> Mannheim was himself quoting Pinder's writings on generations within art history.

same time. But since experienced time is the only real time, they must all in fact be living in qualitatively quite different subjective eras” (Mannheim [1923]: 283). Pilcher (1994) has underlined the relevance of Mannheim’s essay for addressing the issue of social time and for seriously considering its subjective dimension. These reflections on contemporaneity also convey that which Corcuff (2011) calls "the discordance of temporalities". Detached from strict chronology, the notion alludes to lived and socially constructed experiences of time.

During my fieldwork in Canadian ports of entry, I found that non-contemporaneous subjectivities as well as practices expressed as generational are interacting synchronically in ports of entry. The dynamics produced by generational approaches to borderwork both reflect and give direction to the recent transformations of border institutions. They also interrogate, at a more conceptual level, the treatment of temporality in existing studies of security and border surveillance. Generally characterized through the figure of anticipation, these studies miss the varied temporalities at play in border control, from a disavowed but lingering past to a tense everydayness and an uncertain future.

## **Conclusion**

By taking into account the people and contexts that make up the days and nights of borderwork, the contentious spatialities and temporalities of border security are revealed. Taking its insights from critical border and security studies, the sociology of policing and the sociology of generations, this dissertation sets out to explore how the partial disembedding of border control from ports of entry has put in motion social dynamics that are transforming the provision of security in unexpected ways. In order to

conceptually support this analytical endeavour, the present chapter offered an overview of the theoretical tools that are mobilized in the remainder of this dissertation.

Arguing for a sociological approach to security as a set of practices enacted by social actors, I suggested (following Bigo and Chan) the notion of security field in order to contextualize these practices and relate them to historically specific and embodied dispositions. Approaching security as a field of struggles between security professionals also allows examining how these struggles influence the provision of security. Starting with the premise that "policing at a distance" is supported by the assumption of the neutrality of border technologies and by the introduction of competing rationalities of security governance due to the pluralization of actors engaged in contemporary security, this chapter commended how the critical border and security literatures approach the disembedding of border control. However, the sociology of policing points at the limits of such analyses when it comes to understanding the integration of surveillance means into the concrete practices of security professionals. Following the insights of this literature, I argued in favour of integrating into studies of security the multifaceted interactions between the policies, regulations, work routines and organizational cultures of security institutions. Finally, the chapter debated current theoretical concerns with the future-oriented temporality of security by introducing the notion of *generational approaches to borderwork*. Taking security practices as generational, this dissertation points to the ways in which security actors differentially value particular work methods, security mandates and occupational identities as belonging to the past, the present or the future of border control.

Before exploring the local consequences of disembedding processes upon the work routines and discretionary power of border officers in chapter 3, the next chapter will pave the way by providing a short overview of the history of Canadian customs. It shows how the regulation of commodities was shaken by a series of ruptures in the objects and meanings of security. New methods and rationalities of security governance metamorphosed customs work into a transnational policing practice. The chapter combines a review of the political economy of disembedding under free trade with a genealogy of the recent discursive changes regarding the role of border agencies.

## CHAPTER II. A Short History of Canadian Customs

### Introduction

*Ronald on the upcoming disappearance of the land border*

Ronald: But remember, back in the mid-eighties, they talked of getting rid of all this. This was all going to be gone.

Karine: You mean the border?

R: It's going to be like crossing a state line. But then comes 9/11 and things changed. Right? That's when everything tightened down again. That's, you know, the government didn't... and I remember the people talking back in the eighties — that's another reason I didn't want to get on [i.e. get hired as a border officer at the time] — because why get on a job that was going away? They were getting rid of this stuff. If you talked to people who had been around a long time, you talked to people at [port of entry], they'd tell you. It was talked then that it was going to go. And, now, you see the same thing again. The talk is here again that this is going to move out to perimeter security. Where they are going to work out, we are going to work this stuff coming into Canada, other than from United States and Mexico, stuff coming in from abroad. Isn't that what the talk is?

K: Yes, it is, but I'd like to know what do you think about that? Do you see that happening in your job?

R: I see it! Well no... Well yes! If you look at the programs that they have.

K: Like FAST for instance?<sup>32</sup>

R: Like FAST and all those... CSA [Customs Self Assessment]<sup>33</sup> and stuff like that. They're setting it up to be that way. It won't probably... I've got another ten years or so to work, maybe fifteen at the most. But.. You know, I might see it in my time, but I wouldn't want to be starting the job today and think that I'm going to work 30 years here.

K: No?

R: I don't think it's going to happen.

K: You think it's not going happen? For the younger ones?

R: It's too expensive. It's too expensive. It's all labour intensive right? Why are we having people here asking questions? Join the program or don't go. [...]

*The interview continues. Ronald speaks of tobacco, alcohol and drug smuggling.*

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<sup>32</sup> FAST is a trusted trader program for carriers, importers and truck drivers that facilitates customs procedures for low-risk commodities and truck drivers. This chapter provides more details on such programs.

<sup>33</sup> A trusted trader program, CSA streamlines customs accounting as well as transmission of taxation data and payments for importers.

R: So, those kinds of things would guarantee that this sticks around for a while, but I think overall, I think you're going to see that this is going to dissolve.

K: The...

R: The border. Especially for commercial trade.

This experienced officer's concern about the waning importance of the land border, and, by extension, the potential demise of his livelihood, might seem farfetched. After all, more than 7,400 uniformed border officers are deployed in 119 ports of entry along the land border that Canada shares with the United States, as well as in 13 international airports and inland immigration offices. There are signs, however, that his worries have some basis. Canada is reducing physical presence in many ports of entry along the border. Self-serve customs kiosks for Canadian citizens and permanent residents have recently been introduced in arrival areas at major international airports (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver). Recent cost-cutting scenarios examined by federal authorities may replace border officers through a variety of means, such as closing small and remote ports of entry. Indeed, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) closed three small ports and reduced hours of operation in three other ports in 2011.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the bi-national *Small Port Working Group*—created alongside the 2011 Canada-U.S. Beyond the Border Agreement—is examining the harmonization of small and remote ports. Solutions include the establishment of unstaffed crossings where travelers would speak

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<sup>34</sup> Dyer, E., "Canada-US deal could close small border crossings", *CBC News*, 15 Dec. 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/12/14/small-border-crossings-canada-us.html> (accessed 7 Nov. 2012).



through a camera to an officer located elsewhere. In addition, recent federal budget cuts could mean the loss of employment for more than 1350 officers.<sup>35</sup>

Frontline border officers have been reading the writing on the wall for quite some time. For both these perceptive border workers and scholars alike, the decline in importance of the land border as a privileged site for the cross-border regulation of trade and mobilities of persons has been noticeable since the end of the 1980s. During the past three decades, a series of policies, information technologies, organizational changes and border discourses have been progressively disembedding the land border, taking significant parts of the control over mobilities away from local ports of entry. This chapter provides an overview of this disembedding process at Canadian customs in order to underscore the historic significance of this shift in relation to the regulation of cross-border trade.

For doing so, it is necessary to go back to the beginnings of Canadian customs and retrace our steps. A major source of revenue for local colonial authorities, customs tariffs made up a large part of the French and British mercantilist policies. Following Macdonalds' National Policy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Canadian customs turned to economic protectionism, which would be pursued for more than a century. But since the mid-1980s free trade with the United States, Mexico and an increasing number of countries has done away with border officers' century-old protectionist role, while strongly diminishing their tax collection responsibilities. In this neoliberal era, policies aimed at facilitating the cross-border flow of goods have also progressively hollowed out some of officers'

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<sup>35</sup> Customs and Immigration Union, 2012, "CIU members protest at Montreal's Trudeau Airport", <http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/?p=129203> (last modified Nov. 23, 2012; accessed 5 Dec. 2012).

regulatory responsibilities by denying them the resources and time to fully apply existing regulations on trade. In addition, North American policy discourses insist since the 1990s and particularly after 9/11, on pushing the border "beyond the border" with the help of "smart borders" and "perimeter security". This delocalization of bordering activities away from their historical role and geopolitical location is enacted by a range of governmental, law enforcement and private actors that are now assigned border security responsibilities. A myriad of security agencies and new collaborative security teams claim a stake in border control. Trusted travelers and trader programs devolve parts of the policing of trade and travelers to a variety of actors, including the Canadian managers of these programs, US border authorities as well as private carriers and importers.

This multiplication of players in border security has slowly changed the social status of border officers in the eyes of those involved in the security field. I show how, from being *the* experts in the regulation of cross-border flows, officers have become one of the many security actors concerned with the border thus competing with other officials for budgets, enforcement resources and recognition. By establishing the main historical aspects of this transition, I thus set the scene for the next two chapters. These detail how disembedding is redesigning the work of frontline border officers, and shed light on how officers collectively have reacted against their marginalization within the security field through their union's pro-arming campaign.

### **The Beginnings of Canadian Customs**

Much of the historical sociology of bordering studies the importance of state systems of identification and classification—e.g. visas or passports—that distinguish between

citizens and non-citizens, desirable and non-desirable individuals (Torpey 2000, Mongia 2003). Others have pointed out the significance of the peripheral political work of states in borderlands in the making of national communities bounded by geopolitical borders (Sahlins 1989). Historical works also take into account border drawing activities in the North American colonies. Two centuries of complex political and intercultural alliances between European imperial rivals and North American Indigenous people were followed by the 19th century race to the Western frontier. Borderlands were then converted into set linear borders separating nascent national states (Adelman and Aron 1999). As illustrated by LaDow (2002) in her work on the Canada-US border in the Prairies, this process was oblivious to local trade networks between indigenous populations living in the borderland. The delineation of the Canada-US land border was completed in the early 1900s, but remained quite permeable to the movements of local residents until the end of the century (Konrad and Nicols 2008; Farfan 2009).

Less attention has been paid to those state activities, in North America and elsewhere, that have had a revenue generating character along border—specifically, the work of customs. Before the development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century taxation regimes, which began collecting revenue out of taxes on incomes and capital, most of the financial resources accumulated by modern states came from tariffs (taxes on imports and exports) as well as duties (taxes on commodities purchased abroad) and excise taxes (inland taxes on certain products such as alcohol and tobacco). Of course, historical sociologists have pointed to the importance of resource extraction in war-making as a revenue generating activity of modern states—an enterprise Tilly (1985) famously likened to a protection racket.

Pushing the argument of the state as revenue extraction mechanism even further, others have studied how colonialism constituted a project of capital accumulation that extended a nascent capitalism beyond European frontiers (Wolf 1997 [1982]). Sassen (2008: 88) underlines the importance of the European circulation of gold and silver pillaged by the Spanish in Central and South America, for the creation of modern European customs infrastructures: "Pillaged wealth was recycled, at least partly, through systems other than just the elementary accumulation of gold and precious objects. This, in turn, required the development of customs operations, contracts, and an incipient *lex mercatoria*. In that regard, then, pillaging began to function as one factor in the formation of a type of capability we think of as modern: the apparatus to implement, organize, manage, and service cross-border economic transactions". The centrality of customs controls in the formation of modern states and in organizing European colonial flows of commerce has often been overlooked by historical sociologists of the state and those interested in bordering practices even though—in the words of Chalfin (2010: 26)—customs represents "a key pillar of modern state sovereignty".

Keeping with this colonial history, customs and revenue constituted, until quite recently, a major governing function for modern states. Customs required a bureaucratic apparatus as well as the development of laws and regulations over trade. Modern states gradually came to depend on tariffs and duties in order to fund a range of activities—from wars and territorial expansion to infrastructure building and daily state operations. Thus, the history of customs and tariffs is mundane and administrative only in appearance; in fact, customs has had a central role in revenue creation, state-making and trade regulation. Blake (1956:

498) suggests that much can be learned about the successive transformations in a state's political economy by looking into the history of tariffs: "There is probably no single document that better reflects the diversity of the Canadian economic and political system [than tariff legislation]; and its evolution to its present form likewise reflects important changes in its environment. Essentially a somewhat crude instrument of commercial and fiscal policy, the tariff has had to serve, at various times, as a mercantilist instrument for ordering the channels of trade and as a provider of revenue for colonial administrations; and, later, as an offset to heavy transportation costs, as an agency of industrial protection and 'national' policies, and as an expediter of the export trade". Therefore, a review of the history of Canadian customs and of the fiscal policies and trade regulations implemented by successive governments provides an important background to the recent transformations prompted by the introduction of a security rationality into borderwork.

*Customs officers' historical role as revenue generators and trade regulators*

McIntosh (1984) offers the most comprehensive work on the history of Canadian customs to date. He relates that, until the 1840s, British-appointed officials acted as customs officers. The subsequent adoption of free trade by Britain and of a doctrine of responsible government in its North American colonies saw the end of the imperial governance of revenue. Appointed by the provinces, 132 customs officers staffed 63 ports of entry in 1845 (McIntosh 1984: 104-105). The 1847 Customs Act granted these officers extended powers, which they have maintained, *mutatis mutandis*, until today. According to that Act, officers had the power "to detain, open and examine any package suspected to contain prohibited property or smuggled goods, and to go on board of and enter into any

vessel [...], and to stop and detain the same [...] and to rummage and search all parts thereof for prohibited, forfeited and smuggled goods” (McIntosh 1984: 109 citing the 1847 Customs Act). A customs department was created immediately after Confederation in 1868, collecting taxes and duties, while a separate Inland Revenue department was responsible for the levies of excise (both agencies also collected canal tolls).<sup>36</sup> A few department name changes occurred in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the departments were amalgamated in 1918. Under the responsibility of the Department of National Revenue (thus named in 1927), Canadian customs services remained the same until 2003—with a short-lived reorganization in 1999 that created the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency. It is important to note that most of those interviewed for this research project started their careers as Revenue employees.

Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the historic dependence of states on customs revenue was fostered in the North American colonies by the low level of direct taxation (e.g. income taxes, taxes on capital gains) levelled from its inhabitants. With mercantilism, the French regime imposed duties on some imported products and substantial taxes on fur exports (as high as 25%), a policy maintained after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763 (MacIntosh 1984). Consequently, British trade preference replaced that of the French. Mercantilist trade regulation favored products manufactured in the metropolis and staples exchanged within colonial trade networks. Under the joint weight of this taxation regime

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<sup>36</sup> As told by Library and Archives Canada, *Canadian Documents Gallery: National Revenue*, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-state/023012-1612-e.html> (last modified: 22 Jul. 2010; accessed 19 Nov. 2012).

and the economic expansion of a nascent independent United States, smuggling flourished in North American colonies. It is interesting to note that customs efforts were not then thought of as law enforcement as they are today. Instead, they were seen as deterring tax evasion and as part of a set of protections for mercantilism.

Yet, by the same token, these practices were *productive* of a lively smuggling economy. Take, for instance, the fascinating case of Chinese tea smuggling. In 1839, a few years before the provinces obtained customs taxation powers from Britain, Upper Canadians avoided prohibitive taxes on tea and the East India Company monopoly on its distribution by consuming three quarters of their tea from loads smuggled from the United States. Tongue-in-cheek, McIntosh (1984: 34) recalls: “It has been suggested that the only reason Canada and the Maritime colonies did not join the [1776 US] revolution was that they were expert smugglers and consequently were not as enraged by customs duties as were the Americans”. Smuggling to avoid duties or to circumvent laws on illicit products persisted. Farfan’s (2009) historical work on the Québec-Vermont border demonstrates that smuggling was especially prominent during the US prohibition in the 1920s. The enabling geography of the Southern Québec-New England border and the distribution of communities, families and even bi-national villages (e.g. Stanstead-Derby Line ) on both sides of the border have, until today, rendered this border region a smuggling haven. Recent studies estimate that 56% of Québec-produced marijuana reaches the rest of Canada and American markets partly through this particular border (Bouchard 2008); informal conversations with locals held during fieldwork confirms that much of this production is smuggled through the Québec-New England border. In addition, interviews

with border officers suggest that the smuggling of alcohol and tobacco remains a common tax avoidance strategy. Both commodities still count among the main ones seized by Canadian border authorities, while tobacco smuggling continues to be a concern for customs authorities around the world (Cooper and Witt 2011).

It is interesting to note that the issue of relative familiarity between customs officers, truck drivers and borderland locals, which came up in my interviews, has a long history—itsself related to customs services' anti-smuggling efforts. Customs' Preventive Service, geared to counter smuggling, was transferred in 1932 to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Customs retained some investigative powers but closed more than 200 preventive stations. The decision was partly meant to prevent local nepotism and kinship relations from influencing customs decisions. In the words of David Sim—then deputy minister of Revenue (1930-1965)—in a conversation with McIntosh (1984: 149): “You can imagine what this meant in all the small towns and villages. The preventive officer couldn't be expected to inform on his brother or cousin for running rum and that kind of thing. Our whole Preventive Service was just too close to home, so to speak. [...] It's true that the transfer took a lot of the glamour out of Customs but I still think it was right”. As detailed later in this chapter, officials from the RCMP and the now Canadian Border Services (CBSA) are sometimes at odds over the responsibility for securing the land border between ports of entry. In addition, chapter 5 notes that issues raised by border guards' familiarity with local residents remain, until today, a concern for the CBSA management who removed in 2007 hiring powers from local ports of entry. However, the works of Gootenberg (2009) and Andreas (2009) suggest that the repeated



difficulties experienced by border officials at circumventing smuggling despite their best efforts do not necessarily denote a failure at exercising state authority. In contrast, a focus on smuggling can generate novel policing capacities as well as new struggles over mandates and resources between security professionals.

But let's retrace our steps to the Customs revenue generating activities in the 19th century. Despite the existence of extensive smuggling, by 1874, 24% of the state's revenue came from the sole excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco. With the 20th century introduction of direct taxes, there was a diminution of the relative importance of other forms of taxation for the state treasury. In fact, at the onset of WWI, customs and excise duties as well as sales and excise taxes represented 75% of the total revenue collected by the federal government; in 1943, that percentage had gone down to 40% (McIntosh 1984: 133).

This is not to say that customs officers were losing ground. With Macdonald's National Policy and the implementation of protectionist tariffs on imports, customs tax collector and trade regulator roles were actually expanded. After the 1866 abrogation of a treaty signed in 1855 with the U.S., which tested customs reciprocity on about 50 listed products, tariffs on cross-border trade were reintroduced for other purposes. These tariffs provided revenues for infrastructure building in the wake of Western territorial expansion. Designed to protect the Canadian industry and staples from American competition, they also served the national integration of the newly expanded Canadian territory through trade and labour exchanges. In this sense, Norrie and Owram (2002: 85)

aply call the policy “a nationalist instrument”. From the Conservatives' 1911 election slogan “no truck nor trade with the Yankees”, to the epic battle that won the same party a second mandate after reversing its historical rhetoric and signing a free trade deal with the United States in 1988, Canadian elections were lost and won over the question of trade with its southern neighbour for more than a hundred years.

The 1879 National Policy received much popular support and "afforded a new status to the collector of Her Majesty's customs" who found in it a more positive public role than that of the much despised tax collector (Blake 1956: 507). Since this official protectionist mandate for Canadian customs lasted for more than a century, it is important to challenge the assumption that protectionism represents a past trade regulation mechanism foreign to contemporary border governance. In contrast, I shall stress the contemporaneity of protectionism by pointing at its remnants in everyday borderwork. Chapter 6 analyses how the experienced and mid-career officers I interviewed have acquired protectionist dispositions during their professional socialization in the 1980s, and that some of these officers continue to approach their everyday work as a primarily protectionist endeavour. Similarly, while the literature on Canadian Customs history does not comment on this aspect, these officers recalled the time when, in the 1970s and 1980s, they were seen as “ambassadors” for Canada. These ambassadorial and protectionist roles were gradually abandoned in economic policy and regulations in the 1990s, when a neoliberal approach to trade was adopted.

### **Towards Liberalized Trade**

A protectionist policy did not prevent cross-border trade between Canada and its southern neighbour. As Konrad and Nicols (2008) remind us, much cross-border activity made borderlands economically thriving areas during the 20th century, as cross-border industrial communities grew and trading of staples such as grains, lumber, fish or mining products increased. Economic integration between the two countries was well under way when the Canada United-States Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) was signed in 1988 (Jackson 2007). Primarily due to the 1965 US-Canada Automotive Products Agreement, which set the terrain for an integrated car manufacturing industry between Ontario and Michigan, 60% of US imports to Canada and 70% of Canadian imports to the US were duty free by the 1980s (McIntosh 1984). Nowadays, most analysts of Canada-US trade call attention to the fact that a car produced and assembled in the Ontario-Michigan manufacturing hub crosses the border at least five times before completion (Brooks 2008).

In their commendable effort to bring to light the intricate patterns of everyday activities in the Canada-U.S. borderlands, Konrad and Nicols (2008) might, nevertheless, have understated the political economy underpinning the creation of these thriving borderlands. Despite their claim that "the border was not a barrier, or even a regulator, but rather a fulcrum of economic achievement and prosperity" (74), much cross-border trade in the pre-1980s era was regulated under a protectionist regime. It allowed protecting Canadian industry and jobs (particularly in the trucking industry, as further examined below). Consequently, it can be argued that the regulatory role played by the border constituted one of the reasons for the prosperity of these regions—that is, if

prosperity and economic achievement are also characterized by low unemployment rates and well-paying jobs. In interviews, many experienced officers raised in the Ontario-Michigan borderland and having spent their careers in that region viewed the end of protectionism as devastating. Commenting on the cumulating impacts of free trade, downsizing and plant delocalization that followed 20 years of market-based regulation of cross-border economic exchanges, these officers saw manufacturing employment evaporate and their families, neighbours and communities struggle in the aftermath. Decades of regulatory and institutional changes were necessary to make this experience of liberalized trade possible along the Canada-U.S. borderland.

*Customs as trade facilitators and enforcers*

The replacement of protectionism with a market-based mode of economic regulation that fostered contemporary economic globalization and underpinned the building of intricate cross-border production and distribution networks, did not happen overnight. It was introduced step-by-step over several decades of regulatory changes carried at different institutional levels through free trade agreements, transport deregulation and a deep restructuring of customs authorities' mandates and practices. Bowling and Sheptycki (2012: 57) aptly describe the transformation:

The traditional role of customs has been to collect import and export duties at borders and to protect states' revenue by controlling the movement of goods and people through ports and airports, checking cargo and luggage to ensure that all taxable goods have been declared. Customs duties have historically been a

significant financial resource for states. However, customs organizations worldwide are undergoing massive structural change stimulated by the rapidly increasing volume of world trade encouraged by neo-liberal policies emphasising the freedom and flexibility of the market, the free flow of goods across international borders and the removal of fiscal barriers to trade.

How did this happen? Chalfin (2007) suggests that trade organizations were actively dedicated to a "facilitation paradigm" for customs as early as the first years of the post WWII period. Indeed, a few powerful global institutions adopted this agenda at their inception; namely, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) created in 1947, as well as the Organization for Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) both established in 1952. Working to generate a new spatialization and flexibilization of capital accumulation (Harvey 1990; 2007), these organizations spent decades implementing a market-based regulation of global economic exchanges. This included the progressive elimination of a number of tariffs on imports but also was accompanied by the signature of regional free trade agreements. Their efforts led to the signature of the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures in 1973 and to the elimination of even more import tariffs with the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.

This market-based regulatory regime supports increasingly complex relations between just-in-time production and distribution along supply chains linking several continents (Gereffi 1994; Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon 2005). They are sustained by an array of

sophisticated distribution strategies. These include global logistics (Cowen 2010a; Bonacich 2005; Reifer 2004) as well as integrated cargo management via intermodal containers that facilitate freight transfer between marine and land-based modes of transportation—i.e. trains and trucks. But these relations also have a human face. They favour a delocalization of production (Castells 2000) to areas where labor can be bought cheaply, with lesser state controls and protections—thus making workers more amenable to the pressures of just-in-time production. These less regulated manufacturing and commercial areas are often located in borderzones with special juridical regimes removed from national regulations (think the Mexican Maquiladoras or the Sijori triangle in South East Asia) and employ primarily young, female, non-unionized labour from working-class and peasant backgrounds (see, among others, Lee 1998, 2007; Salzinger 2004; Wright 2006).

The global economic upheaval brought by decades of global market regulation initiatives thus required significant structural transformations in the ways customs operate. In order to regulate the global commerce spurred by these “global transformations” (Held and al. 1999), the formerly Customs Cooperation Council was re-designed into the World Customs Organization in 1995. The WTO's “enforcement arm” (Bowling and Sheptycki 2012: 58), the WCO has not only been tasked with the responsibility for the international nomenclature of commodities created in 1988—to which “commercial” border officers refer on a daily basis while classifying goods as taxable or free of duties. Its more recent responsibilities in the past decade also point to the adoption of an enforcement paradigm by customs agencies around the world and supported by the WCO. The organization now

champions the adoption by member states of standardized global customs enforcement practices (e.g. risk management, container control, fight against transnational organized crime and global illicit traffics) through joint training and regional intelligence liaison offices exchanging information via the WCO enforcement database, the Customs Enforcement Network.<sup>37</sup> A new model of customs governance thus accompanies a changing economic context characterized by spectacular increases in global trade volumes (Gordhan 2007). Customs authorities are now required to work with complex trade rules developed under the aegis of the WTO. Meanwhile, regional trade agreements (e.g. the EU, NAFTA, MERCOSUR) create their own trade regimes with their associated customs requirements regarding rules of origins and efforts at harmonizing national regulations on a variety of products. Furthermore, customs authorities are required to adapt to a changing manufacturing and trade environment with newly established economies (e.g. Brazil, China) and to new logistics models oriented to building seamless supply chains.

In this way, studying the recent history of the redesign of Canadian customs authorities allows one to examine an overlooked yet central site where the political economy of states is reworked amidst global restructuring. One of the major means of this transformation can be found in regional and bilateral free trade agreements, spearheaded in North America with the 1988 CUFTA and the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Mexico, as well as the myriad other

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<sup>37</sup> World Customs Organization, *Enforcement and Compliance*, <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/enforcement-and-compliance.aspx> (last consulted 30 June 2013).

accords ratified since then by Canada (e.g. with Israel, Columbia and Chile). However, among the institutional changes that diminished labour protection and industrial regulations, thus paving the way for CUFTA and NAFTA, is a little recognised—yet essential—set of policies geared towards the deregulation of the transportation industry between 1980-82 in the U.S. and 1990-92 in Canada. In fact, before this deregulation, Canadian and American truck drivers simply could not work in each other's countries. A border officer told me how, at the time, freight was generally transported across the border, then transferred onto trucks operated by a national company, which would then drive the shipments to its destination. In contrast, while restrictions on cabotage remain—although, more or less applied nowadays according to this officer—American truck drivers may now carry a load across the border and bring it to destination in Canada—and vice-versa.

This competition of U.S. transportation companies on Canadian soil required the elimination of laws that protected the transportation sector with controls on rates and routings, and limited service competition within specific economic sectors and territories. Madar's (2000: 8) work on the period suggests that the deregulation of the transportation sector in North America has been crucial to implementing free trade as a trucking-dependent endeavour: "When the two states deregulated trucking, they withdrew their controls on the movement of transport vehicles; and when they removed tariffs and other trade barriers, they withdrew their controls on the movement of goods. Deregulation and



free trade were parallel and complementary liberalizations".<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, the trucking industry is now an economically struggling yet central player in North American trade: in 2004, 78% of U.S. exports in Canada and 52.7% of Canadian exports sent south of the border were truck shipments—the difference is due to the growing importance of Canadian pipeline-based exports (Brooks 2008).

While these macro-economic changes had little impact on the work of officers handling travelers in the traffic sections of ports of entry or in airports, they did considerably affect the work of customs officers processing trucks, truck drivers and shipments—as well as any type of cargo landing in airports or unloaded in maritime ports. After the cross-border deregulation of the trucking industry and the signature of CUFTA and NAFTA, Canadian imports from the U.S. increased from 25.4% of the nominal GDP in 1989 to 40.3% in 2000 (Jackson 2007). Between 1989 to 1997, revenues by trucking companies involved in cross-border transportation jumped by 148% and their transported tonnage doubled (Madar 2000). Many officers experienced enough to remember the 1990s told me of the bustling business and activity created by this swift increase in cross-border trade for the commercial sections of major ports of entry. They recalled line-ups of trucks backing up for kilometers at the border, while truck drivers were queuing for an hour, sometimes more, in order to get their paperwork processed. The next chapter speaks to the institutional pressures that required officers to turn themselves into trade facilitators in

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<sup>38</sup> In 2012, the US has started, with little success, a pilot program to bring Mexican truck drivers on US soil. But, despite NAFTA, American truck drivers have until now successfully resisted Mexicans from carrying goods on American soil, fearing even more downward pressure upon their already low wages. CNN, "Program to allow Mexican trucks on U.S. roads off to slow start", 5 Sept. 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/04/us/mexico-trucks> (last consulted 13 May 2013).

response to these changes. It also explores the introduction of technological innovations in customs administration in order to resolve these bottlenecks, as well as their impact upon the work routines of frontline officers.

### **From Customs Services to Security Agency**

During the whole of the 1990s, the Canada-US border remained recognized as the "longest undefended border in the world", a status it had held for more than a century. Nonetheless, while free trade restructured Canadian customs as a trade facilitation authority, the border was made into a space facilitating mobilities, both licit and illicit. Andreas (2009) has shown how drug trafficking has increased exponentially after NAFTA at the Mexico-US border, where truck traffic was so heavy it became near impossible to monitor.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, deregulated cross-border truck traffic at the Canada-U.S. border opened the door to easier smuggling for marijuana, cocaine and drug money concealed in shipments.

Following this transformation in the regulatory mandate of customs, a series of measures and agreements started bringing together trade facilitation and "security". The latter notion itself underwent a significant metamorphosis during the 1980s and 1990s, being progressively detached from its social security connotation through a decade of intense social re-engineering via neoliberal policies (Brodie 2009; Connell 2010). Meanwhile, a mix of intelligence and defense professionals contributed to this work of re-signification.

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<sup>39</sup> In studying the Mexico-US drug market, Andreas also considers the importance of decades of heavy law enforcement presence at the border in a war on drugs strategy that required Mexican organized crime to grow increasingly sophisticated, well-armed and well-financed.

Struggling over diminishing resources for over a decade because of significant budget cuts in governmental affairs, these professionals re-branded themselves after the end of the Cold War by revamping the “security” label. From then on, the notion was increasingly used in reference to a variety of complex social, political and economic issues unfolding on the global stage—from undocumented migration to organized crime, drug smuggling and terrorism (Bigo 1996; 2002).

Taken together, such problems were seen to require new global policing institutions, policies and strategies.<sup>40</sup> Cross-border security agreements, revamped law enforcement legislation and regulations, national and international cooperation between security professionals as well as increasingly sophisticated surveillance mechanisms based on information technologies all contributed to diffusing bordering practices beyond their traditional land border location. Canada and the U.S. set the ball rolling with a little known bilateral accord that closely followed NAFTA—the 1995 Canada-United States Accord on Our Shared Borders. This agreement is the first in the region that explicitly connects the elimination of border hindrances to trade to the tightening of controls for illegitimate flows of commodities and persons smuggled through the same border. The agreement portrayed the signatories as facing “external threats related to international terrorism, transnational crime, and drug and people smuggling” and endeavoured to coordinate immigration, custom and intelligence agencies in order to confront those threats. Among other things, the accord established the Canada-U.S. Border Crime Forum in 1997, a still active regional coordinating body including law enforcement and justice

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<sup>40</sup> The historical details in the remainder of this section are taken from Côté-Boucher (2008).

officials. The Canada Border Services Agency continues to take part in this forum. These efforts constitute the progressive cross-border networking of North American law enforcement agencies and their transformation into global policing agencies. In this way, “security” issues began to be conceived as border-related problems to be dealt with by a series of institutional actors who operate remotely from the land border.

Following 9/11, a series of cross-border agreements have further entrenched these trends, while security budgets increase exponentially. Signed three months after the terrorist attacks, the 2001 Canada-U.S. Smart Border Declaration lays out a 32 points action plan to “identify security threats *before* they arrive in North America,” facilitate low-risk mobilities of persons and commodities, improve cross-jurisdictional and inter-agency cooperation as well as intelligence exchange, invest in land border infrastructure and finally, minimize the impacts of security measures on trade through the creation of a "North American zone of confidence". In the subsequent decade, the policy language adopted to speak of border security and trade is little altered despite changes in government in both countries. It is similarly repeated in the 2006 Security and Prosperity Partnership between the United States, Mexico and Canada—now abandoned. The last instance of these agreements, the 2011 U.S.-Canada Beyond the Border, is no exception. It announces its intention to push the border away from the "North American security perimeter" in order to facilitate trade: "If Canada and the U.S. can identify high-risk trade and travellers before they arrive at our borders, better protection can be provided to our citizens, while legitimate flows of trade and travellers across our shared border can be

streamlined".<sup>41</sup> Consequently, policy discourse analysis reveals a governmental regime interested in joining security and cross-border trade. However, these negotiations unfold in what Stephen Clarkson, in his works on the North American political economy, conceives as an asymmetrical relationship. Canada strategically inserted some of its own priorities in the security agenda through provincial involvement in border-related negotiations (von Hlatky and Trisko 2012)—including, for instance, some refugee interdiction measures (Côté-Boucher 2010a). But it also consented, agreement after agreement, to additional security measures and programs in order to protect a Canadian export sector made dependent on the American market after NAFTA.

What are the consequences for the Canadian customs authority of this metamorphosis in the role, location and representation of the border? At the end of the 1990s, land ports of entry employed workers from three governmental agencies: Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) as well as the Canadian Food and Inspection Agency (CFIA). The aftermath of 9/11 changed this division of labour in fundamental ways, as the border became seen as presenting a security concern. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was first put in charge of public interventions concerning border matters. Soon afterwards, the U.S. carried out major institutional changes in their security agencies. They created the Department of Homeland Security and a novel border agency, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Mirroring these changes, Canadian authorities built Public Safety and Emergency

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<sup>41</sup> Government of Canada, 2012, *Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness Action Plan in Brief*, <http://actionplan.gc.ca/en/page/bbg-tpf/perimeter-security-and-economic-competitiveness-action-plan-brief> (last modification not specified; accessed 27 Nov. 2012).

Preparedness (now Public Safety Canada). The department took responsibility for an array of intelligence and law enforcement agencies including the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the RCMP, Corrections Canada as well as for a new border agency, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

The CBSA was created out of three "legacy" agencies (Revenue as well as the enforcement branches of CIC and CFIA). This generated much organizational instability for the following years and was experienced by those I interviewed for this dissertation. Those hired before 2003 had started their careers as "customs officers" (*douaniers*) and Revenue employees; they were now "border services officers" (*agents des services frontaliers*) and working for the CBSA. Many officers now insist that they are full border enforcement professionals and quite often correct those who call them "customs officers". Consequently, far from being a technicality, this change of title reveals how organizational transformations are accompanied by the internal reworking of officers' professional identity; officers are in the process of reinterpreting themselves as law enforcement professionals.

By 2004, borderwork had become a "secure trade" enterprise, at least on paper. Since then, this novel governing regime for mobilities and border spaces has slowly trickled down into ports of entry. This required the building of an entirely new departmental structure, a remodelling of professional routines, a complete restructuring of the organizational and technological culture of border services and finally, a metamorphosis in the subjectivation of officers. As this dissertation reveals, the transition of customs

services from economic protection to a trade facilitation and law enforcement mandate has created paradoxes and tensions that border agreements, policies and regulations do not acknowledge but which nevertheless manifest themselves in everyday borderwork and in the internal politics of the CBSA.

### **The Multiplication of Players in Border Security**

Transformed into a security provider and a trade facilitator during the 1990s and 2000, Canadian customs enters a policing space in which it is increasingly led to collaborate with other security agencies and to become an intelligence producer in its own right. In turn, law enforcement and intelligence agencies get involved in border security and start receiving part of the funding allocated to security in the years following 9/11. Meanwhile, new modes of security governance based on the displacement of border control measures along supply chains begin involving carriers, importers and exporters in the securing of commodity flows. Through trusted trader programs, border authorities devolve some risk management responsibilities to the private sector. In exchange, the latter receives a low-risk label and a promise of customs facilitation for cross-border freight. These trends diminish frontline border officers' weight in the security field by distributing border control responsibilities to a variety of state and non-state security players.

#### *The CBSA intelligence regime*

Recently, border officers' powers have been both increased and reduced—or, to be more precise, they have been re-regulated. Since modifications were made to the Customs Act in 1998, officers are enabled to execute federal arrest warrants as well as apprehend

drunk drivers. However, these powers came with a stricter management of information exchange within and outside border services. Regulations stemming from article 107 of the Customs Act provide a legal framework for access to information within the CBSA and for the exchange of information with external counterparts (i.e. other national security or foreign enforcement agencies). This framework contributes to the building of a hierarchized and centralized intelligence regime at the CBSA.

Intelligence work is fairly recent activity for Canadian border services. According to interviewees, Canadian border services have been engaged in intelligence work at least since the 1990s. The CBSA hires its intelligence branch internally; all intelligence officers are former border services officers who have been promoted. Intelligence officers investigate between and close to ports of entry, gathering information for regional intelligence analysts (RIOs) who evaluate drug trafficking, cross-border crime and terrorism trends. Like other policing forces (Brodeur 2010), the CBSA local investigative intelligence work also rests upon paid informants. Furthermore, CBSA intelligence collaborates with other local and foreign enforcement agencies. While article 107 stipulates that exchanges of information with U.S. authorities should happen through written requests, a report of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada demonstrates that these exchanges often happen through unregulated, daily verbal interactions between Canadian and U.S. border intelligence officers.<sup>42</sup> CBSA analysts may then transfer the information obtained through these various sources to ports of entry regarding issues such as regional

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<sup>42</sup> For more details, refer to: Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2006, *Audit of the Personal Information Management Practices of the Canada Border Services Agency Trans-Border Data Flows*, [http://www.priv.gc.ca/information/pub/ar-vr/cbsa\\_060620\\_e.pdf](http://www.priv.gc.ca/information/pub/ar-vr/cbsa_060620_e.pdf) (accessed 3 Dec. 2012).



drug trafficking trends. They can also make recommendations about the trucking companies to which border officers should pay closer attention.

In contrast, the same legal article limits border officers' ability to cross to the U.S. side or to pick up the phone to ask for details about a specific individual or a vehicle as they sometimes used to—although some interviewees confirmed that they still do this on rare occasions. Officers thus obtained more enforcement powers in 1998, but, at least legally, their ability to communicate with their U.S. counterparts has been diminished and transferred higher up as the CBSA developed its own intelligence regime. Being one of the most secretive of the publicly-funded federal bodies in Canada, the CBSA's information exchange guidelines provide neither for independent accountability and oversight on these data exchange practices nor for independent review mechanisms for travelers who might be wrongly targeted as a result of these exchanges. These guidelines rather contribute to create information silos where intelligence flows up decisional channels through a complex charting of responsibilities.<sup>43</sup> Yet, as Sheptycki (2004: 321) argues, such silos leave local enforcement somewhat wanting: "What can be lost in this upward flow is an emphasis on horizontal linkages between crime types. It may be more useful for linkages between intelligence relating to different 'sectors of criminality' (...) to be made at the local level, than for this information to flow to the top of their respective information silos". The next chapter reveals that this analysis is shared by

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<sup>43</sup> See the interim Memorandum establishing guidelines for official information disclosure—the 2003 “interim” status of these guidelines remains: CBSA, 2003, *Interim Administrative Guidelines for the Provision to Others, Allowing Access to Others, and Use of Customs Information*, available at <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/dm-md/d1/d1-16-2-eng.pdf> (accessed 3 Dec. 2012).

border officers worried about the coming loss of local intelligence responsibilities at their port of entry.

*Integrated security teams and the RCMP as border actors*

Since 9/11, governmental authorities have been working on establishing an increased enforcement presence *between* ports of entry, effectively displacing a significant share of border enforcement activities away from the hands of frontline border officers. Consequently, state resources for security along the border are distributed amongst an increasing number of players, including enforcement agencies and integrated security teams, who compete for the responsibility of securing the land border. Since 1924, US authorities have counted on a Border Patrol, which evolved into a formidable tool for the policing of Mexican migration at the Rio Grande as well as an instrument of state-building and identity-making for the U.S. (Lytle Hernández 2010). Now a subsection of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (US-CBP), Border Patrol is granted border officers' powers and may legally patrol areas between ports of entry within a 100 miles of the border.<sup>44</sup> These powers allow for normalized immigration status checks by border patrol in mundane public places such as train or bus stations (Mountz 2011). Traditionally associated with the Mexico-U.S. border, Border Patrol saw its resources significantly increased at the northern border in the 9/11 aftermath.

In contrast, Canada never had an independent border patrol. We have seen that the RCMP has been given, at certain moments of Canadian history, the responsibility to police the

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<sup>44</sup> American Civil Liberties Union, *Are You Living in a Constitution Free Zone?*, available at <http://www.aclu.org/national-security/technology-and-liberty/are-you-living-constitution-free-zone> (last modified 15 Dec. 2006; accessed 7 Dec. 2012).

border against smuggling. But it was never provided with supplementary policing powers to do so. However, since the signature of the Smart Border Declaration in 2001, a variety of initiatives have been tested in order to establish a more permanent policing presence between ports of entry in selected Canadian border areas. Originally developed as cross-border crime measures in 1996, Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs) are integrated policing teams comprising the RCMP, the CBSA, as well as US Customs and Borders Protection, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the US Coast Guard. Since 2004, there are IBET officers posted in 24 “strategic locations” in Canada mandated with circumventing terrorism as well as the smuggling of people and contraband.<sup>45</sup> At the customs level, CBSA contributes to IBETs through "expert delivery of strategic and tactical intelligence targeting suspected businesses and individuals involved in national security, transnational organized crime and other illicit border-related criminal activity, through specialized national and international customs intelligence networks".<sup>46</sup> But operating budgets for IBETs are allocated to the RCMP, which leads the initiative on Canadian soil.<sup>47</sup>

Another collaborative initiative extends IBETs into coastal waters through the Shiprider program. Shiprider gives law enforcement powers to RCMP officers and US Coast Guards to operate in each other's country. The first joint training for the pilot project was

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<sup>45</sup> RCMP, *IBETs across Canada*, <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ibet-eipf/map-carte-eng.htm> (last modified 22 Nov. 2004; accessed 7 Dec. 2012).

<sup>46</sup> CBSA, *Canada-United States Integrated Border Enforcement Teams*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/security-securite/ibet-eipf-eng.html> (last modified 25 Aug. 2006; accessed 6 Dec. 2012).

<sup>47</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs) Plans, Spending and Results*, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/hidb-bdih/plan-eng.aspx?Org=77&Hi=59&Pl=425> (last modified 10 October 2012; accessed 6 Dec. 2012).

held in 2012. The 2011 Beyond the Border Initiative aims at extending these joint powers inland through a "next generation" program, but negotiations are stumbling on intricate legal difficulties, including contrasting criminal law provisions and privacy rights regimes in both countries. Finally, another pilot project involving the RCMP was recently carried out close to Lacolle, in the vicinity of Montréal. Lacolle is one of the busiest Canadian ports of entry. It also happens to be surrounded by many unguarded roads in nearby fields and woods offering plenty of unmonitored border crossing opportunities. Project Concept aimed at increasing "police presence at the border between Canada and the United States in an effort to prevent criminal activity" and was especially geared towards countering drug and weapon smuggling as well as preventing undocumented immigration.<sup>48</sup>

CBSA officers and their union were distraught when the RCMP was put in charge of the areas between ports of entry in that region. Some Québec officers spoke in my interviews of the disappointment of their Lacolle colleagues. These officers had undergone complementary training, including arming, in order to be included in this enforcement team only to see its responsibility delegated to the RCMP. In a 2010 letter to the CBSA president, the officers' union contested the decision, claiming it went against the "productive deployment of highly trained and skilled BSOs [border services officers]".<sup>49</sup>

As shown in greater detail in chapter 4, the border officers' union has been relentless at

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<sup>48</sup> RCMP, 2010, *Pilot Project: Become a Partner of the Border Police!*, <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/qc/services/frontiere-border/concept/frontiere-border-eng.htm> (last modified 10 Nov. 2012, accessed 3 Dec. 1012).

<sup>49</sup> See the letter by Jean-Pierre Fortin, Acting National President of the Customs and Immigration Union, to Stephen Rigby, then President of the CBSA, available at <http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/?p=31358> (accessed 3 Dec. 2012).

defending its members' employment amidst current re-organization and institutional changes in the security field. While they have embraced the strong enforcement mandate that they received since the creation of the CBSA, the union has, at times, opposed the trend towards a redistribution of border responsibilities to other policing agencies (as in the case of Project Concept).

Frontline border officers used to be a sort of police of proximity in areas surrounding ports of entry. They controlled tobacco and alcohol smuggling, gathered information on local crime and helped local businesses with customs regulation. They also worked with provincial police—for instance, calling them in drunk driving cases. Now border regions are heavily policed. On the Canadian side only, these areas may be hosting Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBET), Ontario and Québec provincial police (Ontario Provincial Police and Sûreté du Québec), the RCMP and finally, frontline border officers as well as in-land CBSA intelligence and immigration officials. In addition, truck drivers may encounter officers from provincial Ministries of Transport, and those crossing the border interact with US-CBP and sometimes Border Patrol, local police and state troopers. Furthermore, if “Shiprider Next Generation” becomes implemented, a multitude of US security agencies could also be enforcing the law on the Canadian side of the border. Faced with the multiplication of law enforcement agencies and initiatives in border communities, border officers have become border enforcers but, as they did so,

they started competing for security jobs, policing responsibilities and clout on what used to be their playing field.<sup>50</sup>

*Bringing supply chain security “upstream”: private public partnerships and “secure trade”*

Having to grapple with cumulating security procedures, trade facilitation creates headaches for Canadian exporters. Since the past decade, U.S. security requirements weigh heavily on the Canadian industry, which regularly calls for reductions in

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<sup>50</sup> While it is beyond the purview of this dissertation to examine the social consequences of this intensification of policing and surveillance activities in border communities, it is important to mention that they carry significant implications for the lives of borderland residents. Receiving less customs services as rural and small ports of entry are closed, local residents nevertheless experience more everyday surveillance and impediments to what used to be mundane activities, such as having tea with friends on the US side of the border. In her web documentary, Nicole Robicheau (2012) shows how the quality of life at Stanstead-Derby Line, a cross-border community in Québec-Vermont, has been seriously altered since American authorities recently started enforcing a border that used to be quite porous to neighbourhood and kinship ties.

Everyday surveillance in these regions is also based upon the premise that intelligence gathering should seek the “cooperation of local residents”. For instance, the RCMP's project Concept aimed at collecting information by using and educating local resident on “how to detect suspicious activity”. Through IBETs, both Canadian and American authorities are also working on information-gathering operations targeting locals. One of these happened a few weeks before I visited a village located close to a small port of entry. A local truck driver I interviewed reported being led inside the US-CBP building during one of these enforcement operations. The authorities present—who did not properly inform him of who they were working for—attempted turning him into an informant and invited him to report, at the time and in the future, any suspicious behaviour and criminal activities he might have witnessed. This truck driver was never under suspicion of any illegal activity nor did he have a criminal record.

While attempting to circumvent gun or drug smuggling is a useful and commendable task for enforcement authorities, we should be critical of policing strategies resting on the recourse to local residents as privileged investigative method and intelligence gathering tool—perhaps best illustrated by the RCMP's public relations message for Project Concept “Become a Partner of the Border Police!”. Resorting to ordinary citizens to report on their neighbours, co-workers and members of their communities is worrisome, bringing to mind some authoritarian practices which no democratic state should be replicating. Critical academics and civil liberties commentators have raised serious concerns about the extension of security practices and policing powers at the border. I add to these concerns the consequences brought by these policing methods on the everyday lives of borderland residents. See E. Gilbert's op-ed from February 2012 in Rabble, *Harper's border deal expands the national security state*, <http://rabble.ca/news/2012/02/harpers-border-deal-expands-national-security-state> (accessed 3 Dec. 2012).

administrative requirements and delays caused by security policies.<sup>51</sup> Immediately after 9/11, trucks lined up at the border for kilometers as the border was closed to traffic. Unable to obtain parts produced on either side of the border, car manufacturing went to a halt for a week, with millions of dollars lost in the process (Andreas 2003). Since then, the traffic in commodities between the two countries has been falling steadily (Brook 2008). This was partly due to security restrictions (Globerman and Storer 2009; MacPherson and al. 2006) and to a global economic restructuring that culminated in the 2008 downturn. The officers I interviewed are first hand witnesses to this transition. They testify that truck traffic at their border crossings sharply diminished after 9/11, and then again after the last economic crisis. Volume modestly improved since 2010, but officers see an increase in “empties” (trucks coming back from the U.S. without carrying a shipment).

North American economic and governmental actors often cite these impediments to trade as having given the impetus for shifting to securing commodity flows inland, inside the yards of road carriers and exporters. But Chalfin's (2007; 2010) research in port customs in the Netherlands and Ghana demonstrate that the rhetoric of customs authorities differs little from one continent to the other, confirming her own assertion of the importance of the work done by the World Customs Organization for the standardization of customs

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<sup>51</sup> See among others, the following reports published by major industry players: Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2004, *New Frontiers: Building a 21st Century Canada-US Partnership in North America*. available at [http://www.ceocouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/archives/New\\_Frontiers\\_NASPI\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_April\\_2004.pdf](http://www.ceocouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/archives/New_Frontiers_NASPI_Discussion_Paper_April_2004.pdf) (accessed 8 Dec. 2012); Coalition for Secure and Trade-Efficient Borders, 2005, *Rethinking Our Borders*. Available at [http://www.cme-mec.ca/pdf/Coalition\\_Report0705\\_Final.pdf](http://www.cme-mec.ca/pdf/Coalition_Report0705_Final.pdf) (Accessed 8 Dec. 2012); Ontario Chamber of Commerce Borders and Trade Development Committee, 2004, *Cost of Border Delays to Ontario*. Available at [http://www.occ.on.ca/assets/Cost-of-Border-Delays-to-Ontario\\_May-2004.pdf](http://www.occ.on.ca/assets/Cost-of-Border-Delays-to-Ontario_May-2004.pdf) (accessed 8 Dec. 2012).

practices globally. Similarly, a senior manager with UK customs points to a global trend towards a programmatic re-organization of customs away from a focus on import declarations. Customs management starts from the moment when data on commercial transactions is transmitted to customs authorities by exporters and carriers:

We need to return to basics and re-assess why we are in business. In the United Kingdom (UK) we have re-confirmed that we collect revenue, facilitate trade, protect society and collect trade statistics. But we are throwing away the old Customs textbooks on how we do that and looking to see if we can make best use of electronic data which is part of businesses' everyday operations to assess revenue, compliance, admissibility and security risks. This means *working in partnership to drive up compliance and bear down on non-compliance using IT systems and intelligence-led risk management*. But even more radical is the idea of shifting our emphasis from the point of importation to as far upstream in the supply chain as possible and considering the role of the consignor in feeding accurate information into an electronic data pipeline.

Heskett 2009: 27 (emphasis added)

The next chapter further details how this “upstream” transition of customs work has been spearheaded during the 1990s through the introduction of electronic customs declarations, and now through the integration of customs data collection and risk management. But another significant element in generating this displacement of customs away from ports of entry resides in soliciting the participation of the private sector in matters such as customs and risk data transmission, on-site security measures as well as surveillance of



plant and transport workers. As mentioned earlier, the significance of the transfer of risk assessment and customs compliance responsibilities to the private sector has been little investigated. But Chalfin (2007: 1616) aptly underlines "the decoupling of customs controls from a fixed or bounded location" created by these processes of devolution: "Thoroughly dependent on a dynamic of distancing, the prearrival information requirement extends customs' authority outward in time and space as shippers, importers, and their agents are made responsible to customs even before goods reach the nation's shores. Here, the bounds of customs' authority are enlarged, moving beyond the territory of the nation-state, even as customs officers remain within it".

In North America, customs authorities also attempt to coordinate their activities with exporters, importers, carriers and customs brokers. Adopting a public-private partnership language, trusted trader programs have been designed to facilitate commodity flows and 'secure trade' by pre-clearing and streamlining freight before it reaches the border. Since 2002, these programs have become the preferred solution for the policing of supply chains in both Canada and the United States. These programs have two main characteristics which they share with similar customs initiatives elsewhere: first, they transfer part of the security responsibility up the distribution chain to importers and carriers; secondly, they adopt a risk management approach differentiating licit and illicit mobilities, re-categorizing them along a low to high-risk continuum (Côté-Boucher 2010a).

Trusted trader programs create an intricate technological and administrative pattern that streamlines border crossing for commodities and carriers, yet adds complexity to the

operations required from private "partners" before this crossing is made possible. Partners in Protection, a Canadian program first established in 1994, "enlists the cooperation" of importers in border security, as does its US counterpart, Customs and Trade Partnership against Terrorism (CTPAT). Membership in these programs is required in order to receive a Free and Secure Trade (FAST) status at the border. In fact, to be recognized as a FAST shipment at ports of entry, the truck driver, the exporter as well as the shipment carried must all be FAST approved. Obtaining membership requires time and resources on the part of both carriers and exporters; the latter must invest in fences, barriers, CCTV cameras and related surveillance material, while submitting to business site visits by program officers from US and Canadian border authorities. Truck drivers are investigated in order to acquire preclearance FAST cards. In Canada, "trusted" companies are also required to become members of Customs Self-Assessment (CSA). This accounting program facilitates the transmission of duty and taxation data to revenue authorities and requires significant investments in accounting software. It is therefore not surprising that recent research shows that trusted trader programs unfairly advantage large businesses while representing an added burden for small and medium enterprises (Bradbury 2010; Vance 2008).

Predictably, "shifting the border upstream in the supply chain" has carried significant consequences for frontline border officers. While these programs demonstrate the consolidated and continuing importance of customs work in deregulated markets, they displace much of the securing of commodity flows away from the land border and, therefore, away from the hands of frontline border officers. Officers now share customs

responsibilities with CBSA administrators responsible for trusted trader programs, as well as with private sector actors. Meanwhile, policy discourses about the re-making of "21st century customs management" (Gordhan 2007) represent the work done at ports of entry as less and less significant, even as anachronistic labour.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation examines the dynamics of organizational change raised by the transition of Canadian customs into the security field. It is particularly interested in the impact of such transition on everyday security provision in land border ports of entry. In order to better understand this shift, this chapter offered a review of the history of Canadian customs. It particularly insisted on the economic importance of customs as a considerable source of revenue for the Canadian state during the majority of its history. For most of the 20th century, customs represented one of the key institutional actors that implemented the Canadian protectionist policy. However, since the 1980s, customs officers, like customs authorities elsewhere, have seen their trade regulation role metamorphosed under a neoliberal influence. From a century-old tax collection, ambassadorial and protectionist model, Canadian border services became charged with trade facilitation and securing commodity flows. An important element of this change in mandate raised in this chapter concerns the multiplication of players in the security field. From this moment, customs began transitioning into an institutional space comprising a variety of security and policing professionals. Meanwhile, border authorities have increasingly enlisted the participation of private actors in risk management activities.

As demonstrated in the next chapter, this multiplication of actors with a stake in the security field diminishes the relative significance of border officers' decisions in ports of entry. These changes are reflected on the ground by important modifications in the work routines of border officers and the organizational culture of border services. New information technologies, enforcement and customs databases as well as practices of risk management are delocalizing the border from its traditional geopolitical location. These trends do not only undermine frontline customs officers' labour; they also carry significant consequences for thinking discretionary power at the border.

### Chapter III. "They Keep More and More of That Aspect Away From Us": The Effects of a New Division of Labour

#### Introduction

*Raymond on a workday at customs*

Karine: All these programs, like FAST but also C-TPAT on the other side of the border, e-Manifest, all that, how does that affect customs work? How did this change your daily work as a customs officer?

Raymond: It's given me a lot less work to do. Because it has eliminated... Well I guess, when we were talking earlier, we used to have... every driver that came through had documents. We had to go through everybody's documents. Now it's all done electronically. Especially with e-Manifest and machine-release. Where a lot of times, at least with EDI, a customs officer is reviewing the electronic portion of it, [but] now with machine-release or E-Manifest, the machine is doing everything and it's just randomly picking up shipments to examine. So it's made my job a lot easier, a lot more tedious I would say.

K: Why tedious?

R: Less to do. Because we've lost the administration... I would say, in my own estimation, 10 years ago the administrative part of the job was maybe 75, the paperwork part, and the examination [truck inspections] was 25. Now, we've lost that 75% of our job but our examinations haven't gone up. We're still examining the same amount of vehicles. But now, you have more people. They used to allocate their resources differently because we needed that many more people to review all the documents. But now with that part of the job virtually eliminated, they just allocated the resources to examinations but it hasn't corresponded with the amount of trucks we've had to examine. For whatever reason.

K: So what do you do?

R: We sit around and we wait for a truck to come in. That's what we do. There's nothing... I don't know how else to describe it. We sit around and we wait for a truck.

K: You're there to provide a service. Do you see that there's less people involved or hired to do commercial work because of it?

R: No. No. [*sigh*] In all honesty, I believe that if 9/11 wouldn't have happened we would probably have 10 less people working here.<sup>52</sup>

K: In the commercial area?

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<sup>52</sup> Since a port of entry can be recognized by the number of border officers it employs, I have respected proportions provided by Raymond in this excerpt but replaced the numbers in order to protect confidentiality.

R: All things being considered of what we spoke about, the only exception being 9/11, we would have, in my mind, we would have 1/3 less people working here.

K: Over what?

R: I don't know... Let's say for argument's sake we had 30. I believe that if it wasn't for 9/11, we'd have 20. Only because we eliminated all the paperwork. Our truck exams have not gone up and we streamlined the movement of people and goods in the country. Everything has been streamlined.

I think what has saved jobs and what has gotten people hired was the 9/11 threat and the enforcement part of the job and the [information] gathering part of the job has caused... Not caused, that's not the word I'm looking for... has made Ottawa realize that we can't run at barebones. Because we never know when something could happen in the world. So we have to have our borders manned [*sic*]. I can't speak for traffic. I'm not working there. But back here, just... [*sigh*] How can I describe it? If you used to have four people needed to process a package from start to finish 15 years ago and that being said it was 100% of the work that needed to be done to process this package. Well if only 20% of the work is required to be done, do you still need the same five people to do it?

K: No.

R: That's the point that we're in. But, because of 9/11 and the constant threat that something could happen anytime in the world [...], we're always going to be a potential target. You have to have the staff on. So, we've become, we went from, I believe, an action job, because of all the documents we had to do, to more of a reaction job. And when you are in a reaction position, it's you know, a layman may say: "Ah, you guys all sit around and do nothing". Well, yeah, we do. But that's the nature of the job. But when stuff happens, you know [*he snaps his fingers*] at a moment's notice, we have to be ready. And you have to assume that anything can happen at a moment's notice. [...]

K: So, your work has changed a lot.

A: Yes it has. It has changed. Traffic hasn't. With cross-border shopping, they've picked up. They're always busy. The dollar [exchange rate] being the same. [...] They've stayed busy. We've gone down. [...] But inside the office the work has changed. We used to need four people to screw in the light bulb, now we only need one! [*laughs*] That's what it comes down to. Make sure you put that in your final dissertation.

Raymond's comments invite a reconsideration of current analyses concerned with the new spatiality produced by global mobilities governance. The last two chapters have established how critical border and security studies argue for a more careful charting of what Walters (2006) aptly designates as the "changing topography of border control".

These authors offer fundamental insights for investigating the complex ways in which borders are spatially disembedded through an array of surveillance technologies, a range of policing actors as well as legislative and regulatory mechanisms that partially detach border governance from its geopolitical location. However, these insights are seldom taken up empirically through investigations of how these trends impact work processes within security organizations. This investigation points, amidst this restructuring, to the changing shape of the local in border policing.

This chapter is premised on Raymond's and his colleagues' description of their typical daily activities as well as their reflections about recent changes in their tasks and responsibilities. By doing so, I investigate new articulations of the local in border policing, that is, I pay attention to how the distanciation processes characteristic of contemporary border control are productive of a new division of labour in and between ports of entry. Contemporary borders are not only the product of a delocalized and intelligence-led surveillance over mobilities. Border spaces also represent an outcome of the concrete labour performed by security professionals in ports of entry and a product of their efforts to remain relevant amidst the organizational, political and economic changes impacting the security field. These changes bear on officers' subjectivation and their perception of the purpose and worth of their jobs.

Perhaps best grasped at the level of everyday work practices in ports of entry, disembedding is made visible in the reception border officers give to new ways of doing customs work, particularly as the latter translate into new work processes that reshape

decision-making in ports of entry. These include the extension of the primary inspection line, the use of machine-release for shipments, the adoption of targeting procedures, the integration of risk management and customs clearance as well as the recent centralization of targeting activities. Notably, intelligence-related tasks as well as the increasingly automated character of commercial customs clearance enter in tension with border officers' efforts at maintaining their hold on significant portions of their responsibilities. These tensions are manifested in a growing distrust between the border organization headquarters and rank-and-file. They also appear in the guise of discontent towards the partial deskilling of frontline border personnel.

Most interestingly, interviews reveal that the removal of regulatory and security responsibilities from local ports of entry is felt by "commercial" officers as weakening their discretionary powers. Legally entrenched but reshaped in practice, the continuing significance of discretion emerges both as an individualized response to regulatory complexity and as a "social wage" (Papp 2006) by which customs officers negotiate their loss of effective authority. Consequently, I suggest that the significance of the reflexive adoption, adaptation and even sometimes resistance to novel technologies, regulatory regimes, work methods and distribution of tasks by border officers for theorizing the manner and extent of the disembedding of border control cannot be understated. This chapter continues exploring this disembedding by illuminating how it alters the daily work life of frontline security professionals in ports of entry, and how they respond to these tendencies in unexpected ways.

**Raymond Works "Commercial": A Distinct Occupational Sensibility**



In order to understand the technological and organizational transformation affecting work routines in "commercial sections", it is important to have a clear idea of the topography of land border ports of entry. This topography is itself indicative of the official division of labour between customs, traveler processing and immigration land border authorities, therefore contributing to shape commercial officers' view of themselves as a distinct kind of border personnel. With the exception of small ports, most land ports of entry are comprised of at least two buildings—it is also the case in the United States and in many other countries (Heyman 2004; Chalfin 2010). The first building is referred to as the "traffic section" where traffic and immigration officers are posted. Both types of officers process car drivers and bus passengers through booths; this is where regular travelers cross the border. In the main building, immigration officers also evaluate more specific cases of admissibility into the country (including verifying permanent residency, handling NAFTA visas, etc). Trucks, commodities and truck drivers are processed elsewhere, in the "commercial" building, where the great majority of my interviewees were assigned.

In major ports, the two sections, traffic and commercial, practically function as two different ports of entry. In fact, officers are often not acquainted with their colleagues working in the other building. Officers' spatial language illustrates both this division of labour and the infrastructural configuration of ports. Interviewees frequently referred to commercial services as "the back" of the port and traffic operations as "the front" or "up there". This backstage position of the commercial section reflects the more uneventful and administrative character of customs work, which includes more computer-related and paper-based tasks and requires less contact with border crossers. Work weeks start slowly

and pick up as trucks start coming back from the U.S. for the weekend. Weekends and night shifts are less busy, allowing for more week-based work schedules than at traffic where cross-border shoppers, vacationers and sports fans cross over to the U.S. for the weekend.

Elizabeth, an officer with previous traffic experience, characterized commercial work as the comfortable, "slipper section" of her port of entry. But this does not mean that nothing happens for commercial officers. While the most common seizures at the border concern tobacco and alcohol, the most significant seizures in terms of weight made by the CBSA (e.g. drugs, counterfeit goods or money, firearms) come from commercial sections—trucks have more room than cars to hide illegal goods and truck drivers are more experienced with border crossing. Despite this fact, the more "relaxed" and "routine" atmosphere of the "back" was confirmed time and again. A former traffic officer transferred to commercial duties for health reasons told me that he "would have given his right arm to get back in traffic" while another, in the same position, said he appreciated traffic because he was not scared of "getting into a little scuffle". Another traffic officer who I met during a guided visit of a port of entry did not understand my interest in the boredom of commercial work, since traffic and immigration obviously are where the action happens. Commercial officers were forthcoming in portraying traffic duties as confrontational and stressful work, a "cat and mouse game" with those travelers who are inclined to lie. An interviewee called the searching of private luggage, purses and wallets "petty". As a result, the difference between "commercial" and "traffic" is far

from being only spatial; it designates a specific division of border labour for customs and for traffic/immigration officers.

In addition, it points to a distinct occupational identity. As indicated by Waddington (1999), policing work represents an “inherently problematic occupational experience”. My analysis reveals that this observation is also valid in the context of borderwork. Commercial officers narratives are replete with evidence of discomfort regarding the parts of their responsibilities that requires them to display repressive and invasive authority—secured by their extensive search and seizure powers—especially when this involved direct conflict with travelers. Most interviewees expressed a dislike for traffic work. The officers I interviewed portrayed the traffic section as an unhealthy work environment with tense labour relations (especially with the ports' management) and riddled with daily conflicts with travellers. Seeking less "action", those officers sometimes attempt to get transferred, seeing the regulatory compliance work involved in customs as a respite from the pressures experienced in the traffic section.

Raymond expresses this discomfort as he describes the specific features that make commercial work more uneventful, and the commercial section "a lot happier work environment":

So when I came back here [the commercial section] (...) I wanted to stay, I like the paperwork, part of it, better, I like dealing with the brokerage community, I like that a whole lot. I felt like it was more of an office as opposed to cat and mouse, which I considered that up there [traffic section], just a game. It's trying

to guess if you're lying. Whereas back here, it's very, very rare that that kind of stuff happens. Because truck drivers are working. Brokers are working. Truck drivers, if they get caught smuggling, a lot of time will be fired (...)

You know, we have an obligation to our clients. So, that's another reason why there's mutual respect between the truck driving community and us. The traffic flows, or the commercial traffic flows pretty good. And I just enjoy that part of the job a lot more.

Some people can't stand it back here. They come back here for a little bit and they hate it. They find it boring. They want to be up front. They consider that action, they enjoy the confrontation I suppose, with people and, you know... I always found that part of the job [traffic], unless you were helping somebody on the phone, it was almost 90% negative. Because you were... Unless you were just questioning somebody believing them and letting them go up the road, as soon as you were sending somebody down, you were sending them down for two reasons. Either to pay, which pissed them off, or because you didn't believe what they told you. When you're essentially looking at somebody saying: "I think you're lying to me". And who likes to be called a liar? And then so you're getting dirty looks and then, if you're the person searching the car, you know: "I don't look like a smuggler" [*imitating irritated voice*]. It was always confrontational where you never... I don't want to use the word never, but you almost never have that back here. Drivers, they have a job, we have a job, you know, we respect each other's

position. I just enjoy that, it just made life a lot easier for me personally being back here.

Raymond describes different work processes with discrete tasks associated with traffic and commercial work, differentially evaluated and valued by officers of each section. But his description also touches on a significant feature of the occupational identity of Canadian customs officers: how they downplay their power differential with truck drivers.

*Undervaluing one's formal authority*

Officers insist that they appreciate the commercial section because truck drivers are just like them: workers trying to make a living, "pay their mortgage" and "feed their families". However, as Lipsky (2010: 54) reminds us, "clients in street-level bureaucracies are nonvoluntary" and a coercive element can always be found in this relationship. The varying features of this relationship depends on the particulars of the power differential between clients and bureaucrats in a specific agency as well as the dependence level of clients on their services. High reliance on a particular organization diminishes the ability to complain or seek accountability. In the case of truck drivers, this dependence is significant. Their compliance with border official's authority provides them with access to the country and impacts the swiftness of border crossing. It even bears on the possibility of keeping one's job. Indeed, non-compliant truck drivers at customs may be disciplined by their employer with job termination.

Most of this dissertation is dedicated to examining the internal subcultural and organizational dynamics unleashed by contemporary changes in border control. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind, as Heyman (1995) suggests, that a significant feature of bureaucratic work concerns how state workers are entrusted with the control of persons located *outside* the bureaucratic organization. By insisting on their putative equal relationship with truck drivers, commercial officers undervalue the visible features of their authority. These features comprise legal, material and symbolic elements such as extended legislated powers, significant amounts of discretion, navy blue policing uniforms as well as repressive tools including batons and pepper spray. Ports of entry are designed to create a certain levels of compliance from truck drivers by making them wait in line at the booth, compelling them to answer questions and even submit to searches to their personal belongings and trucks. In addition to these spatial arrangements, the technological remodelling of customs requires truck drivers to provide an ever expanding amount of information before they present themselves at the border. It is part of cross-border truck drivers' everyday experience of labour discipline to be exposed to the routines of paperwork and booth questioning at the land border.

Commercial officers agree: truck drivers seldom create trouble. They are, as officers overwhelmingly reminded me, much more familiar with customs regulations than the average traveler. As a result, some officers give a lot of weight to instances when truck drivers smuggle the odd bottle of alcohol or carton of cigarettes. Sarah, a young officer, wondered out loud why some truck drivers did not conform to her expectations of truthful, compliant behavior: "They could be lying about the length of time they were

gone, about their declaration, about alcohol or tobacco. Uh... they just, I don't know. It's frustrating! Because if they just told the truth in the first place, it wouldn't be as big of a deal". Despite these petty lies, truck drivers are generally seen as docile travelers, even when it comes to claiming their legally recognized rights. According to another officer: "The best way to describe it is: truck drivers never complain. They just want to clear their freight, and especially a lot of the French guys, because of the language barrier, kind of have their tail between their legs. They just want to get by so they would do their best in English. Whereas up front [at the traffic section] people who were French, you know, if they wanted French service, they demanded it." Many of those working in the trucking industry in the Eastern part of the country are French-speaking, generally working-class Québécois who do not speak much English. In Ontario ports of entry, truck drivers do not dare ask for their legislated right to French-speaking service: it could buy them ill-will but most importantly, it would stall them at the border. Paid by the kilometer, truck drivers wish to limit to a minimum the time spent at ports of entry and ultimately, model their behavior to protect their employment by keeping a spotless file with customs. Drivers' dependency upon swift border processing is productive of a high level of compliance to regulations and to officers' instructions.

The downplaying of the power differential between officers and truck drivers is based on a variety of legal, organizational, material and symbolic displays of state authority as well as on drivers' reliance upon the good will of border officials. Whether working commercial, traffic or immigration, customs officials apply the regulatory power of the state at its borders. Through a narrative emphasizing the business-as-usual nature of a job

that legally grants them the most important powers held by enforcement officers in Canada, commercial officers obscure the power relationship they construct with truck drivers. Having established this central dimension of the occupational culture of commercial work, I now turn to the transformation of customs work routines in ports of entry due to the introduction of information technologies.

### **Customs at a Distance: The New Features of Frontline Customs Work**

Experienced officers who spent their careers at the commercial sections of major ports of entry remember the 1990s with a hint of nostalgia. At the time, their workplace had its own outdoor hot-dog stand and a parking lot filled with trucks waiting to be processed through the border. The commercial section's social committee organized Christmas parties funded with the generous amount collected from on-site pop machines, where lined-up truck drivers emptied their pockets in their wait to present their paperwork for approval. A little more than a decade later, drivers are swiftly released and rarely step out of their trucks, parking lots are empty save for the odd confiscated trailer and the pop machine is mainly used by thirsty officers. What happened to bring about such reversal in the social life of these ports? The introduction of data processing technologies and electronic customs declarations in customs officers' work routines brought about a variety of customs at a distance practices that extended the primary inspection line, automated significant parts of customs decision-making and generated novel risk management tasks and new labour arrangements between ports of entry.



*Electronic declarations: reducing decision-making times at the booth*

Officer: We used to do EDI [electronic data interchange] here. We no longer do EDI here.

Karine: Yes, it's [another port], correct?

O: Yeah, pros and cons to that.

K: Oh, ok. So pros?

O: We don't have to do them! [Laughs]

K: [laughs] That's a pro! Cons?

O: More available time. Cons? They don't know what they're looking for.

K: Yes, it's far away.

O: You're trying to... it would be like me trying to target a marine port. I never worked at a marine port. For me to try to target that, it's... you don't have a realistic understanding as to how that operation works. (...) Bails of used clothing, they don't know because they don't see them. You see what comes across your desk, right?

K: Yes.

O: So you see that, but it happens a lot less frequently than when you work in the booth, I mean... I can't even tell you how many loads of used rags and used paper for recycling that I've come across. Right? Well if you have never searched them, then you don't know. You could say I've searched a thousand of these, right? I find them to be low-risk because I've never found anything in them. But then if they never searched it, they've never done it then they don't understand it, they don't have that experience.

K: Hum... they won't be able to say it's low-risk or high-risk?

O: Yes, like I mean they can make a guess. Whereas now, I see a load of used rags, I have it out low-risk, but it's good because now if I'm sending it in, it is more driver-specific than shipment-specific. [...]

You know you can't hold it against them, they don't know and this is how the department [CBSA] saw fit to change or shift this over, but... At the same time... yeah... you feel for them I guess. And it's just not the best operation. Right? *They keep more and more of that aspect away from us* I find.

And eventually I think we're going to be enforcement-minded at the border, I think... not that we're not now, but even more. I wouldn't be surprised if in the next ten years we were just basically mostly secondary all day, every day, searching trucks all day, every day, and very little of the paperwork aspect of it.

K: No dealings with customs brokers?

O: Well, we probably would if it wasn't in, if the shipments weren't set up, but really it's like... Ok, when I first started here, we had 20 desks downstairs. So it's like ok, you'd

have 20 people at least processing documentation, and when I first started it was go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go! Right? And now its like ok, you got 10 officers down there... and they're waiting! Right? You're waiting for stuff to come in. Why? Because it's all been moved elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> (emphasis added)

In the last chapter, I have explained how the introduction of trusted trader programs—aimed at streamlining the crossing of the land border for "low-risk" shipments for carriers, truck drivers and exporters—placed significant portions of the responsibility for security beyond the reach of frontline border officers. In 1997, Canadian customs introduced another initiative which contributed to further that trend. Developed with the aim to speed up customs processing and reduce truck queues at major ports of entry, electronic customs declarations—or EDI (Electronic Declaration Interchange) in customs jargon—eliminated much of the paperwork required to release a shipment at the border. Before EDI, truck drivers had to step down from their trucks and wait in line to submit their paperwork at the port's main office. Then, they brought copies to their customs broker (i.e. an industry of customs intermediaries for importers and exporters) who worked in the same building or in a small building nearby. Coming back to the main office with the full declaration, drivers had it signed by a customs officer, while they or the brokers paid duties and taxes owed on shipment. The process lasted at least 45 minutes for truck drivers, often more at major ports of entry that were the busiest. Afterwards, the paperwork was processed by clerical customs workers and the total

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<sup>53</sup> For confidentiality purposes, the numbers of desks and officers cited by this officer were modified but the proportions respected.

amount collected in duties and taxes was physically deposited each day in a nearby financial institution.

Electronic declarations have considerably modified how a shipment is assessed and released at the border. From 1997 onward, importers and exporters have been able to electronically transmit the information customs needs in order to evaluate a shipment *before* its arrival at the border. This information includes data about the goods and quantities transported, the exporter's name and address as well as the port of entry where the crossing will occur. Permits for regulated commodities can also be obtained and transmitted electronically by other governmental agencies (for instance Health Canada for pharmaceutical products). Many of the former brokerage offices around ports of entry are now closed; in case of missing paperwork or incomplete data, truck drivers call representatives in major Canadian cities or meet with a local staff member hired by a cluster of brokerage companies to serve that port.<sup>54</sup> But generally, at his arrival on the primary inspection line, the truck driver submits a manifest (a customs form detailing the commodities to be imported) with a barcode to be scanned. With electronic declarations, it now takes about 30 seconds to process a truck at border crossings, unless the truck driver or shipment is sent to secondary inspection.

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<sup>54</sup> Since the advent of electronic declarations in Canada and the United States, and the remodelling of customs to follow World Customs Organizations recommendations in trade facilitation, the North American customs brokerage industry has been undergoing a major upheaval. The last important string of takeovers to date concerns the buying of established companies such as Norman G. Jensen, Inc. and M.G. Maher & Company, Inc by Livingston International in 2012. As Chalfin's (2007; 2010) work on the neoliberal restructuring of port customs remains unequalled, there is a glaring need for ethnographic research into how novel customs processes are reshaping the industries associated with the transport and processing of commodities at borders—e.g. custom brokers, freight forwarding, third-party logistics providers. Such research would greatly benefit the fields of economic globalization and border studies.

### *The extension of the primary inspection line*

Depending on the length of shifts, officers spend between two to four hours alone at the primary inspection booth in one hour-long segments. Thomas comments: "For sure, when it is your 50<sup>th</sup> truck driver who tells you: "Hey! Beautiful day!", it gets boring. (...) It seems stupid, but an hour spent asking the same questions, that can be long. I don't know how they do it at the airport, they do four hours straight". Officers interviewed during this research confirmed the repetitive, lonely and monotonous character of primary inspection work already noted by Gilboy (1991) in the case of U.S. immigration officers posted in airports. Similarly, booth work remains labour intensive, requiring that questioning, reviewing of paperwork and decision-making be done in a short period of time. The primary inspection line encounter still represents an important moment for data collection about drivers, shipments and carriers. As argued by O'Connor and de Lint (2009), it also still stands for "an important zone of detection", especially in matters of contraband.

However, in order to quicken release decisions at the booth, information technologies extend the primary inspection line both spatially and temporally. When a truck driver shows up at her booth, an officer goes through her admissibility questionnaire, asking for information such as citizenship, municipality of residence, point of origin and private purchases to declare. When passport readers are available, she scans passports and FAST cards; license plates are read by a camera. Otherwise, the officer is required to manually enter the passport and plate numbers. In cases when local truck drivers cross the border multiple times a day, those officers working without a passport reader—already under pressure to accomplish a variety of tasks in a short period of time—admit they sometimes

skip this time-consuming step. This might impinge on the accuracy of risk analyses and trade statistics, but not for much longer; readers were being installed in ports lacking them during fieldwork. The collected information is entered into the Integrated Primary Inspection Line (IPIL) system. This data is compiled for subsequent risk analyses—for instance, in order to establish patterns of border crossing for a specific transportation company—but also for accumulating trade and cross-border mobility statistics.<sup>55</sup> Commercial officers are usually not trained to examine immigration cases; any admissibility issue regarding a truck driver's citizenship status is referred to immigration officers working in the traffic building.

As detailed below, while border services collect a considerable amount of data about truck drivers, carriers and exporters, officers have little access to this information when working at the primary inspection line.<sup>56</sup> Officers can consult databases regarding "armed and dangerous lookouts" in the booth but in order to verify whether a driver has a criminal record, a truck driver must be sent to secondary inspection where officers may consult databases such as Integrated Border Query (IBQ), Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) and its U.S. equivalent National Crime Information Centre (NCIC).

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<sup>55</sup> A seldom studied yet central state-building function, customs plays a key role as a statistics producing machine. Customs generates figures about transportation and cross-border trade that have important implications for trade and economic policy.

<sup>56</sup> Interviewed officers were of different opinions as to whether they could reveal the type of information to which they had access at the primary inspection line for decision-making. This hesitation gave me parched data about the topic, but my findings are confirmed by the following documents: Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2006, *Audit of the Personal Information Management Practices of the Canada Border Services Agency*, [http://www.priv.gc.ca/information/pub/ar-vr/cbsa\\_060620\\_e.asp](http://www.priv.gc.ca/information/pub/ar-vr/cbsa_060620_e.asp) (last accessed 30 Dec. 2012); CBSA, 2012, *Info Source: Sources of Federal Government and Employee Information 2012*, <http://www.cbsa.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/pia-efvp/atip-aiprp/infosource-eng.html> (last accessed 30 Dec. 2012); Eugenia Martin-Ivie v. Canada Border Services Agency, 2011 OHSTC 6, [http://www.ohstc.gc.ca/eng/content/html\\_archive/decisions2011/ohstc-11-006.shtml#ftn\\_ref12](http://www.ohstc.gc.ca/eng/content/html_archive/decisions2011/ohstc-11-006.shtml#ftn_ref12) (last accessed 30 Dec. 2012).

Officers may also check ICES (Integrated Customs Enforcement System) which contains a history of past customs enforcement actions taken with drivers and carriers including motives for secondary inspection, notes from past questioning as well as receipts and invoices previously found on the driver.

Up to this point, the release process is similar whether one works traffic or commercial, differing only by the few databases specific to customs or immigration. But after the admissibility questionnaire, a commercial officer at the primary inspection line goes through a series of tasks specific to commercial work at the booth. This was well described by Sarah:

And then, the next thing is looking at the paperwork. People have their own order of doing things, though. So that's just the way I do it. Personal preference. So I'll look at it and I'll be like: OK, this is a typical shipment of [personal care products company], goods like shampoos or whatever. We see it like all the time. There's never any problem, it's not... it's very, very low risk. It's got a seal on the back [*of the truck; this means the shipment is part of a trusted trader program or is a bonded carrier*], everything. It's a company that you're very familiar with, that has had very few problems. You're usually satisfied, you scan the paperwork into ACROSS. You see it's recommended to be released and then, [you] stamp it. Have a good day!

The shipment Sarah released has already been reviewed for pre-clearance a few hours prior to the crossing of the shipment, speeding up her work in the booth. Consequently,

the principal modification in the organization of work introduced by EDI rests in the extension of the decision-making process. Electronic declarations considerably transformed everyday work routines of “commercial” border officers who now spend several hours of their daily shifts in front of computer screens reviewing customs declarations as if they were paper-based.<sup>57</sup> The introduction of EDI separates the work required to release a truck driver and a shipment between the officer who pre-releases the shipment without seeing it and the officer in the booth who makes the final decision. This is an important detail since, legally, the ultimate decision to effectively release a shipment or send it to secondary inspection remains with the officer at the primary inspection line.

Much of the work of the officer still lies in generating specific information about travelers and statistical data, confirming Gilboy's (1991) analysis that decision-making by border officers is characterised by "focused data collection". In that sense, commercial border officers have always been "knowledge workers" (Ericson and Haggerty 1997). However, electronic declarations and enforcement data now require officers to assess shipments at a distance; that is to say, without seeing the truck driver or the freight. This is a significant alteration since the capacity to classify and evaluate travelers and commodities through face-to-face interactions has historically been an ingrained feature

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<sup>57</sup> The main system allowing for the processing of customs-related data in ports of entry is called ACROSS (Accelerated Commercial Release Operations Support System) and is still in use today. For border security researchers, the gadget aspect of security technologies can exert a fascination detectable even in the articles of the most critical scholars. A visit to Canadian ports of entry, however, quickly cures one's enthralment. Despite billions of dollars of investments in border security equipment, firearms and infrastructures in the last decade, ACROSS' operating system still runs in DOS. It is also the case for a few legacy systems—developed before the creation of the agency—used by the CBSA.

of the work routines of customs officers, the core of the occupational identity of border officers (Pratt 2010; Gilboy 1991).

The absence of physical evaluation is particularly acute in practices of customs at a distance that can be observed in some quieter ports—such as regional airports or small and remote ports of entry. In these ports, officers assess shipments that can be entering the country hundreds of kilometers away by clearing other ports' EDI work lists. Prompted by cost-cutting measures in 2008, EDI allowed for the re-organization of the division of labour not only within but between ports of entry. For the last few years, an officer I interviewed had been processing airport cargo without ever having seen one of these shipment. For someone posted in a small port of entry in the rural region where he grew up and who went through most of his career processing the same set of three or four locally produced commodities, this new task created some confusion for Jacob: "We found it difficult at the beginning, to do this at a distance like that. We are used to have it visual, in front of us. So, one thing I still find difficult today [...] a pair of shoes, we know how much it costs, you see it [on the computer screen] at \$1 or \$1.20, you know it makes no sense, but it's true! [...]. Because at first, we would refer these cases for inspection." In contrast, for these officers who lost their EDI responsibilities to other ports, re-organization of clearance between ports of entry has meant the removal of a significant portion of their tasks. I will return to this issue below. In this way, customs at a distance has generated new labour arrangements—within and between ports of entry—that have temporally and spatially extended decision-making at the border beyond the primary inspection booth.



*Machine release or the automatization of customs*

The assessment and release process of commodities presents a few more layers. The accumulation of data about cross-border flows of goods in ACROSS led to the development of local risk evaluations activities. In particular, two border officer positions were created in major ports of entry (also serving smaller regional ports): the officer responsible for the automated machine-release system and the officer entrusted with “commercial” targeting. Both positions are coveted; they come with much operational discretion and with the exercise of a wide range of data analysis responsibilities denied to most frontline officers.

It would be a mistake to think that customs officers go through every single electronic declaration submitted on EDI. Depending on the month and the port, my interviewees evaluate that between 40 and 60% of entries in ACROSS are recommended by an automated system, which releases shipments from importers with a history of compliance with customs regulations. The release recommendation is thus made without the intervention of a customs officer, who nevertheless keeps the final authority to clear shipments and truck drivers at the primary inspection line. Automated machine release includes random checks of compliant exporters at the level of about 2% of entries—a number quoted in interviews and by border officials—a percentage consistent with standard international levels of inspection of shipments and travelers (Chalfin 2007). Designated trucks are then sent to secondary inspection on an aleatory basis.

The officer responsible for machine release consults reports about local seizures and risk assessments for the port of entry in order to assess the risk presented by local companies

as well as reviews their inclusion in the system. Consequently, despite the automated character of the process, each machine release officer uses a certain level of discretion. For instance, he can slightly adjust the percentages of random secondary inspection, thus influencing the work load at inspection docks. At the local level, that discretionary power is well received; when the system sends too many inspections for the levels of staffing or the dock space available, adjustments can be made accordingly. However, despite a complex data collection system functioning in a difficult operating language (DOS), officers are little trained before they obtain the machine release position which they hold for a two-year period after successfully bidding for the position. My research shows that this lack of training to use the technologies available in ports of entry is an ongoing issue at the CBSA. I have been told of an officer previously working machine release, who was once again put in charge of the system after an overwhelmed colleague was unable to keep up with the work it required. Because the system operated on dated information and exporters files had not been reviewed for months, inspection docks were overloaded with random referrals of trucks. Furthermore, machine-release assessments present another risk management challenge; they can easily become self-referential. A company found in compliance will seldom be submitted to inspections and therefore have little opportunity to be found non-compliant. Nevertheless, while the release of commodities previously represented a time-consuming and paper-based responsibility at the centre of their work, automated machine release now restricts the part taken by frontline customs officers in this activity. By the same token, it modifies the role of the border officer responsible for the system from data collector to data analyst.

### *Targeting and intelligence-led customs*

Another pivotal position in local risk management, the commercial targeter corresponds to a low-level intelligence position. Targeters are mainly employed in major and mid-size ports of entry. Similarly to the machine-release analyst, the targeter is a border services officer appointed for a limited period. Based on information provided by different internal intelligence reports, the targeter may put "targets" on specific products, truck drivers, trucking companies and exporters that she recommends for further inspection. Targets are thus applicable to a wide-range of issues. A local trucking company has a history of past enforcement (e.g. illegal drugs) inscribed in its customs file. It can be targeted and officers would be required to perform more frequent secondary inspections on its trucks. A tree species has been regulated by Environment Canada because it contains a damaging insect for Canadian forests. It can then be nationally targeted by the Department. An importer has been non-compliant with duty payments or with customs penalties. It can be targeted by the CBSA's section responsible for overseeing taxation payments.

Consequently, targeting essentially represents a work of categorization of risks and customs compliance issues. These classifications are produced along different modes of analysis that either adopt an essentialist understanding or insist on the temporal variability of risk. This distinction was highlighted by two interviewees, Nathan and Samuel, who had held risk analysis responsibilities at some point during their careers:

Nathan: You could have targets on anything. You could have targets on commodities. See high risk target for Canada is actually commodity. It's meat,

vegetables, fruit, that's high risk. You know, explosives. Medium risk would be like, drugs. Low risk is like, alcohol, personal things. I'm looking for other ones. Low risk could mean...

Karine: Tobacco maybe?

N: Tobacco. Hum... I think medium risk is child pornography as well, and drugs and guns. A high risk target, for what I can see, is food. Or something that's effected, that CANUTEC would have a say in what goes on, like explosives.

K: Food and explosives. That's very interesting. And why do you think that food is high risk?

N: So many people eat it. Listeria break outs and e-coli and...

K: Mad cow disease.

N: Mad cow disease, sure. You look at it from a lay man's point of view, like: "How could that be high risk?" You would think guns and drugs.

K: Yes, I would have thought that.

N: That would be high risk. But you know, high risk is for the better of all of Canada. For the people, the citizens. You know, you don't want a load of contaminated food coming in and then going to Toronto and then a 100 people die from it. That would be high risk.

For this officer, a risk is an immediate and essential attribute of an object thus making risk assessments subject to static classifications. These classifications rest on long-

standing moral justifications for the protection of the health and safety of the body politics.<sup>58</sup> Some commodities and perishable foods are seen as potential vectors of contamination that can be prohibited through border intervention. These types of biopolitical considerations in border management are not new, recalling sanitary practices aimed at circumventing the spread of diseases by placing Chinese and Irish migrants to Canada under quarantine (Mawani 2003) or by performing arrival screenings in airports during the 2003 SARS outbreak.

However, by explaining how to establish a drug traffic target, Samuel sheds light on the ways in which targeting introduces a temporal variability in the evaluation of risk. While accompanying the introduction of information technologies in border control, this variability is not exactly grasped by theories, reviewed in the first chapter, that insist on the pre-emptive character of contemporary risk rationalities deployed in contemporary security practices. In contrast, targeting remains primarily reactive; it is based on past enforcement histories, re-interpreted by low-level intelligence analysts who then mark specific routings or commodities as worthy of further inspection. Hence, these risk analyses vary depending on readings of recent smuggling trends produced by “commercial” intelligence analysts and targeters.

In order to illustrate this point, Samuel came up with the following example: if cocaine has been found hidden amidst ceramic tiles, then ceramic tiles would become a high risk commodity and be targeted accordingly. This would especially be the case if these tiles originated from a region known as a drug trafficking hub (for instance California for

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<sup>58</sup> In Côté-Boucher (2010b) I reviewed the moral aspects embedded in risk rationalities.

Columbian cocaine smuggled through the U.S.-Mexico border, then transferred on Canada-bound trucks). But if smugglers adapt their practices to avoid detection—e.g. changing one's routing to have another point of origin appear on a truck driver's manifest—and intelligence analysts at the CBSA become aware of these changes, then targeting is adjusted accordingly. Both modes of risk classifications are reactive but the last one modulates levels of risk according to context, events and what is currently known about organized crime strategies.

Beyond putting targets on commodities, carriers and importers, a targeter's main job consists in doing random checks on carriers, drivers and importers for compliance and criminal issues as well as investigating tips provided by frontline officers. Samuel explains the targeter's function in these terms: "I'd say the role of the targeter is where they've done an examination at the back and something just doesn't make sense and they say: "You know what? I don't know what was going on with that company but something doesn't feel right. I'd love to look at these guys again." So the targeter, probably working in a similar vicinity would say: "Ok. I'll do some reports and I'll see what they're bringing in, and how often and so on. And, you know, do background checks on them, do a few more checks. And then, we can target in the future and see what there is."

Ultimately, targeting may broaden the reach of the discretionary power of border officers. In her study of frontline decision-making in airports which she carried out before the use of information technologies in border control became standardized, Gilboy (1991) writes that officers unable to substantiate with evidence a suspicion about a traveler had to release him while hoping to "get him next time". As a result, release/referral decisions

used to be much more dependent on experiential learning on the job as well as on decisions based on organizationally produced categorizations regarding evaluations of risk and compliance. Gilboy observes that these categorizations represent a way for officers to deal with the complexity of the different cases that are presented to them. Assessments of credibility, she maintains, are not to be attributed to socially circulating stereotypes but are mainly "shaped by decisionmakers' prior work experience or the local work culture" (1991: 586).

Nowadays, while still making assessments subject to experience and to the organizational culture of a port of entry, targeting offers the potential to give more weight to an officer's sense that "something does not feel right", that he "has a doubt" or that she "has a knot in the pit of her stomach (*un noeud dans l'estomac*)", as interviewees described these moments of suspicion. Even when a secondary inspection does not result in any tangible findings, an officer now has the possibility to pursue the investigation through local low-level intelligence colleagues who may extend the search beyond the sole driver and towards the carrier, importers/exporters for whom he works. This both confirms and extends O'Connor and de Lint (2009: 50) conclusion that "enforcement actions can be transformed into lookouts" by passing on the information about a cold hit (i.e. seizure accomplished without previous intelligence data) to intelligence staff. In short, targeting transforms release/refer decisions into potential moments of information gathering.

This transformation of the reach of an officer's doubt through targeting bears important implications for theorizing discretion at the border. In such cases, suspicion in customs work gives birth to risk knowledges whose effects could be researched beyond their legal

implications on potential court cases (Pratt 2010). That is, such knowledge can be deployed in the process of legitimation that leads a border referral to a court decision. But an officer's "hunch" can also be inserted within a chain of enforcement practices and intelligence investigations. In short, while it may not have a direct investigative end for a specific truck driver or carrier, this process is certainly embedded within a wide variety of practices of policing of cross-border flows, including risk analyses of criminal and trafficking trends.

*Advance commercial information: integrating risk management and customs clearance*

As a result of e-Manifest, a program that intertwines customs clearance and risk management by integrating a wide range of databases under one umbrella, targeting activities are currently being modified at Canadian customs. Electronic manifests stem from World Customs Organizations requirements stipulated in the Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE initiative) developed in 2005 and promoting advanced commercial information. These initiatives are based on "establishing partnerships with the private sector" and on "harmonizing advance electronic manifest information to allow risk assessment".<sup>59</sup> With e-Manifest, carriers are required to submit "advance highway cargo and conveyance information for imported commercial goods" at least one hour prior to the crossing of the border. In contrast, this information was made available on a voluntary basis with EDI. e-Manifest also requires licence plates numbers, the name of

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<sup>59</sup> World Customs Organization, 2005, *WCO develops a framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade*, <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2005/january/wco-develops-a-framework-of-standards-to-secure-and-facilitate-global-trade.aspx> (last consulted 3 Jan. 2013).



the truck driver as well as of passengers who are expected to cross the border (as truck drivers sometimes drive in teams, or bring family members along). Part of the risk assessment will be done automatically on shipments on a scale of 1 to 10. The system can run databases against each other; thus part of the risk assessment becomes automated.<sup>60</sup> For instance, if a hit comes up on an electronic declaration, e-Manifest can run the entry through the Integrated Border Query database. But an officer reflected that these classifications still needed some revisions; companies considered compliant by local port authorities sometimes received higher risk management classifications than those that had regularly been seized.

At the time of research, the CBSA had just started implementing e-Manifest; only a handful of interviewed officers had released an e-Manifest shipment.<sup>61</sup> But much was

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<sup>60</sup> The CBSA lists the following databases and records accessible under e-Manifest: the Accelerated Commercial Release Operations Support System (ACROSS), Business Number (BN), Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC), Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) Assessment and Revenue Management (CARM), Commodity Search Component (CSC), Customs Commercial System (CCS), Customs Electronic Commerce Platform (CECP), Customs Investigations Information Management Systems (CIIMS), Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Field Operations Support System (FOSS), Facility for Information Retrieval Management (FIRM), Integrated Customs Enforcement System (ICES), Integrated Customs System (ICS), Integrated Primary Inspection Line (IPIL), Intelligence Management System (IMS), Police Information Retrieval System (PIRS), Tactical Information Targeting Analysis and Notification System (TITAN), and the Traveller Entry Processing System (TEPS).

<sup>61</sup> Many problems already mire this program, shedding light on the contentious politics involved in the current modernization of customs. These programs are often portrayed as privileging trade and the circulation of commodities, which would constitute a correct interpretation as far as their governing logic is concerned. However, the events leading to their implementation tell a slightly more complicated story. These programs, many of which have been tested in the past two decades, are imposed on the transportation industry. Failures in their implementation ultimately fall into the lap of frontline officials who are generally not sufficiently trained to oversee a smooth transition between old and new systems.

During fieldwork, some officers commented on the low-standard quality of training they were receiving about e-Manifest. It was provided on the phone by trainers unfamiliar with the day-to-day requirements of customs work routines in ports of entry and often unable to answer officers' specific questions. An officer contended that "90% officers are scared of the phone because they don't know what to say" to clients calling to obtain more information on e-Manifest. Another interviewee familiar with e-Manifest's features foresaw compatibility issues between ACROSS (which still operates in DOS under the new system following budget cuts since the initial e-Manifest project) and other databases. He thought that the learning

already being said about the changes this program would trigger in the division of labour between ports of entry. Advance commercial information programs bring about a transformation in the *manner* and *location* of targeting activities. Similar to recent changes made to contemporary risk management, e-Manifest passes from reactive to real-time, even anticipatory modes of risk evaluation. It thus brings highway transportation risk analyses on par with intelligence-led border policing of maritime and aviation environments. As commented on above, targeting meant to single out an importer, a carrier or a commodity for further investigation based on a history of non-compliance or high risk readings. As explained by this officer, e-Manifest now also permits the analysis of information about a driver before he reaches the border thus making risk assessment really anticipatory: "Risk assessment is done on shipments coming in now, so it's "live". Where, before we were doing targets, we were doing historical data: "Ok, this guy comes through". We were doing stuff after the fact. He's already gone. So we were doing research on him, because we are finding out discrepancies or whatever, then we would put a target in. Now, our main job is to do it live as they are coming in. We have loads, they are supposed to advise us of what's coming in." The implementation of the integrated risk management/customs assessment platform introduces predictive aspects to risk analyses. Different rationalities of risk (preventive, reactive and precautionary) thus now interact in everyday border management.

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curve would be especially steep for officers working in small ports of entry who often cumulate traffic and commercial responsibilities and who "will be completely lost in face of these computerized commercial systems without having received an extensive training". His prognosis was confirmed by recent complaints made by the Canadian Trucking Association (CTA). Full implementation of e-Manifest is expected by mid-2013 but at the end of 2012 the CTA threatened to temporarily withdraw from the program and to revert to paper-based declarations. In a media release, the Association regretted the "significant lack of consistency among border service officers in the level of knowledge and application" of e-Manifest.

With advanced data collection also comes a more individualized form of risk management in "commercial" borderwork. A targeter looks at a transaction number, opens it, sees the load, its provenance and destination and the name of the carrier before a truck arrives at the border. He may run a driver's name and date of birth and check whether he has been found non-compliant previously. The targeter can also examine the databases to verify who owns the carriers and the importing/exporting companies, inquire into criminal history as well as examine the routing of the shipment. He can run many databases through Integrated Border Query (IBQ), including CPIC for criminal records or FOSS (immigration database) or ICES for lookouts and compliance issues and check for border crossing or enforcement history for that particular carrier. If anything comes up, then the targeter can recommend secondary inspection on that specific shipment or truck driver. For instance, if routing seems abnormal, the targeter would then enter into ACROSS "examine for routing" from a drop down list of choices.

Finally, e-Manifest reporting requirements speak to a larger tendency towards new forms of governance over policing authorities. These requirements confirm Ericson's (2007) conclusion that the actions of security professionals are increasingly regulated through a variety of "communication formats". The work of targeting with e-Manifest remains intelligence-led but it also transforms secondary inspections. With e-Manifest-related targeting, border officers are now required to take more notes about the examination of a truck: what has been found, the search method (e.g. random sampling of commodities or thorough search), how many boxes were opened, which commodities were found and load country of origin. Examination becomes not only an enforcement procedure but also

a work of detailed record keeping and data collection. The officer becomes responsible to feed the system with new data, making secondary inspection an essential data collection step. In order to evolve and develop more precise targets based on up-to-date information, such as drug traffic routings, intelligence-led border control might increasingly rely on this work of data collection by officers.

*Centralization of targeting activities and the marginalization of local ports*

Under e-Manifest, the CBSA has been undergoing a process of centralization of commercial targeting activities. Yet this integration of local data collection and intelligence-led policing project has been contentious, meeting with resistance in local ports of entry that are threatened with losing their targeting responsibilities. At the time of research, the CBSA was experimenting with a "commercial risk assessment hub", a national risk assessment centre concerned with assessing highway transportation flows by means of the advance information provided by importers and carriers. Based in Windsor between 2009 and 2011, the pilot project developed 9 risk indicators through which a software application can proceed with automated targeting—the specific risk indicators are not disclosed.<sup>62</sup> The CBSA has since opened a risk assessment "hub" in Windsor operating with 9 targeters but interviewees suggested there could be as many as 4 or 5 other "hubs" scattered in different regions in Canada in the near future.

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<sup>62</sup> CBSA, e-Manifest initiative—Evaluation Study Final Report August 03, 2012, [http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2012/emi-ime-eng.html#fn\\_ref\\_49](http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2012/emi-ime-eng.html#fn_ref_49) (last consulted 3 Jan. 2013).

The plans of the CBSA regarding this particular aspect of the intelligence-led policing of commercial flows by customs are not clearly laid out in public documents. However, officers were quite outspoken about (and against) the project. They were convinced the Agency's plan was to eventually remove local control of targeting and automated release, and then centralize these activities in risk assessment centres. According to this model, local issues and intelligence tips would then be transmitted by frontline officers through the e-Manifest system and Windsor would do the follow-up. This expected loss of targeting responsibilities was opposed by local port authorities and headquarters. Mario, my interviewee, explains that "until the debate between regions and Ottawa about targeting is closed... It seems that for now, Ottawa is winning. In Windsor, anyway, they already have opened the national targeting center. So they oppose regional or local targeting [...]. Regions fight to keep a part of their targeting responsibilities or at least maintain those they already have [...]. So, the local phenomena, Windsor won't be able to represent them well. Officers will probably have to note down local events, transmit these notes to Windsor, and it's Windsor that will do the targeting."

The operative word in this last sentence is "probably"; during my fieldwork, officers had reservations about the effectiveness of these new information-sharing arrangements between these new hubs and ports of entry. Another officer, added: "So, all the verification of commodities and imports will be done before. It is the Windsor people who will decide to send them at our docks for an exam. If management does not think there will be more exams, because they will have to manage these changes... The number of exams that they send us, if they don't transfer their staff, we will end up with lots of

exams and no one to do them. It is the same thing as machine release". How many resources are available locally to do the inspections? How many officers? How many functional docks? This officer wondered about the lack of knowledge of local capacity by these national risk assessment centres and the potential mismatch between targeting-related tasks and the capacity to complete them.

Finally, the centralization of targeting responsibilities brings about a loss of the specialized, detailed knowledge officers have of their clientele, of local risk trends and of types of commodities that they usually see coming through. The same officer adds: "I am certain that it will move [local targeting activities] to Windsor. It's a shame because we know our clientele. And we know what is going on here at [port of entry], we know the commodities. Whereas over there, they don't know our clientele, they will target approximately anything and everything, and it is them who will decide for us what we have to inspect. So I find that a bit lame". This removal of risk management responsibilities from local ports of entry happens in a context of funding cuts in Canadian public services where the CBSA, like other federal agencies, is required to reduce significant portions of its budgets and personnel as well as to re-organize labour accordingly. Customs-at-a-distance practices thus stem from technological changes, international regulatory trends in customs management as well as recent fiscal constraints put on security organizations. These changes bring about consequences on work processes. As elaborated in the next section, border officers do not adapt blindly to—but engage with and sometimes oppose—these modifications in their daily work routines.

### **Deskilling and Tediousness**

In this chapter and the last, I have highlighted a conjunction of regulatory, discursive and technological transformations that point to how border control increasingly governs commodity flows through complex processes of distancing. This reshaping of the governance of mobilities tumble all the way down to ports of entry with significant consequences for the everyday work processes of border officers. More precisely, my analysis draws attention to how the deskilling of border personnel is related to the disembedding of border control. Decision-making at the border has been broken up into work segments redistributed between different security actors. Some more or less traditional tasks that used to keep officers occupied for a great part of their work shifts have been reduced or simply eliminated. Consequently, it is more than a loss of clout in border decisions which characterizes the delocalization of decision-making for customs officers. Their long-established skills and the meaning they ascribe to their work are being compromised.

Before 1997, officers, together with customs clerical workers, were responsible for the whole process of commodities release at the border. They made most of the decisions to refer a truck to secondary inspection and decided what and how to inspect. They offered comprehensive local services to truck drivers, customs brokers and local carriers and importers. Since then, new risk analysis tasks have been created only to be progressively taken away from local ports of entry. Many customs tasks have also been automated (machine release) while others have been re-distributed (targeting). Officers' input has been reduced in most decision-making processes that require a risk assessment of commodities, carriers and importers, an evaluation of the truck driver or an appraisal of

the value and type of commodities being transported and the amount of duties owed. Meanwhile, secondary inspections are increasingly dependent upon random referrals generated by automated release and targeting systems. Commercial targeting "hubs" have also started directing the manner and rationale of these searches, imposing detailed record-keeping duties for developing risk analyses that will be subsequently elaborated elsewhere. Rather than being able to relate to one's own practical sense, work experience and occupational categorizations of drivers and shipments, customs officers are increasingly set to become mere executants of random inspection referrals—which they see as demonstrating a lack of familiarity with local and regional specificities. Indeed, some interviewees suppose the current organizational makeover will focus officers on enforcement tasks—e.g. primary inspection line interviews with drivers and random secondary inspections recommended by risk management and compliance systems—and on intelligence data and trade statistics collection.

In fact, machine-release and the redistribution of EDI responsibilities between ports were meant to liberate time for undertaking more secondary inspections. While new technologies create new work features, they also require infrastructural budgets and the reorganization of local resources. Yet in many ports, work and infrastructure have not been adapted accordingly. As reported by officers and as seen during my guided visits of ports of entry, secondary inspection areas and tools were sometimes in a surprising state of disrepair despite the amount of money that has been spent in border security since 2002. I visited a port of entry where only 20% of the dock doors in its secondary inspection area were functional and where dock openings did not fit all trailer sizes—thus



making the inspection of certain types of trailers more difficult. In another port, I saw broken mirrors and burned light bulbs in docks where they could offer simple but effective tools for illuminating inside a trailer. In a third port, an officer sarcastically mentioned that he could use the ion scan, a tool which can uncover drug traces on the surface of objects, "when it worked". Officers told me they heard of a VACIS truck (an x-ray inspection machine inserted on a truck and operated by a team of officers in some major ports of entry) sitting in the parking lot of another port for lack of budget to staff it properly.

Furthermore, enforcement statistics requirements on officers are such that, at least in some ports, they must send for inspection a specific number of trucks. Sometimes, extra lines are opened to process trucks faster. This means more officers working at the same time at the primary inspection line, and therefore, more trucks referred to inspection. But dock space has not been expanded to accommodate these additional truck processing lanes. This other officer reflects on the impact of these changes on his daily shift:

So we do a lot less now. It's... actually boring sometimes. It's sad in a way that they took away a lot of work because you have a lot of down time. It's even sadder because you cannot do the number of examinations they want because we don't have the space. They want a truck load... as often as you can... to offload a truck to verify, and verify and verify. But one truck could take six hours to offload. So in an eight hour period, how many trucks can you get offloaded? Not a lot. And the one truck could take most of your dock space too. So you really can't do what they want to be done here, we'd have to change the facility a little bit.

You'd need to open up another [twice as much dock space] or even more... to do what they [headquarters] want to do. (...) You need people to do the [secondary inspection] stats that they want, but you don't have the facility to do the stats that they need. So they can't justify hiring people. It's a no win situation for everybody.

Border infrastructure has not yet been adapted to the turn towards law enforcement. I underline in the next chapter how the same problem arises in the case of the arming policy where many small ports of entry are simply not equipped with an arming room, preventing officers from getting armed. Therefore, policies may repeat ad nauseam how new mandates and new stakes are changing "security" but major infrastructure investments did not always follow suit.

As a result, the deskilling brought by technological changes, the massive hiring following 9/11, the discursive shift towards an enforcement mandate combined with an infrastructure built for implementing the former regulatory mandate of customs has created work conditions that officers described as giving them a sense of boredom. In fact, in four of the five commercial sections visited during fieldwork, I could make the same diagnosis as the officer above, as well as Raymond in the epigraph to this chapter. In the few ports of entry where machine-release is functional and where the remaining of EDI responsibilities have been transferred to another port, officers have literally only to "wait for stuff to come in".<sup>63</sup> An officer told me of driving a few kilometers away to buy

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<sup>63</sup> In contrast, the customs section of the fifth port was clearly understaffed and, according to some officers, poorly managed.

coffee on his extended breaks or wandering around the port looking for work to do. I saw others checking Facebook pages or sitting in the secondary inspection area, chatting, waiting for the odd truck to be sent for inspection.

The topic of tediousness appeared sensitive for those officers who approached it in interviews. Each time the issue came up, a similar argumentative line unfolded. After telling me how much the recent technological, organizational and regulatory changes in their port's division of labour diminished their influence on border decisions, as well as the amount of work they were both required and capable of accomplishing, officers spoke of their capacity to be present and responsive at a moment's notice in times of security emergencies. They insisted that their work was becoming more and more emergency response, "reaction" and "enforcement"-oriented. While this representation of officers' work could be interpreted as a justificatory rhetoric from low-level officials whose livelihood but also influence in the security field are threatened by deskilling and the automation of customs, it is also the sign of a noteworthy change in officers' subjectivation; that is, in their perception of their work's purpose and of their worth as frontline border officials. In the next chapter, I discuss in more detail the politics of the transforming occupational identity of border officers amidst a changing organizational culture that emphasizes "law enforcement" as the primary role of ports of entry.

### **Distrust: The Primary Mode of Relation with Management**

Underneath this recent marginalization of frontline customs officers within the security field lies a sense that their work is not respected by "Ottawa" officials, from politicians to

high management. My research reveals that the reorganization of port of entry work routines decided by higher management and the removal of regulatory and assessment responsibilities from local ports exacerbate existing tensions between headquarters and officers. In surveys of federal employees, the CBSA has been consistently ranking in the lowest echelon for overall satisfaction at work, only to compete with employees of Correctional Services.<sup>64</sup> My interviews uncover a unique dimension of this state of dissatisfaction. Officers experience a profound sense of powerlessness and disconnection from decisions taken by headquarters and many interviewees expressed variations on this theme. Portrayed as an unattainable realm, "Ottawa's" symbolic position was illustrated by frequent references to its elevated hierarchical situation through expressions such as "up there" and "high management". In interviews, mentions of "Ottawa" were invariably tainted with a negative connotation. Given that I first approached my interviewees less as workers and more in their role as bureaucrats and policing actors, the level of suspicion simply astonished me. It started to make more sense when I paid attention to the power dynamics of the security field in which, despite their wide legislated powers, border officers nevertheless remain low-level security professionals. My first encounter with this suspicious attitude—which then clued me to take more notice—happened when a supervisor, apologetic, confessed that an officer had blatantly refused to be interviewed for my research as he claimed I had probably been sent by "Ottawa".

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<sup>64</sup> Treasury Board of Canada, 2011 Public Service Employee Survey, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saff/2011/introduction-eng.asp> (last consulted on 19 May 2013).

In the next chapter, I review how these tense relations between employees and "Ottawa" factor heavily in border officers' union politics. But the powerlessness felt by officers concern decisions taken by headquarters that have a direct impact on work routines. Local port employees expressed their repeated frustration at not being consulted on the practicality of changes in customs procedures. They often complained of being not appropriately trained to implement new programs imagined by policy-makers and of being guinea pigs when it came to new systems created by IT services. These actors removed from ports of entry were considered to lack know-how in anything customs-related:

Samuel: So, the expertise is very low up there [headquarters]. You have people making huge decisions that might have been on the job less than five years and... I mean, us in the regions, we'll have dealings with Ottawa, you'll be calling up, you can't get any answers because they don't know.

Karine: They don't know?

S: They're supposed to be the experts. Unfortunately, the expertise is all out in the regions, because we're the people that have been here 20 years. You know. We're the people that are in touch with what's going on. We're the people that see the job. Meanwhile, you have some people up there that might have just gotten out of school and if, you know, they've done well in their exams and they've been promoted to high levels. Which is good for them, it's not their fault that they don't have the experience, but then they're making big decisions on things that

they have little real life experience with. [...] I'm not the only person that thinks this. I'm not the only person with that anecdotal evidence.

"Ottawa, they don't know operations", "Ottawa, they don't even know what customs is"; many interviewees expressed variations on this theme, generally without prompt to that effect. Officers were particularly fond of telling the story of a colleague, or themselves, temporarily hired by headquarters on an assignment only to be constantly used as a resource by their "Ottawa" colleagues eager to obtain information about the daily reality and practices in ports of entry—paradoxically demonstrating that "up there" is making efforts at hiring people with expertise from "down here".

It is not infrequent for low-level officials and management to be at odds in a bureaucracy. Lipsky observes that the relationship can be conflictual and characterized by mutual dependency. With distinctive interests, managers insist on "achieving results consistent with agency objectives" while low-level officials are concerned with "processing work consistent with their own preferences" as well as "maintain[ing] and expand[ing] their autonomy" (Lipsky 2010: 18-19). Similarly, Gilboy (1992) has shown the political character of the work performed by higher level border officials and policy-makers who are subjected to political pressures rarely experienced by frontline officials. Nevertheless, the level of distrust that officers displayed in interviews towards what they called "Ottawa" was particularly pronounced. This exceptional level of distrust, even for street-level bureaucrats, can be partly explained by the powerlessness felt by officers towards mechanisms of distanciation over which they have little control. In this sense, my findings reflect those of Chalfin (2010) who, in her research with Ghanaian customs,

found that the partial removal of frontline officers' authority after a centralization of powers had amplified the tensions between rank-and-file and management.

### **Negotiating Disembedding Through Discretion**

A key area of importance for those espousing a critical stance towards border control concerns the extended discretionary powers enjoyed by border officials. Their actions are regulated by lower legal standards than those keeping police officers in check: "Whereas the legal standard of 'reasonable grounds to believe' governs the use of most enforcement powers (...) it is the decidedly more awkward and lesser legal standard of 'reasonable suspicion' that governs the broadly discretionary and coercive search and seizure powers of frontline border officers in Canada" (Pratt 2010: 462). As mentioned in the last chapter, officers' legal powers have historically been wide-ranging and long entrenched in the Customs Act. These formal powers have been extended in 1999, giving officers powers of arrest in driving under the influence cases and the authority to carry out federal warrants.

Discretion, writes Heyman (2009: 367), does not constitute "a formless domain of uncontrolled action but, rather, an analysable domain of patterned actions that significantly affect law and administration". It is my contention that the pattern traced by the discretionary actions of "commercial" border officers has been considerably modified in the past two decades. Counter to the often reiterated view of a greater discretion at the border, findings emerging from officers' description of how their typical daily activities have been modified by the disembedding of border control suggest a surprising conclusion. Paradoxically, while officers' formal discretion is broad ranging, the effective

use of these powers has been weakened. Major modifications in the division of labour within and between ports of entry have made such alteration possible. Automation and surveillance technologies combine with organizational measures of efficiency (e.g. officers referral rates, a port's enforcement statistics) not only to reduce local ports' influence in decision-making but also to diminish the reliance of border control upon the physical assessment of drivers and commodities.

This vanishing tangibility in their work processes leaves "commercial" officers with fewer opportunities to exercise the full array of their legislated discretionary powers at the booth. In short, it can be at times difficult to act on a "reasonable suspicion". An officer reflects on what this means for her work: "Given that the inspection dock is so full with all kinds of things that have been sent randomly... Well we don't keep... We don't send many exams recommended by inspectors that say: 'Well I have a doubt on this'. That was good before". She adds: "There were less referrals from systems, it was more referrals from inspectors. You know, you see the person, you have doubts, you see it on the spot. It was... more tangible, whereas now, it is all random or selective. So they don't see the person, they just do random checks. In the end, those are examinations that take up time when we could spend it doing inspections that *we* detect [interviewee's emphasis]". At the CBSA, frontline officers keep their legal powers but are losing part of their substantive authority. These alterations in their work processes reconfigure decision-making at the booth as a moment of "ratification of an earlier decision [...], even though that prior decision may appear in the guise of an opinion or recommendation. The nature



of a discretionary determination may change or be changed depending on where in the legal system authority to decide is located" (Hawkins 1992: 29).

Reiner (2010: 165) suggests that the "creeping centralization of control over policing" is severely limiting the discretion of frontline policing personnel through, among other changes, the adoption of modes of regulation based on performance measurements—as it is the case for other government authorities reformed by the adoption of New Public Management frameworks. Consequently, these restrictions on officers' discretion do not respond to an ethical imperative committed to human rights and accountability (or a 'constabulary ethics', as Sheptycki (2007) calls it) but one that stresses rationalization as the primary driver of security-related decision-making. The goal remains to "streamline" border crossing for commodities through risk management technological procedures and organizational goals that are considered better able to produce more neutral and "objective" results. However, officers' increasing lack of control over targeting decisions and over a significant part of the customs release process announces the development of a contentious internal politics regarding decision-making at the border. By means of what is left of their discretionary powers, officers negotiate organizational change effected by the disembedding of border control.

#### *Discretion as social wage*

Social scientific studies of bureaucratic organizations generally agree that the exercise of discretion is "a critical dimension" of the work of lower level, frontline officials who interact daily with the public (Lipsky 2010). Those studying the practices of border officers also conclude that the elevated level of their legislated discretion has traditionally

constituted a core aspect of officers' occupational identity (Gilboy 1991; Pratt 2010). My interviews confirm this conclusion. As outlined in the introduction, even in the absence of questions regarding the rationale that led them to refer a load to secondary inspection, interviewed officers volunteered many details about the particulars of their assessments. Their insistence that despite all border programs, the final release/refer decision remained with them, their pride in this aspect of their work when they can rely on their judgement, follow-up on their "doubts" or proceed to *ad hoc* arrangements with locals, confirms the continuing significance of discretion in border officers' subjectivation.

However, the ways in which officers rationalize the intuitions and practical knowledge that enter their decisions tell only part of the story. What also illuminates officers' narratives are the specifics of the institutional work environment in which this discretionary power is deployed (Ericson 2007b; Hawkins 1992). Being a border officer remains an occupation characterized by repetitive tasks. But it is also currently defined by a general loss of clout at the border, a result of customs services' integration into the security field and of the internal restructuring of their division of labour. In these circumstances, discretion in the "commercial" section stands less as a central feature of borderwork than as a *social wage*. The notion might be unfamiliar to students of border control and policing given that it emerges out of the sociology of work. In her study of the ways in which American construction workers cope within a struggling industry with little union protections, Paap (2006: 9) argues that labour processes cannot be studied separately from "the social performances of workers' various identities".<sup>65</sup> She suggests

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<sup>65</sup> I am grateful to Susan Braedley for pointing me in the direction of Paap's work.

that, although their salaries and working conditions are threatened, construction workers still find payment in symbolic advantages pertaining to their occupation. In this case, these advantages concern the promotion of forms of domination related to "white and male privilege" in the workplace: "doing construction work pays a *physiological and psychological wage* by making the worker look and *feel* like a man" (Paap 2006: 26, author's emphasis). I consider what we learn more broadly about the contribution of a physically challenging training and the adoption of the firearm in the current masculinization of officers' occupational identity in chapter 4 and 5. But Paap's interesting insight for illuminating the uses of discretion by border officers concerns how workers can resort to symbolic rewards and compensations in order to maintain self-worth in their struggles to protect their threatened privileges.

Expressing suspicion about the accuracy of risk management procedures, insisting on the effectiveness of their own assessments of drivers and shipments as well as asserting their discretion constitutes one of the responses deployed by border officers to their marginalization in the security field. Officers' control over release/refer decisions and risk assessments is slipping away. Consequently, border officers responsible for "commercial" operations find less and less opportunities to exercise their discretion in spite of its centrality to their occupational identity. Yet officers claim that even with all preclearance programs, intelligence tips and EDI refer/release recommendations, they are ultimately the ones left with the last decision in the booth.

This was expressed in officers' attitudes towards trusted trader programs—concerned with the facilitation of cross-border freight transportation.<sup>66</sup> Despite the creation of this privileged category of mobility governance aimed at expediting the release of freight, carriers and drivers, customs officers insist on the significance of the primary inspection interview in evaluating drivers' potential criminal background. When asked about FAST, all interviewed officers claim that FAST does not modify their work routine at the booth. Here are variations on the theme expressed by two colleagues:

Richard: "I mean it's one of those things you say: "Well I got a FAST card, I've never been arrested" or "I don't have a criminal record". Well... ok you really have a FAST card it means ok you don't have a criminal record when you got the FAST card. I mean if you get arrested last night for DUI, chances are police didn't take your FAST card. I don't know, it's one of those things where: if you ask me if the FAST program has made the border any more secure. I don't strongly think that it has."

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<sup>66</sup> In fact, much of the rationale behind Canadian efforts at negotiating such bilateral programs with the U.S. stemmed from the Canadian industry displeasure with wait times as well as mounting security and administrative requirements at the border. Evaluations of programs such as FAST conclude that "member" truck drivers are generally satisfied with the process, confirming that providing more personal information and data about one's company has really made a difference in creating a "low-risk" category of exporters, importers, carriers and truck drivers for U.S. authorities. Yet this category appears more effective for South bound trucks. While FAST truck drivers report having been referred more often to secondary inspection by U.S. border authorities, they recall having saved more time when U.S. bound than while crossing into Canada. This difference can be explained by a few factors. At the time of my fieldwork, some ports did not offer dedicated FAST lanes for trucks. But even in ports where these lanes were available to truck drivers, some officers claimed that FAST was not a program that applied to their port of entry, but only useful to U.S. border authorities and at the Windsor crossing.

On studies of truck driver satisfaction with FAST, see Les études de marché Créatec, 2008, *Survey of Free and Secure Trade Members (prepared for the Canada Border Services Agency, [http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/canada\\_border/2008/212-07a/report.pdf](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/canada_border/2008/212-07a/report.pdf)* (last accessed 17 Jan. 2013).

Sarah: "...it shows that they've gone through criminal checks and everything. But, regardless, they're still subject to examination and whatever. So, to me, or to most people, it doesn't matter if they have a FAST card. It just shows that they probably haven't done anything bad lately, or they haven't had any previous customs infractions. It doesn't mean that they're not smuggling anything. It just means that they haven't been caught."

This lack of confidence towards low-risk evaluations stemming from criminal, immigration and border crossing data collected appears as a common thread in my interviews. Officers might well be correct in their assessment. Delays for inclusion of criminal records or their deletion within CPIC (a Canadian police database) can last up to two years. The verification of a trusted trader status is undertaken every 5 years at the time of renewal of membership in the program. Interestingly, Gilboy (1991) had come across similar distrust towards databases during her fieldwork at the end of the 1980s when risk assessment technologies had just started being introduced into the work of immigration inspectors in U.S. airports. In the same way, in a report from 2008 regarding risk evaluation practices at the CBSA, the Auditor General of Canada critically remarks upon the selective appropriation of risk management techniques by frontline border officers. Interviewed for this audit, officers testified that they sometimes did not follow risk quotes on maritime containers established by automated systems, and chose to inspect containers on the basis of their own discretionary reading of the data available,

their knowledge of local specificities and their work experience.<sup>67</sup> Given the incomplete, even sometimes erroneous information contained in those databases, as well as the variety of private and public actors who contribute information to these systems with no overview process regarding their validity and up-to-date quality, officers' caution might be well-inspired. In any case, it confirms a repeated pattern of distrust of accessible data and a preference for the use of discretion—although, as I shall demonstrate in chapter 6, this distrust has a strong generational component.

Beyond issues raised by officers pinning the effectiveness of discretion against the accuracy of risk data, my research uncovers the struggles regarding decision-making at the border. Despite institutional pressures for officers to reduce their discretionary powers to rather uphold risk management analyses and refer to data collection systems, officers continue to cling onto these powers, which, for them, define the essence of their trade and, for many, continue to be seen as a more effective border policing strategy. I suggest it is no coincidence that in one particular port that had lost its EDI responsibilities, officers had heated debates about whether or not they should "remove FAST cards" when truck drivers were found in non-compliance—generally for smuggling the odd bottle of alcohol or carton of cigarettes. Here, a major topic of discussion among officers concerned their discretionary authority to confiscate cards that provided access to a risk management program, which, together with the loss of EDI, had done away with much of the previous decision-making powers from the hands of officers. An officer at this port

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<sup>67</sup> Auditor General of Canada, 2007, "Keeping the Border Open and Secure — Canada Border Services Agency", *2007 October Report of the Auditor General of Canada*, [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_200710\\_05\\_e\\_23829.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_200710_05_e_23829.html) (last consulted 12 Jan. 2013).

told me her job was not to collect taxes but to "keep people honest" and "uphold" the FAST program by taking away such cards. Another officer commented that a low-risk status could not be kept under these circumstances thus effectively converting a disregard for customs-related regulations into a security issue.<sup>68</sup> What became clear to me in this port is the ways in which "commercial" officers' discretionary power increasingly stood for a social wage—a symbolic acknowledgement for someone's work through non-monetary advantages specific to an occupation, such as social status and discretionary power—in a workplace that had effectively amputated everyday decision-making at the border of much of what used to be its discretionary component.

*Discretion as a response to complexity*

Notwithstanding these remarks, another, seemingly paradoxical dimension of contemporary discretion in ports of entry can be drawn from border officers' narrative about the transition of border control into the security field. Having explored how officers' reliance on discretion as a social wage should be seen as a consequence of the loss of their monopoly over the release decision-making process, it does not follow that all discretion has been removed from ports of entry. In fact, the transition to a more technologized form of border control is intricately tied up with the specialization and complexification of some of their tasks. The automation of customs and risk management leaves frontline border officials with more complex cases that cannot be dealt with

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<sup>68</sup> After verification with border officials working at CBSA's headquarters, FAST cards are seldom removed from truck drivers on a sole non-compliance matter. Current border authorities' efforts at increasing participation in trusted trader programs probably contributes to explain this unwillingness to be rigid about respecting program requirements. But officers who recommend the suspension from the program then feel frustrated when they see a truck driver cross again with the same card despite a non-compliance mention in his file.

through technological means. These cases require abstract thinking, good judgment and a thorough knowledge of customs programs and of the rules regulating a variety of commodities—from prescription drugs to certain types of fish and tree species.

In theory, these cases would require officers well-trained in health and environmental regulations, familiar with the functioning of preclearance programs and at ease with a variety of databases. In reality, and as further described in chapter 5, their training has not been substantially modified in order to prepare officers for such decisions. New work processes produced by the disembedding of border control, combined with the emerging complexity of customs decisions left to local ports of entry, have brought about a shift in the dynamics of discretionary power at the border. While preclearance, automation and the use of electronic declarations reduces the requirement for officers' review over the processing of low-risk shipments, the need to cope with regulatory intricacies presents the potential of metamorphosing the discretion of customs officers into a complexity reduction strategy.

Alice : For sure before...How would I say? I think we had more powers because we had the regulations in D-memos<sup>69</sup> and we followed them. You know, we went by the type of commodity, there were laws and we applied them. [...] Today there are so many programs that ok, this company, you need to remember that it is a member of this program, while this other one belongs to that other program. Which ends up being not easy to follow. [...]

So it does not make everyone all compliant and uniform. Before, it was more compliant and uniform. Today, well you make a decision with your client but the other officer beside you can make another decision.

Karine : Why? The D-memos are the same?

A : Yes, but it is because of all the people admitted into [customs] programs and the .. privileges is not the word but... I don't wish to say it is favoritism, or a privilege, it isn't

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<sup>69</sup> Explanations of customs regulations for officer use.



the word. They have decisions that come out in relation to a client or a company and it is different from the other client. So it does not fit, we have difficulties to be uniform and in conformity with laws and regulations.

K : Ok, but the decision comes from where?

A : From about everywhere.

K : Ok. For example, the FAST program has taken a decision or the CSA program.

A : That's it. So there are clients who are FAST, well with those you apply rules this way. They have the right to x thing. Then you have other clients who are on another program, they have right to...So, there are so many programs, it is confusing.

We apply the law for many departments and, after all, we are not trained for these departments. You know, we are here 24 hours, so we are the ones who take decisions first. I was not trained for Health Canada, but I am the one who sees the products before them. So it isn't easy. People from Health Canada have been trained, they went to school for this, for their products, and at the end, they are not here. So I am here first, I look at the goods and then I decide: do I let it go through or do I send it to Health Canada or do I refer it for inspection? But we always have the first decision to make and in the end, we are not trained for this. I am trained to be a customs officer, not to be working for Environment Canada, Transport, etc. It is annoying because these people are not here and we are the ones who decide.

K : So it was not like that before, when you first started?

A: Well before, we started with the goods. Take trees for instance. We went to see in our D-memos, it was clear. Trees, that was related to Health Canada [*sic, probably Environment Canada*] you had to have this and that document, it was simple. Today, you have trees, but you also have the company. You check the company, well it's true, it is transporting trees, but it is also a member of this program so it does not need to give x permit for the ministry. So it is so complicated, it doesn't even make sense!

So this is why it is confusing. The young ones [rookie officers], they try to ask us questions, we explain but it is not clear. So they ask another officer, and it won't be the same explanation. I find the change is going from people with experience and knowledge to being more of a generalist. It is not specific anymore, it is not specialized anymore. [...] So experience and knowledge are going away, the decisions we take are more personal, more individual.

Hawkins suggests that discretion is "where the tensions, dilemmas, and sometimes contradictions embodied in the law are worked out in practice" (12). Complex decision-making cases illuminate the contradictions inherent in the work of customs officers who

are now required to operate through at least three different rationalities of border control. Inherited from the policies of deregulation and free trade of the 1990s, officers are pressured to fast-track the passage of commodities under a trade facilitation mandate. But at the same time, they are required to pay attention to indications of smuggling and other matters of law enforcement, and, at least in theory, they are expected to implement national regulations over certain types of commodities.<sup>70</sup>

Officers are expected to work out these difficulties. Bureaucrats enjoy discretion in order to allow for supple decision-making and room for unique situations (Lipsky 2010). But the interaction between trusted trader programs, information contained in databases and regulatory requirement on some products is becoming overly complex and generates patterns of decision-making based on an individualization of discretion instead of a uniform implementation of national regulations. In this case, it is the relation of officers

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<sup>70</sup> I write "in theory" because the application of many of these regulations would require more rigorous enforcement at the border which would then threaten trade facilitation. Programs of trade facilitation make it difficult for officers to implement some regulations. After all, maybe this really represents the policy objective in face of trade liberalization and the Canadian economic dependency on trade with the U.S.: a *de facto* deregulation at the border given the increasing difficulty to implement national regulations on commodities in ports of entry. An officer suggests this conclusion, as he comments on preclearing containers at a distance and the border officer's "helplessness" in such cases:

And the department gives little resources to this [implementing regulations]. Because it is proactive at the commercial level, it says: "If I slow down commercial activities with more law enforcement, it harms commerce". (...). So there are very few measures that are taken regarding containers. We have verifications to do by computers, but that does not tell us if there is a guy smuggled in with the shipment. That tells us approximately nothing. (...) We see the name of the company that imports, we verify what they give us as information, what the customs broker gives us. So the system releases automatically, a pre-release. It scans, all its boxes are checked. But for us, working with this system, if you are not a targeter and you can't have access to taxation reports, well, *the border officer is a bit helpless*. (...) Nobody, certainly not higher ups, will talk about this. (...) But here again, there are little people dedicated to that job so there are many things that come into Canada [without proper evaluation if they respect national regulations] (...) Go to the Dollar Store and you'll see, most items are not even labeled bilingual, they are "franglais". So to which extent the government thinks this [applying regulations] is important? Otherwise, we would have resources related to this. We are not many to do this job [emphasis added].

to the rule that finds itself questioned. When the rule becomes blurred and vague to those charged with applying it, the flexibility provided by officers' discretion allows evasion of the regulation and an individual decision based on an officer's judgment, overall experience and training. As I shall demonstrate in chapters 5 and 6, this means leaving the application of national regulations over commodities to officers whose decision-making methods evolve along entrenched generational approaches to borderwork, either emphasizing law enforcement or insisting on the application of regulations and taxes. Paradoxically, the goal of creating more standardized decisions through risk management technologies necessitates the parallel development of a specialized, individualized decision-making process for more complex cases for which officers are more or less prepared and receive little operational support.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter argued for a consideration in security and border studies of the impact of risk management frameworks upon work processes in security agencies and upon the work routines of security professionals. By focusing on "commercial" Canadian border officers, it particularly called for paying attention to how the technologization and automation of borderwork is negotiated into security personnel's work routines. As they comment on their ability to perform their everyday tasks and on their marginalization in customs decision-making amidst these changes, Canadian "commercial" officers' observations offer some lessons for conceptualizing the internal dynamics unleashed by the implementation of border security policy. Paying attention to their narratives thus contributes to the development of a more grounded and renewed appreciation of the

disembedding of border control. Particularly, this chapter highlighted the relation between distancing in border control and two tendencies: the increased tensions between the border agency headquarters with rank-and-file, as well as the deskilling of frontline officers. It also brought up the complexity of the issues raised by distancing concerning officers' discretionary power. On the one hand, it suggests that discretion continues fostering the occupational identity of officers while its significance is weakened by a new division of labour that removes part of risk assessment responsibilities from ports of entry. On the other hand, those regulatory intricacies left to the discretion of officers, combined with a lack of training in "commercial" matters, threatens to give rise to patterns of individualized decision-making. These would only keep a loose connection to the spirit of national laws and directives believed to be upheld at the border.

The loss of monopoly on border security decisions has brought about significant changes in the ways in which frontline officers think of themselves as border workers. The next chapter sheds light on the evidence of a shift in the occupational identity of border officers towards that of "law enforcers" as a collective response to the disembedding of border control. Acting as a catalyst for this shift, the officers' union campaigned for the arming of its members. Focusing on what became the CBSA's arming policy, the following chapter turns to how border officers have been contending with their marginalization in the security field by actively renegotiating their role within it.

## Chapter IV. "We Are Not Second Class Enforcement Workers"<sup>71</sup>: The Arming Policy and The Pistolization of Border Control

"The firearm is definitely one of the biggest changes... excuse me, THE biggest change within the department in the time that I've been here".

Richard, border officer

### Introduction

Studies of security governance can benefit from paying attention to the ways in which security actors perceive the strength or weakness of their position and the resources they mobilize in order to improve their stakes. This dissertation argues that the struggles through which frontline security professionals negotiate their influence within the security field are shaping this field and, by extension, the provision of security and the implementation of border-related policy. Having explored the disembedding of border control and its impact on the division of labour at the border, on the work routines of frontline border officers and on their uses of discretion, this chapter investigates how officers actively recast their occupational identity in regards to "law enforcement" in order to reposition themselves as key security providers. Particularly interested in the gendered representational work that is part of this process, I examine how commercial border officers deploy an *enforcement narrative*, emphasizing the investigative, repressive and potentially dangerous aspects of their work over the more administrative. By recasting as "feminine" past customs work and the ambassadorial attitude formerly

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<sup>71</sup> Title of a flyer distributed by the Customs and Immigration Union (CIU-SDI) to its members regarding its stalled negotiations with the Treasury Board over a new collective agreement. CIU-SDI, March 2012, "We are not 2nd class enforcement workers", [www.ciu\\_sdi.ca/?129003](http://www.ciu_sdi.ca/?129003) (last consulted 12 April 2012).

required from Canadian customs, officers promote a masculinizing vision of the securization of borderwork.

Studying this enforcement narrative is necessary to understand how a small yet deadly weapon—the firearm—came to be the predominant self-ascribed, symbol of worth for frontline officers struggling to maintain their influence in the security field. In this sense, the firearm is not only a gendered narrative device favoured by officers as they espouse a policing sensibility: the recent efforts made by frontline border officers to protect, maintain and improve their position in a reconfigured security field have relied on union promotion of arming. If the influence of collectively organized groups of policing and security professionals upon security policy is infrequently studied by sociologists of policing, it is simply absent from critical border and security studies discussions. Importantly, my research reveals that the firearm has represented a formidable symbolic resource for unionized border officers competing with other federal policing and security workers (including non-frontline workers at the CBSA) for influence and decision-making powers over border matters, as well as for negotiating better pay and improved working conditions. Despite the union's success in securing what became officially known at the CBSA as the "arming initiative", guns have met with a mixed reception by frontline officers. As discovered during fieldwork, different attitudes towards the addition of firearms on officers' tool belts are often expressive of generational approaches to enforcement. Meanwhile, my interviews indicate that concrete modifications in officers' bodily dispositions are already emerging following firearm training, affecting work routines along generational lines.

By emphasizing the place of firearms in border politics, this chapter sheds light on the complex relationships between security policy, union politics as well as a transitioning organizational culture and occupational identity, and explores how their combination has been the driving force behind what I call, following Shepticky and Edwards (2009), the "pistolization" of border control. By doing so, I introduce a caveat intended for students of the techno-material culture of borderwork. Our warranted concern for biometrics, drones, surveillance technologies and risk algorithms should not prevent a close examination of the more conventional policing tools (e.g. firearms) employed everyday by frontline security personnel. After all, guns are one of "the most significant, highly charged register of material culture in the world today" (Springwood 2007). While I have recognized and detailed above the impact of technological change on the work routines of border officers, this chapter invites a consideration of the new subcultural meanings given by security professionals to traditional enforcement tools such as the firearm, and how they can mobilize these tools to their advantage.

### **Masculinity, Security and Guns**

A commercial border officer shift consists of inspecting trucks, cabs and shipments, sitting in booths asking routine questions as well as assisting truck drivers, importers and custom brokers with paperwork and administrative problems. Depending on the port of entry, she may also spend hours releasing shipments on computer screens. Most of her regular enforcement interventions concern small amounts of alcohol and tobacco smuggled in by truck drivers going over the legislated customs limits. Nevertheless, many officers insist that their mandate revolves around law enforcement concerns such as

countering drug and counterfeit money smuggling, protecting abducted children and seizing smuggled firearms. Not in the least a rehearsed public relations effort, this attitude is expressed with conviction: we used to collect taxes; we are now policing the border. In fact, in most of the interviews conducted for this research, officers seldom refer to "security" or "risk management" but rather comprehend their work as a form of frontline border policing. My interviews are replete with evidence that officers—especially those recently hired—are increasingly identifying as members of a larger law enforcement community. With the term "enforcement narrative", I refer to the tendency of many (but not all) commercial border officers to emphasize the policing side of their work over more typical customs activities.

Intrigued by the apparent disconnect between this narrative and the ways in which officers described the repetitive and administrative character of their work routines, a particular element attracted my attention. In their descriptions of the shift of customs from tax collection towards "law enforcement", officers' narratives contained much references to their recently acquired policing equipment. They were especially keen on mentioning the firearm as an emblem of transition of borderwork into the security field. This was surprising. I had entered fieldwork with little expectations regarding arming, not having seriously considered what it could have changed for border officers. Despite my lack of interest in firearms and generally without prompting, interviewed officers could not stop talking about guns: the gun they carried, the gun they wish they were trained for, the gun they refused to carry, the gun that changed everything.



I was dumbfounded. I had imagined that the challenges brought by other technological and administrative processes (e.g. historic institutional upheaval, important redesign of training, novel border technologies, trusted trader programs and border enforcement teams as well as security and trade policies) would somehow be more meaningful to officers. Furthermore, while the firearm emerges as a narrative device in officers' accounts, epitomizing recent transformations in border control, it was often difficult to see the significance given to the gun reflected within border officers work routines as they described them. Why do so many border officers consider arming such a significant change, even when, in many cases, they themselves are not armed, refuse to be armed, cannot be armed for health reasons or because they are close to retirement age and therefore unfit for gun training? Why give such significance to a piece of equipment most interviewees were not yet trained to carry?

Similarly to sociologists of policing who call attention to the mundane aspect of most low policing work, there exists a discrepancy between officers' enforcement narrative and the mostly banal and ordinary character of the daily activities they perform in ports of entry. It is a characteristic of professionals tasked with the protection of the public to adopt a glorified representation of their line of work as action packed, requiring a sense of mission, strength, valour and the occasional use of violence (Reiner 2010). These representations are at stake when security professionals judge daily assignments, each others' actions and work methods along scales of distinction that afford more or less recognition and status (Proteau and Pruvost 2008). In fact, students of police work have time and again underscored how those serving in policing organizations are known to

have a preference for "real" police and security work—for instance, crime fighting or, as a few interviewed officers called it, "catching bad guys" (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). Heidensohn (1992: 71) remarks on the similar rejection of the community-based, social service and administrative aspects of police work by officers: "Indeed, there is much evidence of a resistance to this type of work from serving officers who recognize the tasks and their volume but resent them".

Such resistance rests on inescapable gendered representations accompanying policing, public safety and security-related occupations. In her essay on the logic of masculinist protection, Young (2003: 2) writes: "Viewing issues of war and security through a gender lens, I suggest, means seeing how a certain logic of gendered meanings and images helps organize the way people interpret events and circumstances, along with the positions and possibilities for action within them, and sometimes provides some rationale for action". Some studies in the sociology of workplaces engaged in public safety confirm Young's insights. In revealing research on emergency care provision by Toronto firefighters, Braedley (2010) demonstrated that the greatest part of contemporary firefighting labour was in fact care-related. This alteration in their everyday work routines owed to improvements in fire safety but also to the neoliberal reorganization of care provision that made firefighters first emergency responders. Yet the firefighters she interviewed still hang onto the traditional representation of firefighting as an honourable and dangerous job performed by strong white men. This narrative stressing the courage and heightened masculinity of firefighters secures for these workers a positive view of themselves as they grapple with an increasingly "feminizing" occupational experience as well as with the

timid yet progressive hiring of women and racialized individuals in fire halls. This narrative was not recreated by my interviewees. But it shows how masculinized representations of particular occupations can help enhance or protect the social recognition they receive and, by extension, their generous salaries and working conditions in times of fiscal restraint.

There are parallels between Braedley's research and mine. Worthy of attention in the case of Canadian border services is the production of a masculinized ethos for border officers that has recently come to constitute a gendered distinction strategy in a transforming work environment progressively staffed by women. In fact, at the same historical moment when women are being integrated into border officers' ranks in higher numbers, the enforcement narrative builds on a symbolic re-casting of borderwork from a set of feminizing clerical tasks into a masculinized border policing project.<sup>72</sup> In those gendered narratives, the passage to enforcement and especially the adoption of its ultimate symbol, the gun, epitomizes the transformation of the border from a soft and subdued taxation space into a strong and hard protective line where border officers feel they should still play a central part.

Historical works have underlined the symbolic importance of firearms in promoting violent forms of masculinity characterized by a repulsion towards femininity conceived as weakness (Theweleit 1973). Inviting us to shift our attention from quantitative data

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<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately, despite different attempts to obtain such numbers from the CBSA and from union officials, I was not granted access to statistics concerning the gender and age of their employees. However, my field observations show that the new cohorts of officers include much more women than those hired in the 1980s and 1990s.

about gun possession "onto the purpose and meaning of weapons", Sheptycki and Edwards (2009: 259) use the term "pistolization" to refer to the "social processes whereby individuals come to adopt the custom of carrying personal firearms in the context of daily life". While frontline border officers do not carry personal firearms, I nevertheless extend the concept to make sense of the significance of firearm carrying for security professionals. Not only does the enforcement narrative cast the gun as a strong "marker of identity" (Cukier and Sheptycki 2012), but the pistolization of border control appears to be closely connected to gendered perceptions of social status, themselves shaped by the registers of distinction characteristic of the security field.

Consequently, through the symbol of the gun, the enforcement narrative emphasizes "a whole series of connotations to do with the use of force, self-presentation, authority, danger, and vulnerability" (Heidensohn 1992: 73), which were traditionally deemed to exclude women from policing work. It is interesting to note that officers currently mobilize these representations in a context of negotiations over placement within the security field. Masculine symbols such as the firearm are thus not only called upon in struggles for recognition between security agencies but also become tools in political-economic struggles over resources, pay and work conditions. My interviews and my analysis of the union's position on arming suggest that the masculinization of the purpose, practices and material culture of borderwork is intimately intertwined with the union's efforts to raise the profile of border officers within the security field. However, it is important to underscore that this gendering process at the level of representations does not necessarily undervalue female border officers from a strict gender equity perspective;

while male officers may be working through some challenges to their identities represented by the current disappearance of the port of entry as an "old boys club", women who integrate these work teams materially benefit from this symbolic recasting (as do their male counterparts) through collective bargaining.

Pistolization therefore recasts the self-perception of border officers both in terms of their subjectivity as "law enforcers" and in relation to their efforts to favorably locate themselves within a security environment in transition. Consequently, my argument at this point does not concern the specific experiences of two generations of female border officers as police actors—although, as demonstrated in chapter 5, more research is clearly needed in that regard. I rather examine how, in parallel to that entry, the transforming symbolic worldview of border workers appears saturated with changing gendered meanings that remain open to investigation.

### **Gendered Accounts of Change: The Firearm as Narrative Device**

In telling their account of the passage from tax collection to enforcement work, officers often mention their legislated powers and accompanying policing instruments. Versions of these stories were repeated by officers going over the recent addition of enforcement tools to their belt as well as their donning of a police-like, navy blue uniform. Denis, an officer hired in the second half of the 1990s, makes explicit reference to these alterations: "It really changed a lot. When I got in, I was dressed in a pale blue shirt with regular shoes and a leather belt. [...] I [now] have my bulletproof vest and all my tools. Handcuffs, baton and pepper spray and a radio". Experienced and mid-career officers also illustrated the transformation in their work by referring to the increased powers—

including arrest powers and the execution of federal warrants—they gained in 1999 through changes in customs legislation. These new powers have introduced some concrete modifications in work routines at ports of entry. Senior officers, especially those with experience in traffic, are particularly proud to mention they now have the capacity to arrest drivers under the influence—the lack of such power being a source of frustration during their early careers.

Nevertheless, the adoption of firearms by border services represents, by far, the most commonly invoked illustration of recent changes in border control by those interviewed. Richard, the officer quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, was convinced that the firearm represented the biggest change he experienced during his years working at his port of entry. This was a surprising statement coming from someone who had experienced the fusion of immigration and traffic services under the auspices of the new Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in 2003, seen the introduction of trusted trader programs in customs work and witnessed the increased importance of risk targeting and risk management data in enforcement work. At the time of interview, he was experiencing the slow implementation of integrated customs data analyses and risk management with e-Manifest, an expensive customs initiative evaluated at \$396 million which, as I have shown above, will likely alter his work routine in fundamental ways.<sup>73</sup> But the change that struck him the most since he had taken his first steps as a border officer was the firearm, which he was still not trained to carry. Richard was not the only one who

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<sup>73</sup> CBSA, 2011, System under Development Audit – e-Manifest, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2011/suda-vsd-eng.html> (last modified 31 Aug. 2011; last consulted 24 Sept. 2012).

favorably saw arming. At the time of fieldwork, only a handful of those interviewed were armed. Gun carrying interviewees had volunteered for training and most of these volunteers had less than 10 years of work experience. As analysed later in this chapter, this predominance of early career officers in firearm training speaks to diverging generational approaches to borderwork in ports of entry. Numbers released by the CBSA confirm that 2,142 officers had been trained for firearm carrying as of October 2012. The CBSA projects training 4,800 officers by 2016, a target that might not be met on time.<sup>74</sup>

Each prospective hire is now required to have undergone the Canadian Firearms Safety Course or Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course prior to entering the formal hiring process at the CBSA. This new policy generates a lot of pressure on Canada's few shooting trainers while devolving the responsibility and part of the cost of firearm training to individuals looking for employment. Meanwhile, inadequate planning and infrastructural deficiencies, including lack of training facilities, are mainly to blame for the lagging firearms training of officers. In October 2012, the CBSA opened a new shooting range at its customs college, where firearm training is now offered. Before this opening, officers could obtain training at only two other facilities on Prince Edward Island and in Chilliwack, British Columbia, also charged with the training of police officers. Finding instructors available for 3 week-periods—the length of the training program—also presents challenges. In addition, some small ports of entry simply do not include space for safe firearm storage. Consequently, officers at these ports are not armed

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<sup>74</sup> CBSA, 2012, Fact Sheet, The Canada Border Services Agency's Arming Program, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/media/facts-faits/118-eng.html> (consulted on 25 May 2013; last modified 15 October 2012); CBSA, 2011, Fact Sheet: The Canada Border Services Agency's Arming Initiative, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/media/facts-faits/063-eng.html> (consulted on 21 Sept. 2012; last modified 25 Mar. 2011).

and, unless major infrastructural investments in small and remote ports are made, will not be in the near future. These circumstances still beg the question: why did interviewed commercial border officers attach such significance to this particular piece of equipment for which most of them were not trained?

*From 'bank clerks' to gun carriers*

Paul: The events of 2001 have changed the world. At that moment, Americans decided that Canada would take its responsibilities because Americans decided that Canada would change its ways. Before that period, we were ambassadors. Welcome to Canada. We were there to greet people.

And then this transition has not been easy because the person, man or woman, who applied [to work at customs] in those times, well it was often people who were searching for a second wage. In Ontario, it was practically only women who were... they were clerks. People came and they did the clerical side a bit and...

But after 2001, it changed and we went towards enforcement. And then it was arming. But if you, you don't want to have it, the firearm, what do you do? The government requires you to carry it. So you have two choices: either you get in line or you quit. We are in that transition right now. I think it will last about 10 years.

In this excerpt, this experienced officer mentions the firearm in relation to how border services gave up their former ambassadorial attitude. It is significant that, in telling this story of the transition, Paul invokes the figure of the female clerk who he does not



conceives as a *bona fide* policing actor but as a second-rate administrative coworker. Of course, his description is historically truncated: there were, and still are, clerks in the commercial sections of land ports of entry in Québec and other provinces as well. As further detailed in chapter 5, their numbers decreased when the introduction of computers reduced paperwork requirements in the 1990s. But this excerpt matters for the way this interviewee constructs clerks—and not customs officers—as representatives of a calmer past characterized by an administrative and ambassadorial stance towards borderwork while this stance was in fact the one required and expected of all frontline border workers at the time. There is nothing innocent about this gendering of the recent past of borderwork as ambassadorial work done by underpaid clerical staff. Hospitality relies on a gendered set of duties generally performed by women. Hamington (2010: 22) encourages an examination of the "political and social implications of hospitality" or the asymmetrical relationships hospitality creates between hosts and guests: "in the case of women, "host" is not always a freely chosen role nor does it always entail power or decision-making ability". At the same time, there is a hint of nostalgia in Paul's portrayal of this past; he seems to be lamenting simpler days and a lost approach to borderwork. But this officer's feminization of his past ambassadorial mandate does create a distance between officers and the mundane administrative and paperwork duties still required by customs work despite its recent securization.

Another interview further illustrates the efforts made by some border officers to dissociate themselves from what they portray as the feminized past of customs work. An uncommon occurrence for experienced male officers, one of my interviewees had started

his career in border services in a clerical position. He considered that by becoming an officer, he had "worked his way up". Many years later, he received with disbelief a check for retroactive wages owed after a positive pay equity decision was rendered on behalf of female federal employees. In contrast to his female colleagues who had been clerks before they became officers and who willingly provided many details about that part of their career, he spoke little of this period, as if he had not really been an integral part of the clerical staff even though he had been paid the same amount and worked under the same conditions: "*They* made little money when *I* was working there" he confided.

Both these officers oppose a feminized appreciation of their role, which they associate with a lower social status. Whether or not they themselves wish to be armed, this resistance points to the sensitivity of some mid-career and experienced officers who, having previously encountered some level of contempt and marginalization within the federal service because they were perceived as taxation workers, are pleased to finally receive the respect they deserve. In this context, the firearm becomes a clear symbol of this shifting tide. My interview with another experienced officer—where clerical work is once again mentioned—highlights this dynamic particularly well. We were discussing the physicality of the training for "control and defensive tactics" when the topic came up:<sup>75</sup>

Officer: The BSO female officer I work with now, she just got back from it this week. She went all last week. She came back all limping and full of aches and pains.

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<sup>75</sup> Since they have been granted increased powers in 1999, officers now receive CDT training (control and defensive tactics). After these courses and their recertification every three years, officers must demonstrate proficiency in handcuffing, weapon retention (if armed) and carotid control techniques, as well as in the use of baton and OC spray (pepper spray).

Karine: Yes. It's a tough job sometimes.

O: It's not at all like what it used to be.

K: No? What was it like before?

N: Pretty... Well, one of our ministers, Elinor... hum, Elinor, can't remember her last name, she called us "grocery clerks".

K: Ah! Caplan. Grocery clerks?

O: She said: "Well, Canada customs is just no more than grocery clerks" or "bank clerks" or something like that.

K: Why? Why would she say that?

O: Well, greet the traveling public and let them into Canada.

K: That was the job, or the way the job was described before.

O: We just collect duties and taxes. That's it. We don't do enforcement, drunk drivers, you just ask them not to drive. "Just park your car in secondary, we'll get you a cab". Now it's completely different. So...

K: Now it's what? How different is it?

O: Now? Well if they arrive drunk on your line, you arrest them for drunk driving, because we have the powers now.

K : So what changed the most since you started working?

O: Everything. Guns, pepper spray, baton, duty belt. We had nothing when I first started here. Computers. We had nothing. Computers in the office for doing B-15 for travelers, like when you go shopping in the States, they charge the duties and taxes. Those just came in when I first started here. Other than that, it was all...

K:... by hand.

O: Yes. So everything has changed since I've been here.

K: All computerized.

O: Computerized everything now, guns, duty belt, officer powers, powers to arrest drunks. Everything.

This officer is remarking on a 2002 episode involving then federal Revenue and Customs minister, Elinor Caplan, under whose authority customs officers worked at the time. That year, borderwork was at a crossroad. Immediately after 9/11, security budgets had exploded while many enforcement and security agencies competed for a piece of the pie. The deskilling effects of the automatization of customs were starting to be felt in ports of

entry. Intelligence-led policing was taking more importance in overall border security while risk management programs were put back on the drawing table after having been tested but set aside at the end of the 1990s. Minister Caplan's comments about bank clerks had also been made in the context of her directive to then "customs officers" to let armed and dangerous individuals into the country *since officers were not armed* and thus not properly equipped to intervene in such situations. In her infamous quote, Caplan likened this eventuality to the reaction bank clerks would have when confronted to bank robbers: "Frankly, it's a similar kind of situation as bank tellers. You never want to put anyone in a situation where they are being threatened, where they will be in danger. So bank tellers will give a robber the money and call the police. We do exactly the same thing at the borders and it has worked effectively over a number of years."<sup>76</sup> Following these comments, the then Customs Excise Union received "a deluge" of phone calls from angry officers complaining of being compared to clerical workers. The president of the customs officer union was cited commenting: "We were stunned when we saw that particular comment on her part. Obviously, customs officers can't begin to be compared to bank tellers. Caplan's comments show she doesn't understand what customs officers do or how many laws and regulations they have to administer".<sup>77</sup>

For frontline customs officials, the Minister's comments shed a derogatory and simplistic light on their work, a point publicly underscored by their union representative. This officer's remarks thus reveal how little acknowledgment officers felt they received from

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<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, 12 Apr.2002, "Customs agents chide Caplan", *Montreal Gazette*.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

decision-makers in "Ottawa". But the Minister's observations also equated customs with an administrative clerical position often conceived as feminine. By insisting on their changed role as law enforcers, and their ability to carry guns—even when they are not yet armed—officers attempt to effectively upgrade their social status against the previous representation of their work and their marginalization in the security field. Self-identifying as an enforcement officer and not a "bank clerk" or a "customs clerk" can offer border officers the recognition afforded to other enforcement actors involved in border policing and national security, better access to resources to do their work, and, as we shall see next, may provide them with better wages and working conditions. It is noteworthy that following their rebranding as enforcement workers, officers insist on being called "border services officers" as per the current official labelling of border guards. An employee of a federal governmental department confirmed this conclusion in a personal communication. While offering a short training session at the CBSA's college in Rigaud, she was castigated by the officers present for having used the old label "*douaniers*" (customs officers) rather than "*agents des services frontaliers*" (border services officers). This is another testimony to the active involvement of officers in promoting the new enforcement-mindset of their position. Obtaining the gun has been fundamental in the recasting of "customs officers" into "border services officers" and in placing them more advantageously within the registers of distinction pertaining to the security field. The officers' union has been a central actor in this regard, promoting with success the adoption of what is now known as the "arming initiative".

### **The Officers' Union and the Political Economy of the Firearm in the Security Field**

There is an interesting but limited literature about police unions, stemming primarily from the 1970s when these organizations were getting stronger (see Reiner 1978, Larson 1978). Nevertheless, we know little about how border officers act collectively and strategically in a new security environment through workers associations. There has been important studies of the informal networks of security professionals and of their involvement in defining security and their influence upon its provision (Bigo 1996). But what about the influence of formally organized security professionals upon security policy and practice? Such a study should be of interest for those studying the power dynamics reshaping the security field. Indeed, a specialist of police unions, Marks (2000: 559-560), claims that workers associations must be considered as essential actors in any effort to effect change in policing organizations: "state change and changes in legislation, policy and constitutions alone, do not give rise automatically to police transformation (...) such transformation is dependent on police agents themselves. This involves a challenge from within police organizations, and such challenges are particularly effective when collectively organized".

As is the case for other law enforcement associations, the Canadian border officers' union adopts a conservative outlook on its activities and mandate by privileging the promotion of its members' interests over other socio-political agendas pursued by the broader labour movement (Burgess, Fleming, Marks 2006; Finnane 2008). However, collectively organized policing professionals can effectively influence, even shift policy decisions within the security field either by enhancing an institutional transition or by demonstrating open hostility to it (Berry and al. 2008). Like other organized labour

groups in the policing domain, border officers can actively participate in the constitution of security policies and in steering reforms related to security governance (Finnane 2000). Street-level policing and security labour articulates "segmented market arrangements" — also characteristic of policing and other labour markets—between a "unionized, high-cost sector" and a "non-unionized, low-cost sector" (O'Malley and Hutchinson 2007). While border officers are not the only frontline security workers, they are the major unionized force directly involved in border control in Canada.<sup>78</sup> Partly by virtue of unionization, border officers are neither powerless nor are they the passive recipients of border security reforms trickling down from policy realms into ports of entry. The case of their arming illustrates this active involvement of officers in border policy-making. It involves "internal conflicts over what policing [is] about, what principles it should follow, and how it should be practiced", similarly to other tensions between unions and management emerging in light of organizational changes that have been recently transforming policing and security agencies (O'Malley and Hutchinson 2007: 163).

A "community of interest" in its own right, the officers' union thus contributes shaping the governance of security from within (Fleming, Marks and Wood 2006). With relatively limited resources compared to those deployed by state authorities or the private security industry, unionized officers actively participate as stakeholders in the

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<sup>78</sup> While verifiable for many security professionals, the relation between unionization and pay rate is not as clear-cut as argued by O'Malley and Hutchinson. The obvious example remains Canadian airports where the inspection line is staffed with underpaid, non-unionized security personnel employed by private security companies, themselves subcontracted by CATSA (the Crown corporation responsible for aviation security). In the visited ports of entry, I also found such division of labour where employees of a local carrier are subcontracted to unload trucks that are flagged for inspection. However, high salaried RCMP officers tasked with policing the territory located in-between ports of entry remain non-unionized despite efforts at unionization which have been thwarted by the Supreme Court of Canada at the end of the 1990s.

redefinition of their mandate. Until recently called CEUDA (Customs Excise Union Douanes Accise), the Customs and Immigration Union (CIU-SDI) represents frontline land and marine border services officers, as well as those officers working in investigation and immigration enforcement. Beyond collective bargaining, the CIU-SDI strategically uses the media, regularly comments publicly on border policy and intervenes at Senate and Parliamentary Committees. The union also lobbies political parties and the government for more resources and the participation of officers in pilot projects and collaborative enforcement teams—a political impact similar to that of police unions, as noted by Walker (2008). Law enforcement unions can also influence public perception about security issues. For instance, in 2012, CIU-SDI applauded a new initiative to "combat human trafficking" but shrewdly noted that its implementation might be difficult to achieve in a context of service and employment cuts.<sup>79</sup> These public tactics are strategically deployed by the CIU-SDI, which, like other law enforcement unions, is aware of its potential "to shake the appearance of a government's commitment to public safety" (Finnane 2000: 12) especially when that government platform is partly centered on a law and order agenda, as has been the case in Canada since 2006.

As shown by their campaign to obtain arming for their members, this union activism carries significant consequences with regard to border-related policies. For the first half of the 2000s, in a time of significant policy-based, legislative, institutional, budgetary and technological change that made border security front-page news but threatened their

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<sup>79</sup> CIU-SDI, 8 Jun. 2012, Customs and Immigration Union Raises Questions for Minister Toews on Announced Anti Human Trafficking Initiative, <http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/?p=129071> (last consulted 3 Oct. 2012).



members' influence in the security field, the Customs and Immigration Union (CIU-SDI) lobbied and pressured all federal political parties for the adoption of an arming policy for border officers. The union used, as its major argument, a law enforcement rhetoric mixed with a concern for the safety of its members. Their efforts were ultimately successful following the election of a Conservative government in 2006. Influenced by the union's campaign, the party promised to go through with the arming of border services officers in its electoral platform and it kept its promise once in power.

The use by the officers' union of a masculine symbol—which also happens to be a lethal weapon—in order to secure better working conditions and salaries for its members deserves reflection. These concerted efforts suggest a series of questions regarding the interactions between organized security professionals, politicians and policy-makers in the security field: How do unionized border workers negotiate their place as security professionals amidst the multiplication of security actors? What does it mean for officers to interact with policy-makers and ministers as their employers, and politicians as potential allies? Which discourses do they strategically deploy to gain recognition for their work and better access to public resources? How do they use the willingness of state officials to spend in security and public safety to their advantage? How do they influence policy priorities?

*The gun: a health and safety tool*

Richard: Well you know [a colleague] was dealing with a case, a guy came up here [at the traffic section], they found a gun on him and he had just killed his parents, right? Like I mean... Yeah, yeah, and he was coming up from the States and they... they got him. I mean there's been probably a couple of cases ... it's not something that happens every day but it has happened.

I know I do take exception when people don't believe that we should be armed or don't believe that we should carry weapons or firearms. It's definitely a necessary evil, if you will, whether you believe in arms or not. It is something where it's like ok, you either want enforcement or you don't. If you want me to enforce the law, if you want me to enforce the Criminal Code, if you want me to enforce criminal aspects of the Customs Act or Immigration Refugee Protection Act, then you know what? This is necessary. Once you get into a position where you're now removing people's freedom from them, putting them in cells, taking them out of their element and placing them under arrest, it is something because it's... it's something that's going to be necessary because you never know how somebody's going to react.

At the end of the day, I want to go home, you know? I have a wife, I have a family, I... you know I... I'm not saying that by carrying a gun you could never be shot, I'm just saying: give me a chance! Right? (...)

I don't see the downfall to it [*sic*]. People say: "Well you could have an unlawful discharge", well it's like ... I'm not sitting here spinning a gun around on my finger like I'm Wyatt Earp or anything crazy like that, I mean it's one of those things where you're saying "Well cops can end up having an unlawful shooting, police could, so let's not arm our police officers", well you would tell me I'm nuts! Right? At the end of the day, there's bad guys out there and people will have guns, I mean... It's... same thing, even if it's not a gun, even if it's a knife. Lot of people carry knives, that's something that... we don't [know] about as much, but so many people carry knives.

Especially truck drivers. Every truck driver carries a knife.

Karine: Oh yes?

R: Absolutely, every single one of them. Now it makes sense, they cut seals, they have all their jobs for it. Every single truck driver. I never came across a truck driver that didn't have at least a folding knife of some sort, or I don't recall ever coming across one that at least had a pocket knife, like a folding knife of some sort. And I get some who are just enthusiasts. Right? But again, I mean you're not drawing down on everybody just cause he's got a knife, but there is potential there that has to be recognized, that has to be looked at.

Richard suggests that arming was the logical next step after officers obtained legislated increased powers; he saw the firearm as a necessary enforcement tool in an environment where he is now expected to be a law enforcer. But Richard also envisioned arming as a way to protect himself in an environment where he might encounter weapons. Yet commercial officers work with a clientele who is unlikely to exhibit violent behavior, a

fact acknowledged by many officers. As seen in chapter 3, truck drivers comply with regulations and laws in order to both reduce time spent at the border (as they are paid by the kilometer) and protect their employment. Richard's mindset does not really correspond to the daily realities of the commercial section. Even though he told me, "I know we don't get a lot of use of force instances back here in commercial," his approach is framed by concerns about armed law enforcement.

Similar to Richard's plea in favour of the gun, the officers' union adopted a health and safety language insisting on firearms as a necessary tool for officers to protect themselves. On this basis, CEUDA (the former CIU-SDI) presented a series of appeals before the federal Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal (OHST) involving traffic officers confronted, in reality or potentially, with armed individuals. The tribunal overturned several work refusal cases—when officers have refused to work for safety reasons—presented by border officers during the years the union was campaigning to obtain firearms. These work refusals included short work stoppages by groups of colleagues in major ports or by officers caught in "working alone situations" in small ports of entry.<sup>80</sup> Often, these appeals to the tribunal concerned the failure of CBSA management to provide officers with up-to-date information about "armed and dangerous lookouts". In one instance, U.S. law enforcement had informed Canadian officials about armed bank robbers who could attempt to cross into Canada. Local CBSA officials took more than three days to enter that information into the lookout database that officers have

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<sup>80</sup> See: *Canada Border Services Agency v CEUDA*, OHSTC 2006 049; *Mike Coene v Canada Border Services Agency*, OHSTC 2008 27; *Tony Ferrusi v Canada Border Services Agency*, 2011 OHSTC 28; *Eugenia Martin-Ivie v. Canada Border Services Agency*, 2011 OHSTC 6.

access to in their booths (where they generally work alone). Significantly, this failure by CBSA management to communicate in a timely fashion such vital information for officers' safety has been interpreted by their union not as an opportunity for demanding improvements in IT and communication of information, but as an additional argument in favour of arming. Those appeals, still pending in front of the OHST when the arming initiative was adopted, have been withdrawn—either by the union or by the CBSA.

It would be inappropriate to underestimate the potential for violent encounters at the border, and especially the perception of this danger by officers. Some of the border officers who I interviewed related vivid tales of life-threatening situations that generally occurred in the traffic section. One such story concerned an officer who opened a car trunk only to find a man pointing his gun at her. A police officer was passing by the port of entry at the time and disarmed the individual. This event happened before the arming of officers. During fieldwork, officers described instances of intimidation on the part of travelers and told stories of finding hidden firearms in truck cabs. They recalled arresting criminally charged and armed individuals who attempted to cross the border to escape U.S. authorities. Usually told informally by experienced officers as a pedagogical tool for informing rookies about "real" police work (Van Maanen 1973; Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce), these "war stories" took another turn in interview context. The officers who touched on these stories hoped to shed light on their concern regarding their own safety and that of their colleagues.

The union's cumulated efforts succeeded at associating these health and safety concerns with arming. Violent occurrences against officers' safety are now presented by

management as justifying the policy. A section of a recent internal review of the arming initiative asks: "Is there an ongoing need for CBSA officers to be armed?" and provides the answer with small numbers about threats of assault and bodily harm faced by officers.<sup>81</sup> As shown by Table 1, statistics on the number of assaults in a 2002 workplace assessment numbered 106 "life threatening encounters" on border officers between 1976 and 2002, including "being held hostage, being physically assaulted and being fired upon". In 2006-07, officers collectively reported being assaulted 10 times and threatened with bodily harm 13 times; 4 assaults and 17 threats of bodily harm were counted in 2007-08.<sup>82</sup> Border services officers seized around 500 firearms annually between 2005 and 2009, as well as more than 5,000 other weapons in 2007-2008.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> This is not an attempt to diminish the severity of each incident of violence experienced by border officers. Yet, compared to statistics about workplace violence experienced by health care workers (34% of Canadian nurses reported having been assaulted in 2004 alone), these numbers appear quite low. Despite such a high rate of assault, no one has yet called for the arming of nurses. My gratitude goes to Susan Braedley for bringing up this comparison. Statistics Canada, *Factors related to on-the-job abuse of nurses by patients*, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2009002/article/10835-eng.htm> (last modified 15 Ap. 2008; last consulted 30 March 2013).

<sup>82</sup> CBSA, 2009, *CBSA Arming Initiative Evaluation Study*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2009/arm-eng.html> (last modified 17 Feb. 2012; last consulted 26 Sept. 2012), p.9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

TABLE 1.

	1976-2002	2006-07	2007-08
Life threatening encounters	106	n/a	n/a
Assaults	n/a	10	4
Threats of bodily harm	n/a	13	17

While it is to be expected that police unions lobby for budgets to acquire work tools that can protect their members working in dangerous environments (Berry and al 2008), the proof that firearms represents the most effective solution to real but infrequent occurrences of violence against officers remains to be made.

*Outcomes of the arming initiative*

The outcomes of the arming initiative remain to be fully assessed. It is a challenge finding statistics regarding the number of times trained officers pulled or fired their guns since the beginning of the implementation of the arming policy. No publicly available statistics appear to have been officially compiled. The range of quoted numbers in different documents and newspaper articles is too wide to carry any serious weight. During mid-2010, it was reported that guns had been drawn more than 80 times.<sup>84</sup> Yet, later quoted at the end of 2011, the Customs and Immigration Union president claimed that officers had pulled out their guns between 10 and 25 times. The same article suggests

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<sup>84</sup> Brennan, R.J., 16 May 2012, "Border guards have drawn their guns 80 times", *Toronto Star*, <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/810315--border-guards-have-drawn-guns-80-times> (consulted 26 Sept. 2012).

that officers discharged three times—twice by mistake and once to put down an injured moose blocking traffic.<sup>85</sup>

It is equally difficult to evaluate the total cost of arming. In 2006, the federal government committed the impressive sum of \$785 million to the arming of border officers over a 10-year period.<sup>86</sup> This number includes training costs and expenses incurred by the "doubling policy"—a health and safety effort that aims to eliminate work alone situations in small and remote ports. As further examined in chapter 5, however, the arming initiative also reduced the number of student border officers hired on a contractual basis. Together with the doubling policy, this trend contributed to the increase in hiring of full-time border officers from 3,963 in 2006 to 5,307 in 2011.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, this array of interrelated policies directly connected to arming increased the number of full-time officers entitled to full-time wages, full benefits and pensions—expenses not accounted for by official cost forecasts.

Furthermore, in their 2009 round of collective bargaining, BSOs earned an increase on their wages; after this collective agreement, a border officer earns between \$51 000 and

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<sup>85</sup> Harris, K., 25 Nov. 2011, "Five years, \$214M, three bullets fired: taking stock of the CBSA arming program", *iPolitics*, <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2011/11/25/five-years-214m-three-bullets-fired-taking-stock-of-cbsa-arming-program/> (last consulted 26 Sept. 2012).

<sup>86</sup> CBSA, 2009, *CBSA Arming Initiative Evaluation Study*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2009/arm-eng.html> (last modified 17 Feb. 2012; last consulted 26 Sept. 2012).

<sup>87</sup> CBSA, 2011, *Evaluation of CBSA Officer Recruitment and Port of Entry Recruit Training (POERT)*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2011/poert-forpe-eng.html> (last modified 11 April 2012; last consulted 26 Sept. 2012).

\$109 000 annually.<sup>88</sup> This is no small feat. They obtained these wage conditions in the middle of a recession, budget cuts and attacks on federal civil service unions. In a letter to its members in the Winter 2008 CEUDA journal, then union president Ron Moran commended the high "level of access CEUDA currently enjoys with the present Government".<sup>89</sup> The union also obtained support for its arming campaign from the New Democratic Party and some members of the Bloc Québécois, while denied support by the governing Liberals.

This is a significant outcome. Despite the fact that the disembedding of many border functions from ports of entry (previously reviewed) should have seen a decrease, not an increase, in the number of border officers posted at the land border, the union effectively countered a thinning of its ranks, even increasing its membership. Collectively organized workers experiencing a loss of influence in the security field managed to maintain their employment and strengthen their ranks. By the same token, it can be safely assumed that this process significantly improved the union's resources by multiplying the number of workers paying dues. With the arming policy, and its overall activism on behalf of its members, CIU-SDI strategically played a context politically favorable to security that had opened up in the decade following 9/11. The union campaign for arming contributed to advantageously locate border officers in the security field where new registers of distinction and new rules of the game involve recognition as "enforcement workers"

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<sup>88</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2009, Border Services (FB), Appendix A, FB-Border Services Group Annual Rates of Pay, [http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/hrpubs/coll\\_agre/fb/fb08-eng.asp#toc223757315](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/coll_agre/fb/fb08-eng.asp#toc223757315) (last consulted 27 Sept. 2012).

<sup>89</sup> Moran, R., 2008 (winter), "Word from the President", CEUDA magazine.



rather than "clerks". These struggles to obtain their part of state resources spent on security entailed renaming, through the enforcement narrative, the work done by officers by insisting on the dangers they faced, potentially and in reality, and turning this narrative into a bargaining strategy.

If the union's choice to focus on arming in order to increase the pay, working conditions and its numbers has paid off, officers' enforcement-oriented strategy for collective bargaining has yet to produce more benefits in the 2011-2012 round of collective bargaining. Similar to all government employees in Canada, security professionals have had to cope with thinning budgets. Following 10% budget cuts at Public Safety (the Ministry responsible for the CBSA), many border officers' positions will be eliminated—although the Canadian government and their union disagree on how many workers will be impacted by these cuts. The union cites 1,300 lay-offs and the replacement of officers by machines in some airports.<sup>90</sup> This would represent roughly a 20% reduction in border officers ranks (there were 5,307 border officers in 2011). Strangely, the CBSA began a parallel hiring process in spring 2012.<sup>91</sup> Fiscal restraint affect all public workers via job cuts as well as privatized and technological alternatives to their labour. These trends present particular challenges for those policing and security unions severed from the labour movement and for whom a law-and-order public relations strategy might not provide the pull it once did (Berry and al 2006).

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<sup>90</sup> CIU-SDI, 2013, *We Deserve Much Better*. <http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/?p=129499&lang=en> (last modified 7 May 2013; last consulted 27 May 2013).

<sup>91</sup> CBSA, 2012, *Become a CBSA Officer: Now Hiring CBSA Officers*. <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/job-emploi/bsa-asf/menu-eng.html> (last modified 20 Apr. 2012; last consulted 4 Oct. 2012).

In this context, it is not surprising that border officers have been working without a contract since June 2011—and still so at the time of writing in August 2013 when they have been forced to vote on their employer's offer (CBSA and Treasury Board). In their recent March 2012 campaign, the CIU-SDI titled a pamphlet to their members, "We are not 2nd class enforcement workers," echoing their reply to Minister's Caplan blunder nine years earlier. The latest pamphlet against the forced vote on the government's offer in 2013 repeats such language: "Respect and Pride: We must take a stand and tell our employer that comparing our work to Security Guards is wrong. The Public Interest Commission (PIC) recommendation recognizes the important work that we do as law enforcement agency employees. We should be treated accordingly."<sup>92</sup> In its negotiations with the Treasury Board, the union is seeking parity with RCMP and Corrections regarding wages and conditions, including retirement after 25 years of service.<sup>93</sup> We will see below that arming and defensive tactics training are making the job more physically demanding, thus justifying, to a certain extent, the union's position regarding early retirement (at least with regard to armed land border officers). Yet while the CBSA now trains frontline rookies to develop a policing sensibility (as demonstrated in the next chapter) and relies on border officers to perform enforcement work, federal negotiators

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<sup>92</sup> CIU-SDI, 2013, *Top 10 Reasons to Vote No!*. <http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/?p=129613> (last modified 12 July 2013; consulted 25 August 2013).

<sup>93</sup> Public Service Alliance of Canada, 20 Jun. 2012, *A Message from the FB Bargaining Team. Talks Break off. Process for Conciliation Starts*. <http://www.psac-afpc.com/news/2012/bargaining/20120620-e.shtml> (last consulted 3 Oct. 2012). See also: Customs and Immigration Union, 28 June 2011, *Press release: Early retirement raised by our team at bargaining table*", <http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/?p=62466&lang=en> (last consulted 29 Sept. 2012).

refuse to further acknowledge this change of role as it did in the previous round of negotiations.

What lessons can we take from these efforts by a professional association of security personnel to influence border policy? While all unionized workers should obtain support for trying to improve their working conditions and wages, and receive respect and appreciation for their work when it is well done, there is nothing mundane about a union strategy which turned a deadly weapon into a political tool. Border officers are now considered part of the enforcement community in Canada—without all of its perks—yet the union's strategy has only been partially successful and not without costs. For instance, firearm recertification is creating anxiety for some of those who are now armed. Firing ranges are difficult to find for armed officers wishing to hone their skills, raising concerns regarding the capacity of armed officers to re-certify (and thus protect their employment). In addition and as we shall see below, many officers, generally career and mid-career ones, refuse to be armed. This creates needs for accommodation that are now met with difficulty. In fact, the implementation of the policy has hence become a significant stake in recent collective bargaining where management wishes to make officers' job security "subject to operational requirements"—that is, to the capacity to train and periodically recertify one's arming credentials. By not volunteering, older officers could opt-out from firearm training with the past collective agreement. It seems that the CBSA does not wish to extend this possibility any longer; this capacity for career officers to avoid firearm training has become a significant point of contention in the negotiations for a new collective agreement between the union and the Treasury Board.

Finally, the example of Canadian border officers successful campaign to obtain firearms provides a comparative background for studying the pistolization of other groups of law enforcement workers, either recently armed or attempting to acquire firearms. Debates about arming were renewed in 2012 in the UK—where police officers generally remain unarmed—when two Manchester police officers were gunned down during a routine call.<sup>94</sup> It is unlikely that English bobbies will be armed given the history of the model of British policing at home (excluding Northern Ireland), yet arming police officers is still presented by those relatives of the murdered police officers and some police officers associations as an effective way to improve officers' security. Meanwhile, the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border serves as cautionary tale. It resulted in the escalation of violence by Mexican organized crime. Criminal elements became more efficient at concealing drugs, better armed and better financed. In fact, the militarization of the border created costs of opportunity that required better organized smuggling strategies (Andreas 2009). The death of a U.S. border patrol shot by friendly fire at the Arizona-Mexico border also challenges the purported safety of firearms for border workers.<sup>95</sup> This being said, the unfortunate non-lethal shooting of a border officer in a British Columbia port of entry in October 2012 has been met by renewed calls to speed up the arming of officers in Canada. The perception that firearms constitute a necessary self-protection tool for Canadian border officers has now entered public discourse.

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<sup>94</sup> Dodd, V., 19 Sept. 2012, "Police chiefs oppose routine arming of officers in wake of Manchester deaths", *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/sep/19/police-shooting-manchester-gun-weapons> (last consulted 3 October 2012).

<sup>95</sup> Fatal shooting of border agent likely caused by friendly fire, says FBI, *The Guardian*, 6 oct. 2012 (last consulted 1 Ap. 2013).

## **The Physical Challenge of the Gun: Reworking the Officer's Body**

William: It changed over the years. That is why we have this difficulty. Because now, we are going to arm officers. There are old officers who say: "I was not hired to be armed". And you have new ones who say: "I can't wait to carry my firearm because I will receive the respect that Americans [U.S. border officers] receive from people". There's also the mentality that comes with arming. When you are armed, you really are a "border guard". [But] You also have old officers who say: "I have always done my work right, I have always had the respect I deserve without a gun. Why would I be required to carry a gun now and re-qualify myself every year?"

Springwood (2007: 2) invites us to consider people's "everyday experience with guns, especially the relationship of people to their guns" and "the idiomatic meanings of guns in local spaces". Yet the subcultural meanings given to the gun by security professionals, the interactions between officers and their guns as well as the effects produced by firearms upon work routines remain absent from contemporary discussions of borderwork. This is a surprising deficiency given that North American frontline border officials (including US Customs Border Protection and US Border Patrol) are generally armed. As illustrated by this interview excerpt, this section of the chapter is interested in how the materiality of the firearm and its various connotations dovetail with generational approaches to borderwork in Canadian ports of entry. In fact, arming brings a new physicality into frontline borderwork. The challenging training and testing it requires emphasizes the physical strength possessed by youth. It contributes to the building of a

new body image—one that is young, strong and fit—in which experienced commercial officers do not recognize themselves. In addition, firearm training introduces a novel set of bodily dispositions for officers that present the potential to significantly alter their everyday conduct. The firearm requires armed officers to keep a safe distance from the traveling public thus transforming a relationship that was historically characterized by more approachability. By shedding light on these changes, my research opens a unique perspective onto the changing practice of border security in Canada and its ongoing "pistolization" (Sheptycki and Edwards 2009).

*The gun under fire: generational approaches to arming*

Much discussed between officers, the introduction of firearms in ports of entry has been the most debated issue during my interviews. A major topic of contention, firearms crystallize the opposition between two generational approaches to borderwork. Guns were brought up time and again as an illustration of the transition of border control towards security and "law enforcement":

Thomas: That's what is happening; there are people who concentrate on different types of work. I give you an example: trade compliance. It is important for them, as much as for others, security and drugs [trafficking] are more important.

Sometimes age as well. Age, in the present moment, I think that age is still a big, a big point because we are in a pivotal time where there are a lot of people who are retiring. And there is a great empty space; I would say that there are few people in mid-career. And the boom of young people who get hired, like me... A

lot of people have difficulties with that. As much as some young people are not interested in making compromises to understand other peoples' experience, some are unable to understand that customs has reached another phase. So that creates frictions sometimes.

Karine: Customs has reached another phase? Where is it now?

T: (...) I give you an example: the firearm. You go around seeing who is armed, who has volunteered for it. It will be 60, 80... 90% of the people at the start of their careers. And that is understandable you know. I mean when you are nearing 50 years old, carrying a firearm is not something that is of interest to you, especially when you started as a tax collector at the border. You know, for sure, the years 1970s were more like this. They only had their stamps. Starting in 1990, even maybe 2000, they started having their batons and all... And now, we have reached the firearm. (...).

You know, I am not... The idea to be... You know, you are not allowed to be unpleasant. The model of the cop, the wannabe police officer, has a tendency to happen here. But we do now put emphasis on security more than on anything else.

Like Thomas, a rookie officer, interviewees hired after the creation of the CBSA consider arming a given; it is, after all, included as a pre-hiring requirement in new officers contracts since 2007. But tensions over generational approaches to borderwork in ports of entry were often expressed in interview by recourse to the firearm as a preferred narrative device. Together with making sense of the shift of borderwork to the security field, the

enforcement narrative serves as a generational method of classification. Using the main symbol of this narrative, the gun, pro-arming officers separate what constitutes "real" borderwork and what amounts to technicalities—often in reference to paperwork, taxation and trade compliance responsibilities. For those officers, the gun firmly anchors customs in an enforcement mentality. Consequently, the firearm represents an oft-used metaphor in the portrayal of experienced officers as not being in sync with contemporary transformations in the security field. It speaks to what many officers—often rookies and mid-career—interpret, to paraphrase Mannheim (1952 [1923]), as the "non-contemporaneous" character of an approach to borderwork that does not include guns. The gun thus points to the subjective experience of change in the security field; border officers make sense of this transformation by debating its meaning for their occupational identity. In those debates, a sensibility more in tune with law enforcement preoccupations is often seen as better adjusted to what one of my interviewees called the "future of border security".

In contrast, experienced officers tend to be more critical of the arming initiative. They view the depiction of the firearm as *the* enforcement tool as a disguised disdain for the numerous years in which they accomplished their work without it. Some do not see the necessity of a uniform implementation of the policy for those working in "commercial" sections of ports of entry:

Karine: Will you train for it [the firearm]?

Officer: Unless they force me. I don't see a need. [...] Because you do your work, for instance at a desk, and you tell me if you think we need a gun, working in an



office environment like we do. As opposed to being out front [traffic] where you're always in direct contact with people. It's a different environment. It should have been... I understand the need to have it 100% up front. Back here, it should have been, like I believe, back here, maybe 45, 50, 60%.

K: Armed.

O: Armed yes. (...) There are a lot of people who are still concerned about having to go for the training. They don't want to do it. People my age group, a little bit older than me. We're just waiting. You know, our last contract [collective agreement] kind of cleared us. So, but the next contract...

Intergenerational debates over firearms point to the increasingly challenging physicality of border officer's instruction, including firearm certification as well as control and defensive tactics training. In addition to formal training, each officer needs to recertify these skills every three years. There is an underlying assumption in such continuous training and evaluation: that the border officer's body is young, agile and physically fit. In reality, many "commercial" experienced and some mid-career officers oppose arming by expressing concerns regarding certification and regular retesting. They worry about undergoing the trying three-week training and re-qualification tests from which even younger officers come back sore and aching. A soon-to-be-retired officer claimed to be glad that he would be undergoing his last CDT training the following month. Recall also Nathan, the experienced officer quoted earlier in this chapter who mentioned how physically demanding this training had been for one of his female colleagues. Most of

those officers hope to retire before having to undergo firearm training; they did not sign up for this.

The opposition to arming among experienced officers also relates to their own physical safety. In a paradoxical argument, if one compares it to the officers' union official position, the same experienced officer just quoted above sees the arming initiative *as presenting a health and safety concern*, citing an incident involving a firearm:

Officer: So, you know, I have a big concern. You never know. I mean, you always hear about shootings and, let's face it, I don't know the mental stability of everybody that I work with, so the less amount of guns, the better. 30, 40% of the population are on some sort of anti-depressant. Be it mild or not. And you can't look at somebody and know if they're, you know, on... you know, "I have some type of issue". That was always my big concern. That's was from the first time guns came in, that was my first thing. I said: "At some point, something is going to happen".

K: You mean, within the work environment?

O: Within yes. Maybe not necessarily here but somewhere, something is going to happen. And it just had... Some guy was dry firing in [other POE] about a month ago. And didn't empty his chamber. Ricochet a bullet all through storage unit. There you go. It could have "ricoched" and hit him.

Another experienced officer wondered about the effectiveness of the policy and even questioned their union's efforts in obtaining the firearm:

Mario: Why wish to put people at risk and the career of officers on the pretext of carrying a firearm? Ok, the program is relevant. We have identified a need : in order to be able to intervene, officers needed a firearm. [...] Yes, there have been cases in Ontario. There are many more cases in Ontario. Maybe in British-Columbia, I think. [...]. Here, very little. Very little. But it has been built and pushed by the Union at the national level that agents needed a firearm and blah, blah, blah. I think in Québec it has been argued for salary raises, no more no less. And this is how we are seen now—excuse-me, I am really negative—that we are some kind of Rambo...and after all in Ontario, they have a tendency to get excited right away.

For me, the boat has been poorly steered and it is stupid to ask 50-year old officers to go train [to carry a firearm]. It is a waste of money and I will absolutely not contribute to this program. That's for sure.[...]

Karine : So if you are armed or not armed, you are all paid the same wage?

M : This reclassification has been made starting at the moment when we got the firearm. This idea of the firearm, the union fought to have it. It is for that reason that I tell you it is a matter of salary raise. [...] They succeeded and convinced the government; the government said yes, it said "we need firearms". Now, we arm everyone. Why so suddenly? What is the.... I never even had the need to take my baton out.

Some officers claim a uniformly implemented arming policy does not take into account the great variations in the potential for threat facing border officers. Working at the doorstep of a city with a highly armed crime rate such as Detroit has little in common with the everyday work of border officers posted in remote ports of entry or in rural communities. A standardized national policy has been imposed where a tiered implementation would have been preferable. Targeted arming makes sense and has been tried elsewhere. For instance, arming is a specialization within the British police, which is generally not armed (with the exception of Northern Ireland); special firearms units (Authorized Firearm Officers) can be called upon in emergency situations.

But this officer also points to local variations in the ways in which union locals took up the arming campaign by promoting different objectives (e.g. salary, status, self-protection, law enforcement requirement). He speaks to how these objectives are anchored in distinct views of borderwork and of customs union activism promoted throughout Canada. Similar assessments of cultural and regional variations between approaches to borderwork have been made in interviews by some officers from Québec who claimed that training at Customs College had been "militarized" by English Canadian officers. In addition, an Ontario officer told me that colleagues who had been temporarily deployed to British Columbia during the Vancouver Olympics reported that they had encountered a militarized organizational culture in Western ports of entry inspired by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Because I have met Québécois rookies who wished to be armed and Ontario-experienced officers who refused to carry a gun and were more interested in trade compliance, I have been unable to assess the

significance of regional and cultural differences, real or imagined, in the making of the enforcement narrative. But combined with generational approaches to borderwork that embrace or oppose arming, these arguments provide a glimpse into the representations that shape the everyday practice of security in Canadian ports of entry as well as their organizational culture and professional routines. They also shed light on the multifaceted dynamics influencing the pistolization of border control at the local level, while complexifying the enforcement narrative adopted by many officers, by their union and, recently, by the CBSA's management.

*Sarah's awareness: Changing officers' conduct through arming*

It is difficult to assess the impact of the introduction of firearms in ports of entry upon border officers' practices and routines. The policy is still under implementation and most interviewees were unarmed mid-career or experienced officers. In addition, commercial border officers are presented with less opportunities to assess the consequences brought by the presence of firearms in their workplace. Given the repetitive nature of border crossing for truck drivers with whom they develop a certain level of familiarity, officers are less likely to come up with high risk readings of drivers and consider whether to draw their guns as a result. However, my data suggest that the embodied dispositions of border officers could well be modified by arming. The emergence of a policing sensibility in rookie border officers seems to be accompanied, for those who are armed, by new forms of body discipline related to firearm training. The conclusion that the firearm is in the process of remaking border officers' conduct emerged from my interview with Sarah, an armed rookie who conceives of her work as primarily enforcement-oriented. Doing a

good job for Sarah is not to "stamp it and send it away" but "to work hard and really dig and look for things". Getting results means proceeding to seizures as well as receiving good assessments on her enforcement abilities by supervisors. She particularly enjoys when colleagues recognize her search abilities and ask for her help in inspecting a vehicle. There is no mention in Sarah's interview of "protecting the economy" or of providing a service to drivers and importers, as was the case in interviews with her experienced colleagues (a generational approach to borderwork further reviewed in chapter 6). For Sarah, a job well-done stems from an enforcement-oriented attitude and its accompanying skills. Yet, for her, as well as many of the officers hired in the last decade, law enforcement carries a different connotation than that expressed by senior officers: it is intimately connected with gun carrying.

I became intrigued by the potential of firearms to modify a border officer's conduct and her interactions with her surroundings when Sarah spoke of the *alertness* the firearm brought into her work routine—especially since Richard, another pro-arming officer quoted above, had also characterized the effect of the firearm on work routines in exactly the same terms. Asked whether she saw a difference with or without a firearm, that is, before and after her training, Sarah replied:

I think, *you're just more aware* of, once again indicators, but these indicators could be things where people might potentially get angry and, you know, if they're hiding their hands or like... *You're more aware* of where are their hands, because you're not sure if they've got some sort of weapon, that they're going to

produce, or whether they've got their fist clenched ... Like, "oh my gosh, I want to beat this person up", that kind of thing. *You're more aware. You're more aware* of keeping your distance and knowing what's around you in case, let's say somebody does have a firearm. You can position yourself behind cover, in a safer spot. You know. *So you're always looking around* and seeing what other people are around that could be associates to a person, or places that you can go for safety, and, *you're just more aware* (emphasis added).

As demonstrated in chapter 6, there exists a generational politics of suspicion in ports of entry emerging from the different valuations of effectiveness given by officers to face-to-face examinations, interviewing skills, indicators of nervousness, information technologies, enforcement data and intelligence in decision-making processes. These generational approaches to border enforcement are further complicated by the introduction of firearms in ports of entry. On the one hand, by teaching how to safely use a gun and properly behave when armed, the three-week intensive firearm training ingrains a new attitude and embodied dispositions which are then displayed by border officers in the course of their work. Described by this rookie officer as heightened "awareness" towards her surroundings, this modification is exhibited in her conduct, requiring her to be constantly alert and anticipate any indication of potentially violent behaviour. The firearm thus presents the potential to make the relationship between officers and truck drivers more formal and distant.

On the other hand, with arming, face-to-face interactions do not solely offer the possibility of inquiring into the presence of clues to criminal activity or indications of

customs fraud. The presence of firearms in ports of entry modify the logic of suspicion characteristic of borderwork by bringing about a precautionary attitude to the encounter with truck drivers and travelers. This anticipatory attitude focuses firearms-trained officers on safety, their own and that of their colleagues. Truck drivers and the traveling public thus become viewed as presenting a potential physical threat; as Ronald, a mid-career officer, told me, "You have to worry that every driver has a gun". Whereas Arthur, an experienced officer playfully claimed in his interview, "Somebody wants to get into a little scuffle, we'll go!", Sarah, the "aware" armed rookie, was more likely to "keep [her] distance".

*The challenges of an armed and unarmed work environment*

Sarah's anecdotes seem to confirm the changes to conduct brought by firearm training and illustrate the workplace challenges presented by the transition towards arming:

So I was out there and, all of us were armed and we had discussed, you know, what do we do if we find a gun, where....who's going to do what where you're going to position yourself, and then we found a loaded gun under a guy's pillow in his cab, and automat... it was just so natural, it just felt like the training. You know, two of the guys withdrew their guns and I was at the back of the trailer, so I'm behind cover, and I can see, you know, the client and the other teammates of mine as they were going to... Like, they've got their guns drawn as well and they were going through arresting him and everything and.. It just, it works like clockwork when you're all trained in that area.



However, if you've got people who are not armed... You've got people who are and the people who aren't don't really... they don't know our training. And they don't really know what... what to expect from us, or what we're going to do, so, you know I've heard of one instance where hum... One officer was armed, one wasn't and they found a gun in the person's car and the guy who wasn't armed immediately jumps in and grabs him, grabs the client to arrest him, whereas we're like "No!", "No!" because you don't know if he's got another gun on or not. And that's putting yourself in a really bad position. So the officer who was armed couldn't draw his gun to a low-ready—it's just down here [*gestures pointing a gun at the ground*]. You're not pointing at anybody because there was an officer in the way.

You know, so it creates... situations that, yeah, when there's... when you don't have the same understanding, it might not work as well. Your training might not be as effective as [...] where we were all trained and that all worked so smoothly and everything. Yeah. It's possible that it might not.

Yes. Because they've got an old way of doing things, where there was no guns or, you know, there's just a stamp and some handcuffs or whatever, well that's what they did. They just jumped in and [*gentle mocking voice, mimics taking hold of someone*] grabbed the guy and arrest him or whatever.

[...] But there are still some younger officers who are new and who aren't armed yet. Where they really want to be a part of things and get in there, but they don't

have the same knowledge that we do, which is a little scarier than the older officers who are more likely to step back from the situation.

The co-presence of armed and unarmed officers in ports of entry creates ambiguities as to the proper conduct to adopt when faced with an armed driver. These ambiguities will subside when all officers will be armed, but they speak to the everyday dynamics faced by a workplace transitioning towards arming. Armed officers are trained to assume the worst and to draw their guns when finding a firearm in a vehicle.<sup>96</sup> When officers were formerly invited to let an armed individual through the border and contact local police authorities, they are now qualified, and required by their training, to intervene. In addition, such anecdotes suggest that border workers swap ideas about what is the proper conduct required in the context of arming. With these stories, they teach each other in informal ways how to act in this transitioning environment, providing cautionary tales and exchanging lessons learned. To paraphrase Shearing and Ericson (19991), these stories read border officers culture as a "story book" that provides guidance and meaning to action. In doing so, officers demonstrate that intergenerational relations in ports of entry, although characterized by tensions (as illustrated in the next two chapters) also

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<sup>96</sup> It is important to underscore that American truck drivers who show up at the border with firearms do not necessarily mean harm. U.S. long haul drivers sometimes carry firearms intended for self-protection. As these firearms are not registered to carry in Canada, they cannot cross the border. Some border officers mentioned being tipped off to search for firearms in trucks registered in American states known for gun ownership, especially when, in some cases, gun promotion paraphernalia (e.g. National Rifle Association stickers) is found in a truck cab. Foreign gun owners wishing to enter Canada are required to leave their firearm in consignment with the CBSA, which they can recover upon exiting the country. This procedure assumes truck drivers will cross back at the same port of entry, which is in fact entirely dependent on the routing provided by their next client. This may consequently present challenges for these drivers who may then "forget" to declare their firearm.

give rise to collaboration. Officers teach each other how to negotiate the unique situations that can arise from the adoption of a more enforcement-oriented conception of border control. But, as we shall see in chapter 6, given the current alterations in formal officer training, these lessons are sometimes taught by newcomers to disoriented and frustrated career officers unhappy with this generational reversal of traditional teaching relations.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter conveyed students of security to pay attention to a neglected actor, unionized security professionals, and to a deadly weapon, the firearm, while considering the part they have both played in the current pistolization of border control in Canada. I have explored the profound influence firearms have had on labour relations within the CBSA, on officers' self-perception as they grapple with a changing security environment as well as on their conduct in ports of entry. By pushing for the adoption of firearms, the border officers' union has responded to the disembedding of border control and to officers' increasing marginalization within the security field. As border officers were concerned about their safety in ports of entry, as political leaders and management did not respond satisfactorily to these preoccupations and as a recasting of their role within the security field threatened to diminish their ranks, their union turned to the firearm as bargaining leverage.

Many hopes, energies and resources have been invested in this small, dangerous, object, which came to symbolize contemporary change in border control for many officers. Adopting a novel policing sensibility sustained with an enforcement narrative that has

recast the border as a threatening and risky environment, many officers embraced the firearm in a bid to affirm a proud occupational identity. My interviews also suggest the current pistolization of borderwork reshapes border officers' attitude towards travelers and drivers with a suspiciousness that requires constant awareness towards possible threats of bodily harm. Pistolization emphasizes officers' enforcement responsibilities in a work environment that nevertheless remains characterized by administrative decisions, the release of shipments and the filling of paperwork.

By focusing on arming, this chapter opened new avenues of reflection for students of security and border control. It discussed the impact of professional associations of security personnel, including unions, in shaping security policy. It also argued for taking into consideration the role of more traditional enforcement tools in border control, paying attention to their symbolic importance and to the ways in which they are integrated within the everyday work routines of frontline security professionals. Drawing on border officers' enforcement narrative, I have been able to detect distinct generational approaches to arming. The next two chapters are dedicated to making better sense of generational differences in approaching borderwork. Chapter 5 consider the professional socialization of two generations of border officers while chapter 6 sheds light on generational struggles over promotions as well as on disagreements regarding the border agency's mandate and the most appropriate methods of border control.

## Chapter V. Becoming a Border Officer

### Introduction

Criminological studies present a valuable model for studying the professional socialization of border officers, that is, how they learn the know-how (skills, practices, conduct) as well as acquire the normative and subcultural knowledge (values, assumptions, norms) that allows them to integrate border services (Chan 2003). These authors pay particular attention to the ways in which training and the first years of work alter recruits' understanding of what policing entails. Triangulating a variety of methodological approaches ranging from ethnography to longitudinal and survey-based inquiries, they explore the process of self-transformation through which recruits separate themselves from civilian life and become insiders within policing organizations (Alain and Pruvost 2011). While this literature sheds valuable light on the socialization of police officers, the professional socialization of many other security and enforcement corps has not yet been examined—Coton's (2008) ethnographic work on French military officers' training is a notable exception.

With the multiplication of “high policing” (Brodeur 1983) bodies dedicated to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism—including transnational policing organizations as well as private security and military corporations (Bowling and Sheptycki 2012; Scherrer 2009; Andreas and Nadelmann 2006)—the continuing interest in investigating “street cop” culture at the expense of these emerging and little studied policing organizations presents a lacunae. In fact, aside from Horii's (2012)

institutionalist overview of the integration of European border guard training, we know little of the ways in which new recruits in the security field learn their trade. How do they become acquainted with the organizational culture, norms and practices of these security and intelligence organizations? In which ways do major security policy shifts express themselves in the professional socialization of security personnel? The lack of interest in processes of professional socialization within security organizations undermines any possibility of tackling the various ethical and political challenges aptly underlined by specialists of transnational policing. These challenges are partly related to how security professionals are trained in questions of accountability, compliance with constitutional rights and international human rights law, professionalism and transparency (Goldsmith and Sheptycki 2007).

Since contemporary security and policing organizations are changing at a rapid pace, I follow Chan's (2003: 20) invitation to pay attention to instability and variability in border officers' socialization; like her, I decided not to "assume the existence of a relatively homogeneous and stable organizational culture into which newcomers become acculturated". As the previous chapter began to demonstrate, the organizational culture of ports of entry is being reworked by the Canadian Border Services Agency's (CBSA) most recent training schemes, which encourage officers to adopt a new enforcement-related embodiment and a policing sensibility.

The present chapter builds on this argument. It unpacks the more fundamental transformations in the professional socialization of Canadian border officers that accompanied the movement towards arming. Returning to Bourdieu's terms, it is through

this professional socialization that officers acquire their habitus and a generational "feel for the game" of borderwork. In fact, it is my contention that the two generational approaches to borderwork encountered during fieldwork (i.e. a pro trade regulation-taxation attitude as opposed to a more enforcement-oriented outlook on borderwork) can be traced back, in great part, to the remodeling of hiring procedures and training programs at Canadian customs. I suggest that the different skills, dispositions and attitudes for which rookies and experienced/mid-career officers have been recruited and trained have contributed to the emergence of these two approaches. Hiring and training play a central part in shaping "old ways" and "new ways" of doing borderwork, which are themselves anchored in divergent temporalities of border control.

This chapter thus outlines change and continuity in the professional socialization of Canadian border officers by comparing the hiring, training and early work experiences of career, mid-career and rookie border workers. It examines officers' prior motivations in applying to a border officer job, their passage through Customs College and what they learn after joining a port of entry. Based on official documents produced by the CBSA, my findings reveal the formal aspects of professional socialization, including hiring procedures, the College's curriculum and training in the field. But I also uncover the informal elements of this learning process based on officers' long descriptions of their experience at "Rigaud" (Customs College)<sup>97</sup> and of their first years on the job.

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<sup>97</sup> The College of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) is located in Rigaud, in the vicinity of Montreal.

Accordingly, I make a number of arguments regarding the specificities of the professional socialization of Canadian border officers. I first draw attention to the CBSA's attempt to remove local ports' influence in the appointment of officers by standardizing the hiring process. However, in spite of these efforts, my research reveals that hiring continues to present significant local features. The chapter then goes on to investigate the remodelling of training at Customs College on the model of the police academy. Both its curriculum, which now puts emphasis on developing enforcement skills in recruits, and the stressful pressures it places on trainees contribute to the emergence of an enforcement orientation in rookie officers. Recent trainees appear to be partial to the dispositions and worldview they are taught during their attendance at Customs College. I propose that this attachment to a policing sensibility is at the centre of the new generational approach to borderwork brought by rookies in ports of entry. Nevertheless, there exists some continuity between experienced, mid-career and rookie border officers' experiential learning. A significant part of on-the-job training remains focused on acquiring better interviewing techniques and mastering "risk indicators" and customs regulations. Furthermore, I show how officers, men and women, learn to adapt to the bureaucratically dictated demands of their role and exert themselves to display their authority. I particularly pay attention to the gendered nuances involved in this process.

In short, this chapter investigates how dynamics of social change unfolding at Canadian customs in the past three decades are associated with the transformation of professional socialization for frontline border workers. It sheds light on how security professionals actually become skilled at policing people and commodity flows in border spaces. It also



provides an original angle into the dynamics of border control integration into the security field and into the complexity and diversity of processes involved in the implementation of security policies.

### **Getting Hired: From a Local To a Nationally Standardized Process**

The paths that lead to a career in border services have changed over the course of Canadian Customs' history. William, an experienced officer, remarked that he started his career at the beginning of the 1980s, working with war veterans who had been offered positions as officers in recognition for their participation in the war effort and who were close to retirement at the time. Recalling this aspect of Canadian customs' history discussed in chapter 2, it seems that the practice of distributing customs positions as rewards—handed over as status recognition and income-generating positions for the British nobility during colonial times—had been revived following the Second World War. Other career officers mentioned that some of their career colleagues had been hired by local ports not always on the basis of merit alone; at some ports, hiring was a matter of nepotism. Two experienced officers employed in the same port mentioned that at the time of their hiring, at the end of the 1980s, most of their colleagues had fathers, uncles or brothers already working at this port—in those years, the question of favoritism in local managements' hiring practices was already discussed. Nowadays, if not necessarily as a result of nepotism, borderwork nevertheless still can be a family business; the continuing significance of kinship networks in ports of entry is confirmed by those officers having family members employed by the CBSA. Three experienced and one mid-career officers told me that they each had a brother working as a border officer in their region.

Since its inception, the CBSA overhauled its hiring process in order to better reflect contemporary changes in the *raison d'être* of borderwork. Senior officers remember when their work consisted in playing an ambassadorial role, greeting visitors with a “Welcome to Canada”. No longer interested in fostering a hospitable attitude in its employees, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) asks instead that prospective officers be assertive, have the ability to deal with stressful situations, in conjunction with being culturally sensitive and showing themselves to be of “high moral character”.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, in line with the introduction of a client service management model in public bureaucracies under the influence of New Public Management, a service-oriented attitude is demanded of prospective officers. In line with this policy, interviewed officers often refer to truck drivers and travellers as "clients".

The present hiring and training of officers assume that contemporary border security requires a different set of attitudes, capacities and skills than those previously held by customs officers. At the most visible level, change includes the willingness to wear policing equipment and to be trained in the use of enforcement tools. These requirements were non-existent before the mid-1990s when officers only wore a light blue shirt. Aspiring officers now have to consider whether they are prepared to dress in a policing uniform and heavy boots, carry policing equipment (including a baton, pepper spray and handcuffs) and wear a bullet proof vest on a daily basis. Another step in the self-selection of prospective applicants concerns aspiring officers readiness to carry a firearm. A

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<sup>98</sup> See “Before you apply” on the CBSA website: <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/job-emploi/bso-asf/hiring-emploi-eng.html> (last modified 21 February 2012; retrieved 18 April 2012).

supervisor interviewed during this research said he insisted on that requirement with locals who meet with him to discuss a potential career in border services. At this point, he relates, some people change their mind about pursuing the job. The firearm does not represent the only warranted health and safety concern for prospective candidates. An experienced officer complained of recurring back pain which he associated with the wearing of this equipment over time. He estimated its weight at 16 pounds. In short, the requirements for the job have changed, emphasizing interest in an enforcement-related position.

Traditionally the task of a port of entry's local management, hiring now responds to national criteria and its responsibility is assumed by regional CBSA offices. Past practice favoured regional appointments. Most of the officers I met had their hiring interview at their local port of entry, generally after answering an advertisement in the local newspaper. However, with modifications to the Public Service Employment Act, which legislated on a “national area of selection for officer-level jobs”, hiring was made national and standardized in 2007.<sup>99</sup> Since then, candidates must apply in nation-wide competition and their files are assessed by CBSA regional offices through harmonized guidelines. Among these guidelines one finds no height or weight requirements but trainee officers must hold a driver's licence, a first aid and a firearm certification. While a high school diploma is also required, most mid-career and all rookie officers I met held a

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<sup>99</sup> Most of the data cited in this section is taken from interviews with officers and from the following document: Canada Border Services Program Evaluation Division Internal Audit and Program Evaluation Directorate, (2011), *Evaluation of CBSA Officer Recruitment and Port of Entry Recruit Training*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2011/poert-forpe-eng.html> (modified 11 April 2012; retrieved 23 July 2012).

college or a university degree. The next chapter explores how divergent academic credentials create conflicts over promotions in ports of entry.

Candidates must also demonstrate a willingness to accept a position anywhere in the country following the deployment model for Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers. It is generally thought that this policy is favored by the president of the CBSA, Luc Portelance, who was trained by the RCMP before he joined the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) where he spent most of his career. Interviewed officers commented that such posting should be accepted for a minimum of two years after which a recruit could file for redeployment closer to home. This new policy is intended to prevent local favoritism and corruption by detaching hiring from kinship and friendship ties. The CBSA does not have policies regarding gender and ethnicity in hiring.

The hiring procedure can be a stressful experience. It is a time consuming process and candidates can be eliminated at various stages. The official application starts with a general test of competence—the "Border Services Officer Test".<sup>100</sup> Prospective officers are first asked general arithmetic and grammatical questions. Given different cases to study and memorize before the test, they are then expected to put together the information related to a traveler and the regulations that would need to be applied in those fictional cases. If they pass this stage, recruits are then assessed for bilingualism in a separate test and interview. A security clearance must also be obtained. Aspiring officers then undergo a medical examination as well as a written psychological test and interview that evaluate

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<sup>100</sup> The information booklet on the test may be found at: <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/job-emploi/bsa-asf/bsotest-testasf-eng.html> (last modified 13 April 2011; retrieved 6 March 2012).

their capacity to carry firearms and cope with stress. At this point, applicants selected regionally attend a three-part officer training. After a waiting period during which they are required to complete 40 hours of internet-based learning about the CBSA and its mandate, they are then sent to Customs College for intensive training (now 18 weeks). Even during this phase, trainees may fail and be expelled from the hiring process. A successful Rigaud trainee can then be officially hired in a port of entry where she will receive an additional training on site.

*Cheap and temporary security labour: The Student Officer Program*

Such standardization of hiring could misleadingly suggest that border services pursue a policy of professionalization for all frontline border security employees. In fact, only a handful of those interviewed during this research project became employed by following this new official hiring process. Most of my interviewees had been hired by their local port of entry. Some had been first recruited as student officers and subsequently hired after a few summers spent at the traffic section of their port of entry or at a regional airport. The Student Border Officer Program is meant to temporarily employ students as substitutes for full-time officers during summer vacations. Student officers receive a three-week formal training and are then coached while on the job. Following recent hiring policy changes, student officers wishing to be appointed full-time are required to go through the whole process described above, including attendance at Customs College. Because the CBSA deemed the increasing presence of firearms in ports of entry a safety hazard for these temporary officers, the student officer program was terminated for land

ports of entry in 2010. It nevertheless continues for airports, sea ports and inland customs offices across Canada—which remain unarmed.

This reliance on student officers invites a critical look at labour arrangements in frontline border security, and, by extension, at border security rhetoric. During the years following 9/11 and despite a significant growth in border policing spending, barely trained, inexperienced and low-waged part-time workers have partially staffed Canadian land border crossings during vacation periods when they are at their busiest. The student officer program was often critiqued on border officers' online message boards before the removal of the program from land ports of entry. An officer expresses his concern under the well-chosen screen name Columbo: "Students have no place working as part-time, seasonally-hired, unarmed, half-trained, cut rate federal peace officers, most of whom have no desire to pursue the position further. It's a fuck of a joke, but at least one that's gotten old as of late."<sup>101</sup> Posting under the SierraSeven pseudonym, another contributor concurs: "I'd say that the reason we still have the student program is due to the fact that it is a supply of cheap labour to supplement our ranks during our peak seasons of travel. Rather than hire fully trained, full time employees, they can hire moderately trained, part-time, cheap labour to fill in the gaps. The government is behind the times on having the student program around in an enforcement agency, and are just only starting to catch up now that the number of armed officers is increasing."

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<sup>101</sup> CBSA-Student border services officers 09-10, <http://forums.blueline.ca/viewtopic.php?f=24&t=20020&start=120> (last modified Dec. 2009; last consulted 30 May 2013).

This short-term hiring of non-unionized, underpaid and, most importantly, undertrained staff has long been seen as an inexpensive solution to momentary labour shortages by border authorities. During the busiest season at the land border, there has been, and still is, a willingness to temporarily hire persons who have not undergone the intensive training now deemed essential for a border enforcement position. The student officer program raises the question of whether those in charge of border security even believe in their own enforcement narrative. At the very least, the assumption of a more standardized security following change in hiring and training procedures appears to be sometimes belied by practicality. This lack of training in some policing and security personnel should receive more attention in the context of an increased segmentation of the security labour market.

We already know that the recourse to temporary and cheap labour to perform frontline security tasks is not restricted to border operations, but to all policing and security sectors. According to O'Malley's and Hutchinson's (2007: 170), policing has long been a segmented labour market. They offer valuable insight for thinking labour arrangements in frontline border security: "we are looking at the kinds of segmented market arrangements that are characteristic of a large number of modernist industries, with a semi-monopoly, unionized, high-cost sector, and a 'competitive', non-unionized, low-cost sector". We have seen in chapter 2 that repetitive and less valued security tasks undertaken by border officers are starting to be undertaken by machines in Canadian airports. Other tasks still requiring human input, as well as temporary surges in labour needs in security organizations, are filled by temporary and/or underpaid workers (see also Berndtsson and

Stern (2011) on the privatization of security at the Stockholm airport). This trend can be seen in Canadian airports where luggage and individual searches on outbound travelers is provided by employees of private security companies subcontracted by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) crown corporation.<sup>102</sup>

By combining border control frontline officials with unequal levels of training at particular periods of the year and in specific border crossings, the student officer program speaks to the everyday practice of border control in local context. In fact, nothing in the policy prescriptions indicates the extent to which they are implemented by a segmented security labour market, to which security organizations have recourse given scarce resources and seasonal labour needs. Security policies are comprised of elements that are differently weighted, replaced or altogether discarded by those tasked with their implementation. Therefore, cases such as the Student Border Officer Program are a reminder to look beyond policy prescriptions and stated objectives and rather propose a careful analysis that juxtaposes these policies with the organizations and work practices on the ground, as well as ethnographic accounts of the latter.

### **Applying to Border Services: Multiple Motivations and Expectations**

In the literature about the professional socialization of officers, we often find the assumption that police recruits apprehend the world in ways that favor a law and order agenda and social stability while showing a preference for *esprit de corps* rather than for personal freedom: "Paramilitary organizations want new members who are prepared to

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<sup>102</sup> Unionized Securitas employees threatened a walk-out at Montreal's Trudeau airport in 2013 over their low salaries and working conditions.



submit to the intense rules and authority structure that characterize such organizations. Those who make the decision to join these organizations are also likely aware of the required limits on their individuality and liberty [...] [N]ew recruits are probably somewhat "like-minded" and prepared to embrace the values and beliefs of the organization. If they are not, they will be less likely to succeed in such environment" (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010: 190). Van Maanen (1975)—after Merton and Kitt—call "anticipatory socialization" the process through which a potential recruit becomes acquainted with the values of the organization she wishes to join before being formally hired and trained.

The various screening requirements as well as the length of the overall selection and training process at the CBSA indicate that recruits are receptive to a border enforcement mandate that was not required from experienced and mid-career officers when they were first hired at their local port of entry. This aspect brings border officer recruitment strategies closer to those characteristic of the police. However, my research actually shows that prospective border officers for land ports of entry present a variety of motivations and expectations regarding their choice of borderwork. This finding is shared by Pruvost and Roharik (2011) in the case of French police recruits. Interviewees spoke of reasons for becoming a border officer that neither contradicted—nor precisely mirrored—the official description of ideal border officer candidates provided by border authorities. In post-industrial borderlands, career choice can be explained in great part by cultural and political-economic factors, which mobilize the local in new ways.

*From watching "Cops" to the daily routine of border services*

Adopting a field-specific approach to borderwork does not imply that officers lived in a social and cultural vacuum before becoming security professionals and joining the security field. Like everyone else, recruits were exposed to heroicized depictions of policing. These widespread cultural narratives emphasize traits traditionally associated with dominant representations of masculinity such as courage, strength and risk-taking. They tell the story of an existence spent in street pursuits at the sacrifice of one's personal life and characterized by a mix of honorable conduct and occasional rule bending for the common good. Both male and female officers in interviewee could adopt the view of policing as enforcement work. Thinking about her long held wish to join a law enforcement corps, a rookie officer reflects on the influence of the crime fighting mythology characteristic of 20th (and 21st) century North American contemporary visual culture (Wilson 2000): "It [law enforcement] was something I was just always interested in when... even when I was little. You know the [television] show *Cops*? As crazy as it may seem, I just loved watching it. Absolutely loved watching it! And I thought it would be so cool to be a cop one day!".

While cop shows abound border services are more recently beginning to get their share of exposure. There was the now cancelled Canadian TV series *The Border*. In addition, based on a similar Australian program, the National Geographic reality TV show dedicated to Canadian border services, *Border Security: Canada's Front Line*, contributes to shaping this public image of borderwork as primarily enforcement-oriented. The tedious questioning of travelers goes unmentioned while TV crew film the interrogation

of the few individuals sent for secondary inspection. It follows detector dog crews (a quarter of which was cut by the 2012 federal budget),<sup>103</sup> inland officers tracking a sex offender or an immigration enforcement team on undocumented workers arrests. Importantly, only a small part of borderwork includes these tasks. While the officers' union has recommended to its members not to collaborate with the show, it has obtained full clearance by CBSA management and the Ministry of Public Safety. As mentioned in my introduction, policing organizations have become skilled at managing their public image. Reiner (2010) calls "mystifying the police" the part taken by the media and policing organizations in mixing the factual with the fictional in depictions of their activities.

But the anticipatory socialization of border officers goes beyond the symbolic force of media representations of policing. In interviews with Australian police recruits, Chan (2003) found that personal connexions and previous information gathered among police officers were as likely to influence the choice of a profession in policing—thus confirming earlier and similar results obtained by Van Maanen (1975). My interviews with officers, as well as my conversations with borderland residents whom I visited during fieldwork support Chan's findings. In addition to providing prospective candidates with factual information about their future occupation, local narratives influence rookies' expectations about what situations they might encounter at the border. For border guards who grew up in border regions, local gossip, folk tales and news construct the border as a

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<sup>103</sup> J. Smith, 2012, "Federal budget 2012: More than 1,000 job cuts at Canada Border Services Agency", Toronto Star, 12 Apr. 2012, [http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/04/12/federal\\_budget\\_2012\\_more\\_than\\_1000\\_job\\_cuts\\_at\\_canada\\_border\\_service\\_agency.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/04/12/federal_budget_2012_more_than_1000_job_cuts_at_canada_border_service_agency.html) (last accessed 15 Jun. 2013).

smuggling haven. These stories show how local residents use the border strategically for tax evasion; they are also an indication of local borderland folklore regarding the long history of cross-border smuggling touched upon in chapter 2.

My fieldwork, as well as Farfan's (2009) social history of the Quebec-Vermont borderland, confirm that the border is a common topic of conversation among local residents. Prospective officers having grown up in a border region hear accounts of alcohol and tobacco smuggling from family members and neighbours who cross the border, who know a border officer or from officers themselves. Raymond told me: "You know [when I started as an officer] I truly expected that every day, there was going to be a big drug seizure. I just did! (...) You always would hear stories about people smuggling 50 bottles of alcohol and selling them and stuff." Many interviewees but also borderland residents met during fieldwork expressed variations on this theme. A truck driver in a small border community told me of exchanging tips with local residents in order to avoid paying taxes on tires brought back from the U.S. Someone else confided that she smuggled a survivor of domestic violence across the border two decades ago. In addition, local newspapers in borderland communities publish front-page articles about the last major seizures at the local port of entry. In one of the ports I visited, one such article had been laminated and hung on the wall in the main office.

These stories also draw a picture of borderwork as constantly concerned with the taming of illegal traffics. Officers quickly realize that this image stemming from local folk tales and visual culture does not exactly match their everyday routine. Raymond thinks back to his surprise at finding out that he was not going to catch drug traffickers everyday: "So

when I started, I expected that that's what it was going to be! But it was people going shopping and wearing their clothes back or just little things like that. You know, a lot of people just going out to eat supper. It was just a very routine job." New officers discover the lonely routine of booth work, the repetitive questioning of truck drivers, the accumulating paperwork, the recurring truck inspections and compliance-based enforcement of a myriad trade regulations. Similarly, Elizabeth also had to review her conception of her work after a few months on the job:

Elizabeth: You know, I did not know much about customs. (...) So I thought that it was more "law enforcement" than what I figured out it was when I started. So I said: "In the end, it is a lot of client services".

Karine: A lot of client services. What else makes it different from enforcement?

Elizabeth: There is a lot of documentation. I didn't think that there was as much documentation regarding customs. We offer a panoply of services. (...) You know it is more about meeting regulations, all these things I would have never thought of. We have to deal with so many departments. Before working for customs, I would have never thought that all these government departments could be involved, that we applied so many laws and regulations beyond mere customs. Because, in the end, customs, it's full of laws and regulations. It is not as much "customs" as the Criminal Code, health, agriculture, environment... It is so varied. We touch on everything that comes into Canada."

Cultural representations of (cross-border) policing shape recruits' expectations about their future employment and thus contribute to recruits' anticipatory socialization. I suggest there is a growing alignment between recruits' expectations of an out-of-the-ordinary job, the CBSA's recent public portrayal of its work as a "security" organization and its own enforcement-related recruitment criteria. Yet the sociology of policing problematizes this "heroization" of police work as crime-fighting (Pruvost 2008), especially because all policing-related occupations involve an important clerical component. In a study of a U.S. police department undertaken at the end of the 1960s, Webster (1970) demonstrated that street-level officers spent more than half of their time in administrative work, and the rest mostly on traffic duties, social services and crimes against property. The importance of administrative duties in daily police work has only increased; time spent in the production of statistics and reports, including on behalf of the insurance industry, turns officers into "knowledge workers" (Ericson and Haggerty 1997). Similarly, commercial officers' routine remains primarily administrative and focused on routine questioning of truck drivers, collection of paperwork, examination of cargo manifest data as well as ensuring compliance with customs and trade regulations. Despite this daily reality of frontline commercial borderwork, many rookies and some mid-career officers speak of their role as that of "a police of the border". I have shown in chapter 4 how an enforcement outlook on borderwork has been promoted by both officers and their union as a strategy to limit their loss of influence in the security field. It is possible to add to this analysis that a configuration of representations, expectations and recruitment policy also participates in the making of this new generational approach to borderwork.

*A good, local, permanent job*

"[I was hired] in the late eighties. And employment wasn't that good. It's not like I had a desire to, you know, a childhood dream to work for customs or anything. In [Southern Ontario], there are only a few things. They have automotive, they have a big border. They were hiring at the time... And I got hired." Despite the weight of media images and local narratives in shaping recruits' expectations, Samuel, an experienced officer, reminds us of the economic considerations and strong attachment to place that motivated my interviewees to apply to work for border services. My interviews confirm the results of the CBSA's 2011 survey of recent graduates from Customs College. According to this internal survey data, only 11% of recent recruits joined the CBSA for the enforcement aspect of the job. Most respondents to this survey cited job security (33%) as having been their principal motivation for becoming border officers, 17% viewed the job as a good match between responsibilities, skills and personal interest and 13% mentioned work/life balance.<sup>104</sup> The importance given to job security in this survey is not surprising; it was cited as an important motivation by the majority of participants in my research who had grown up as borderland residents. Economic insecurity is prevalent in Southern Ontario industry towns facing de-industrialization. For instance, a former hub for the Ontario-Michigan car industry, the unemployment rate in Windsor was over 10% in 2012. It

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<sup>104</sup> Canada Border Services Program Evaluation Division Internal Audit and Program Evaluation Directorate, (2011), *Evaluation of CBSA Officer Recruitment and Port of Entry Recruit Training*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2011/poert-forpe-eng.html> (11 April 2012; retrieved 23 July 2012): 10.

remains one of the five Canadian regions with the highest unemployment rate.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, the rural areas of South-East Quebec visited during this research were experiencing the aftermath of the structural crisis in the forest industries. Borderland mills have reduced their activities, villages are shrinking and local service businesses are closing. We will see in the next chapter that experienced officers in these regions reflect on these difficulties and are more likely to envision their work as guided by economic protectionism as a result.

Limited employment opportunities outside of Canadian metropolitan cities and a structural economic uncertainty in borderland regions explain in great part why some decide to pursue borderwork. These federal service positions are coveted as they offer stable employment, social protections as well as a comfortable public service pension. Of course, working conditions can be demanding on one's health and social relations. The constant rolling of the day-night shifts on rotating schedules is wearing on sleep patterns and general health, especially for aging officers. This shift rotation makes it equally challenging for parents who need to organize daycare-nightcare for their children.<sup>106</sup> A rookie also mentioned how this scheduling instability made it difficult to develop intimate partnerships. Yet the perks associated with the job are hard to beat in a Canadian labour market that is increasingly offering contract-based, temporary, non-unionized and underpaid employment without social benefits (Vosko 2006). Many of those interviewed

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<sup>105</sup> Workforce WindsorEssex, 2013, *Windsor's Unemployment Rate 10.4%*, <http://www.workforcewindsorsex.com/archives/windsors-unemployment-rate-10-5/> (4 Jan. 2013; last consulted 2 June 2013).

<sup>106</sup> See *Jonhstone versus Canada* where a female border officer contested the rotating schedule as discriminatory on the basis of her childcare needs: <http://decisions.fct-cf.gc.ca/en/2007/2007fc36/2007fc36.html> (10 July 2012; consulted 24 July 2012).



acknowledged that somewhat privileged position in the current labour market. This was particularly the case for those officers who had grown up in working-class or farming families, those who became employed with border services after being laid off from their former workplace or those still living in communities hard hit by the economic downturn and closures in the manufacturing sector—in short, the majority of my interviewees. A rookie officer compares his lot to that of his father: “When I got in, I was on the old collective agreement and when I explained that to my father who has been a ceramic installer all his life... I was 24 years old and he said: “I never even dreamt of having that kind of working conditions”.

My research also uncovers a unique dimension to the professional socialization of border officers when compared to that of other street-level enforcement workers; namely, their attachment to place as a prime motive for becoming a border officer. In addition to their search for employment security, officers living in borderlands insisted on their wish to remain in their local communities. As mentioned above, the CBSA's most recent hiring policy requirement that prospective officers accept a posting anywhere in Canada should attract individuals willing to be displaced, at least for a few years. Therefore, it is not surprising that internal CBSA surveys do not inquire into officers' attachment to place and willingness to maintain kinship and friendship ties. Yet, while long-time employees were born and raised in the vicinity of their workplace, most officers, including rookies, still came from the immediate region or up to an hour drive away. The hiring radius expanded from local to regional but did not include inter-provincial appointments—at least in the ports I visited.

In fact, proximity to home and family was one of the major reasons cited for applying to border services by rookie, mid-career and experienced officers interviewed during this research project. Hired in the 2000s and born and raised in the region where he works, Richard aptly states this reality: "If they build a mill in town, everybody'll work at the mill, right?". Similarly, Suzanne, who was first appointed towards the end of the 1970s, recalls her hiring interview at the local port where she is still employed: "The question that I remember until now was: "Why do you wish to work for customs?" and I answered: "Because it is close to home". In order to better care for her children, she abandoned a position she loved that was an hour's drive away for work that, she confesses, she first truly disliked—she is now one of the most esteemed experienced officers in her port of entry.

To summarize, recruits' idealized view of policing as an action-packed occupation may be better aligned with new border control priorities stemming from the integration of border regulation into the security field. Yet, this promotion by security authorities of an enforcement attitude in borderwork enters into tension with the realities of the job. The recent standardization of hiring procedures and the CBSA's search for enforcement-related aptitudes should not distract us from continuities in the expectations and motivations held by applicants to border officer positions, including the importance given by recruits to economic security, kinship relations and family obligations as well as their attachment to their region.

### **Early Training**

In the words of van Maanen (1973: 408), whose classic work on police professional socialization remains an important reference, "early organizational learning is a major determinant of one's later organizationally relevant beliefs, attitudes and behaviors". Aspiring officers develop during their initial learning period the basic skills required by their workplace. They acquire technological, administrative and investigative skills, learn about the laws and regulations they are required to apply and are made aware of the principal orientations of their employer's mandate. But recruits also begin shaping a new habitus by acquiring competencies for borderwork and by slowly learning how to engage with the mindset characteristic of their new profession's occupational culture.

A major indication of the turn of officer training to law enforcement has been its recent remodelling along the police officer training model. While the professional socialization of career and mid-career officers has been primarily experiential, those hired after the creation of the CBSA in 2003 underwent a different training path that starts with Customs College located in Rigaud, Québec. While officers were formerly authorized to act as "customs officers" from the onset—that is, as soon as they were hired by a port of entry—nowadays, rookies are required to undergo quite a rite of passage; one that begins with the recruitment process and culminates with attending "Rigaud". It is only after having succeeded at this challenging and stressful academic stage of their training that border officer recruits can officially join the security field and act as official representatives of the state. This step is now marked by the successful trainee's acquisition of highly symbolic rewards reminiscent of policing work such as a navy uniform and vest, pepper spray and handcuffs as well as the licence to carry a firearm.

Through such symbolic acquisitions in this new training process, recruits learn a major lesson even before being deployed in ports of entry: their work invests them with the capacity to enforce the law.

*Fostering local work habits: when officers were hired by their ports of entry*

There is a significant difference between the type of training received by career officers and that undergone by recent recruits. Before the remodelling of hiring in 2007, experienced officers immediately started their career after having been interviewed at their local port of entry. There, they learned how to collect taxes, search cars, purses and trucks and fill out paperwork. "Customs officers" early professional socialization was characterized by on-the-job learning, the informal passing of colleagues' know-how and skill sets, as well as by the adoption of behaviours and attitudes privileged by officers and management in this particular port. Their professional socialization also relied on local port subcultures which emphasized specific aspects of the role of Canadian customs. As mentioned above, this subculture depended on officers who grew up in the vicinity of the port of entry and their knowledge of the region's history, local economic and business needs, regional smuggling habits as well as kinship ties between borderland inhabitants on both sides of the border. It was also confirmed by those mid-career and experienced officers who spoke of their ports' public service orientation while others emphasized how "their port" paid particular attention to the protection of the local economy.

After being appointed, officers could work for a few years before being sent to Customs College. An officer who attended "Rigaud" in 2001 after a year of having worked at the traffic section of her port of entry told me one of her training companions had been

employed as an officer for a whole decade. Most of her co-trainees had worked for the past three years. At Customs College, officers learned more about regulations and norms with respect to borderwork. The length of the academic part of mid-career and experienced officers' training varied according to the cohort, from 11 to 16 weeks, depending on the years when my interviewees attended the college. They divided their time between studying "international" and "commercial"—that is, between the rules pertaining to the regulation of travelers at the land border and in airports, and those controlling importations and exportations through air, marine, train and highway modes of transportation. Given the fact that immigration enforcement responsibilities eschewed to Citizenship and Immigration employees before the creation of CBSA in 2003, there was little immigration-related training at that time. An experienced officer recalls his 14-week training at the beginning of the 1990s: "First week was immigration, the rest was all customs. That's all. We got one week in immigration because, when you process the travelers on the line, you have to know some of the rules in immigration. [...] But there was no 'use of force', there was no handcuffs, nothing, when I was there. It was basically learning the tariffs and regulations".

The professional socialization of officers thus used to be mostly experiential and acquired locally; their behavior, attitudes and know-how had already been firmly established at the port of entry level before attending Customs College. Much of their professional socialization taught them to consider that a major part of their work concerned the regulation of cross-border trade, tax collection and the protection of the Canadian economy. The next chapter analyses the continued relevance and permanence of these

local and historic features in experienced and some mid-career officers' understanding of their mandate, and their implication for developing a generational approach to borderwork. Yet the change in professional socialization has not only been in the structure and content but also in the *experience* of training for new recruits.

*"It wasn't as intense as it is now": Jacob compares his college training with that of rookies*

Experienced officers all point out that attendance at Rigaud had required a lot of time away from their families. But they also recall that this part of their training was not as stressful as the one experienced by current recruits. In contrast to most police academies in North America and past practice at border services (before 2007), current recruits must now undergo formal in-class training at the CBSA's College *before* being officially hired by border services and deployed to a port of entry. Interestingly, this replicates the model privileged by the Québec Police School (*École nationale de police du Québec*) (Alain and Baril 2005). When career officers were sent to the Rigaud campus in the 1980s and early 1990s, they had the certainty that they would keep their employment regardless of their results at College and that they would be fully paid during the duration of their training. Jacob attended Rigaud after being locally hired three decades ago. He compares his experience with that of his younger colleagues:

Now, take someone who has an okay job but who's bored with it. If he wants to enroll in College, he needs to quit his job, and he receives \$125 a week. There is no guarantee he will succeed. (...) You can also fail. And then you end up with no Rigaud, no customs, no work while you had quit your old job to attend.

For us, it was completely the opposite. You did need to succeed in your course but, honestly, if I had to go today... For sure, I learn a little less fast as the young ones but I would be hard pressed to succeed in College today. [...] Those who come back from there talk about it: you really need to discipline yourself and study every evening. For us, when we went, it wasn't as intense as it is now. No, it wasn't that bad. ...Because we hear that in each training group some squarely fail. You know, they will escort you to your room then to the door and ciao bye!

All full-time officers are now required to repeat their "use of force" training at Customs College every three years. For a few days, they review restraint techniques, handcuffing and legal procedures regulating arrest. During these short sojourns, older officers interact with recruit trainees undergoing their initial academic training. Jacob speaks of the different ambiance at Rigaud compared to when he himself attended: "You see the new ones who are there. Holy cow! You go in the cafeteria and they are sitting at the table beside us and they speak only of the training. They are really concentrated on their studies. For us, let's say it was lighter than that". Most researchers of police recruits' professional socialization highlight their high level of motivation in training and as they begin working (Alain and Baril 2005; Devery 2003; Provost and Roharik 2011; Van Maanen 1975). As we shall see, Customs College now relies on different strategies to keep its recruits "on their toes" and to prompt them to adopt a policing sensibility oriented towards law enforcement.

*"Rigaud boot camp": Socializing enforcers*

Since the creation of the CBSA, the length of training at its Rigaud campus and its curriculum have been changed many times. Rookies I met during fieldwork underwent 8 to 9 weeks of training in Rigaud, but since 2013, this part of the training has been extended to 18 weeks. One of the main long-term changes concerns the emphasis on enforcement-related skills. The CBSA's Customs College follows renewed police training curriculums, developed internationally since the 1990s, that put emphasis on "cognitive and decision-making domains" (Haarr 2001: 405) and "formal training in 'subjective' features of policing" (de Lint 1998: 290). This part of the training aims at developing the successful resolution of simulated scenarios where students must show their capacity to apply their newly acquired regulatory knowledge to concrete situations. At contemporary police academies, this often means an insistence on conflict resolution and community policing—that is, partnership with the public on public safety and prevention. At Customs College, however, it relates to the acquisition of enforcement and general borderwork skills. For instance, rookie officers I interviewed described tests during which they had to recognize "indicators" of nervousness in travelers then played by professional actors.

The significance of the identification of "indicators" through face-to-face interactions to officers' professional socialization is further explored below, but it is worth underscoring that border enforcement techniques based on subjective readings of travelers' conduct are first taught in a professional training setting rather than left to experiential learning as it had in the past. Illustrating this point, De Lint's (1998: 195) unpacks the transforming



ways in which police officers are taught how to interpret suspicious conduct and to use their discretion accordingly: "While the earliest police drills worked on the habits of the body and the mind of police constables, judgment drills begin to focus explicitly on the very nomenclature of interpretation. If the body is the seat of the habits, interpretations, too, may be habituated [...]. Instead of being drilled exclusively on the body—doing holds, shooting at targets, memorizing and practicing the application of pressure points, etc., the officer is drilled on his/her interpretation of suspect behavior and her selection of use of force response". Consequently, the curriculum at Customs College now emphasizes the learning of enforcement abilities, both in the bodily and interpretive sense, or, as internal CBSA documents phrase it, how to "conduct an arrest, seizure, detention or personal search and identify the grounds for action".<sup>107</sup> In short, the current officer training curriculum presents an important enforcement skills component that was previously absent from officers' professional socialization.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to the official academic program, Customs College teaches recruits a set of unofficial lessons or what Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) call the "hidden curriculum" of police-type trainings. According to my interviews with CBSA rookie

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<sup>107</sup> Canada Border Services Agency, 2013, *Become a CBSA Officer: After you apply*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/job-emploi/bsa-asf/training-formation-eng.html#a2> (modified 16 Jan. 2013; consulted 6 Jun. 2013).

<sup>108</sup> I have already mentioned that officers are expected to be certified for firearm carrying before attending Customs College where they learn basic enforcement skills (defensive tactics, handcuffing, use of pepper spray). In addition, interviews with officers, on-the-job officer trainers and supervisors confirm that "Rigaud's" training focused until recently on airport, land and marine needs as well as basic immigration regulations and enforcement skills. This means learning the basic traveler questionnaire, how to search luggage and how to use data systems. All "commercial" (import-related) content was removed in the first version of the CBSA remodelled training, but the curriculum now includes modules on performing primary and secondary inspection for "immigration, food, plant and animal (FPA), and customs program functions".

officers, two informal features of police training appear to be duplicated at "Rigaud": the stress experienced by recruits as well as the fear of stigma and shame that accompanies failure. Nicknamed with tongue-in-cheek humour "Rigaud boot camp" by a rookie, all interviewees agreed that academic training has become more rigorous and demanding. Rookie officers speak of the fear of failure at Rigaud. Victoria, a clerk I interviewed, had wished to become an officer but failed at "Rigaud" despite her knowledge of customs regulations. She went back to being a clerk. Her case illustrates the high requirements held by the border officer training, even for those with previous work experience at the border. An officer who underwent the training in 2008 recalled that two persons failed in her class of 15-20 people while a concurrent class lost 5 students. Between 2006 and 2010, the pass rates at Rigaud have fluctuated between 77% and 88%.<sup>109</sup>

On the model of the police academy, recruits are exposed to high levels of stress. Whenever they are asked about their experience at CBSA's college, rookie officers insist on the psychological and emotional dimensions of their academic training rather than on its actual content. For some, this was associated with having to regain study habits. In contrast to the former hiring and training process that was focused on the acquisition of on-the-job work experience prior to attending Customs College, the novel training arrangement advantages those who have just completed a post-secondary degree and who still can rely on the dispositions associated with scholarly learning: the capacity to sit in

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<sup>109</sup> Canada Border Services Program Evaluation Division Internal Audit and Program Evaluation Directorate, (2011), *Evaluation of CBSA Officer Recruitment and Port of Entry Recruit Training*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2011/poert-forpe-eng.html> (modified 11 April 2012; retrieved 23 July 2012): 22.

class for long hours, the display of ingrained study and memorization habits as well as a familiarity with contemporary forms of academic testing. Interviewees having gone through the training recently mentioned that trainees who had not been in school for a while had a "really rough time".

All officers trained at Customs College in the past decade keep vivid memories of their experiences during their stay. Thomas had just graduated from university when he attended "Rigaud". He did not consider the training academically difficult but mentally challenging: "It is not difficult in terms of studying but there is the psychological level, the stress. They get all over you to see if you will break [...] I watched a lot of documentaries about army training but... I wouldn't say that it is the same... It is more about whether you will break at some point, saying: 'I can't do this anymore' [...] Rigaud, it's something. [...] You get completely out of... you become a different person during these 9 weeks. You are beside yourself". Evaluations are especially stressful moments at "Rigaud". Thomas recalls a "panic" moment: "You always doubt yourself, and then it starts turning in your head, like a hamster in its wheel. I give you an example: during the second part of the training, we had questions about immigration and... I remember, there was a wind of panic about a simulation test in our group. Everyone was asking the same question. 'No, it's not that!'. So the group was divided [about the answer] and we were one day before the test and there was no teacher because it was over the weekend".

Evaluations at "Rigaud" are comprised of a mid-term exam and a final test. The theatrics of failure at these tests is particularly humiliating and contributes to a general atmosphere

of anxiety for remaining recruits. A failed candidate is immediately sent to his room, required to collect his personal belongings and escorted out of the building. This whole process is witnessed by remaining participants. The fear of failure runs high and keeps trainees on their toes. Sarah, a rookie officer, characterized Customs College training as "stressful" and "challenging": "There's so much pressure on you" [...] You are so afraid to mess up because you don't want to get kicked out and... it's just... yeah, it's a lot of work, a lot of studying".

### **The Generational Gap in the Professional Socialization of Border Officers**

The intensification of discipline through anxiety-driven practices such as hard testing, public expulsion and the creation of stressful inner group dynamics shapes officers into border enforcers. According to Conti (2009), experiencing shame or the fear of public shaming, together with learning deference and discipline in the context of training, is essential for gaining knowledge of the dynamics of authority and subordination that recruits are expected to reproduce in their interactions with civilians. The experience of stress, fear of failure and the spectacle of shame offered by trainee expulsion from the College contribute to the production of a policing sensibility that prepares officers to exert their authority at the border. But this experience also creates a sense of social exclusivity. While others are publicly humiliated, those who stay and complete the course feel accomplishment and pride. They are confirmed in their sense of belonging to a group to which access is restricted. Conti (2009) interestingly points to how humiliation in early officer training simultaneously works as "status degradation" and "status elevation". This experience is central for a sense of belonging in the transforming occupational culture of

borderwork and, by extension, to the making of a new generational and enforcement-related approach to borderwork. Those who endure and succeed at this new training are rewarded with enforcement tools and extensive legislated enforcement powers. This turn of events contrast with that experienced by career officers. Hired by their port of entry, they were also working without much of the policing tools now accessed by officers.

A key area of discussion regarding professional socialization concerns the role that early training plays in changing police practice and culture in the long term. Studies show that the early dispositions fostered at police academy can be substantially modified by the experience of police work (see among others, Alain 2011; Haarr 2001; Van Maanen 1973). During this process, recruits adapt their habitus to fit in their new workplaces. The literature reveals the persistence of traditional views within police organizations and its consequences upon officers' field training—such as its gendered components of sense of mission, physical strength and use of force, as well as the importance given to rank and experience. These views can dissipate the community policing outlook and habits acquired at police academy. Albuquerque and Paes-Machado's (2004) work on Brazilian military police training demonstrates how hazing practices contradict any progressive changes made in formal training curriculums. Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) contend that discipline and the paramilitary nature of U.S. police training reinforces hierarchy and *esprit de corps* thus undermining lessons in community policing that promote a culture of participation with—and openness towards—the public. Others examine the growing disenchantment experienced by police officers as they become acquainted with police bureaucracy, budget cuts, legal constraints on action and complex

relations with the public (Van Maanen 1973). The disillusionment characteristic of police work, then and now, has been associated with possible "shifts in ethical standpoint" and signs of officers' isolation from the public as they become acquainted with police work (Alain and Grégoire 2008). Van Maanen (1975) has explained this disillusionment by arguing that street-policing training involves maintaining a consistency in habitus despite academic training. This consistency would ultimately elucidate the intergenerational stability of police conduct: "In large measure, the flow of influence from one generation to another accounts for the remarkable stability of the pattern of police behavior" (222).

Against this backdrop of understandings of police professional socialization, what took me by surprise was rookie interviewees's critical attitude towards their more experienced colleagues' approach to borderwork. It was also surprising to see how much weight was given to new forms of training over the experience of older colleagues. In contrast to police officers, rookies do not seem to change their understanding of what "real" borderwork should be about, challenging instead their experienced peers' generational approach to borderwork (a theme I return to in chapter 6). I suggest that it is precisely because new recruitment and early training procedures insist on border workers' enforcement mandate that such policing attitudes are likely to be maintained by officers once in the field. Both formal and informal aspects of recruitment academic training are now more aligned with officers' prior expectations regarding their future career. This is, I suggest, the principal moment when the gap between two generational approaches to borderwork begins to emerge.

### **Examination as an Acquired Practice**

We have now reached the moment when officers take up their posts, either by having successfully passed Customs College (the case for current rookie officers) or by having been hired directly by a port of entry (the case for mid-career and experienced interviewees). From this point on, officers' professional socialization unfolds into a variety of experiences depending on where they start their careers. Officers may be hired by a small port of entry in a remote region or by a major port in an urban area. They may work close to home and thus be acquainted with the region and its residents, or be relocated for their first assignment. In addition, whether an officer begins her career in "traffic" or in "commercial" depends on the approach taken by local "chiefs of operation" (the main managers of a port of entry). Traditionally, the traffic section is considered the unofficial training school for rookies and it is still the case in many ports. After a few years and depending on seniority, officers may apply to transfer to the "immigration" or "commercial" sections if positions open up. But in ports where local management now prefers developing a specialized workforce trained in the particulars of customs and trade compliance work from inception, rookies are directly hired as "commercial" border officers.

A key area of importance in rookies' field training consists in sharpening their interviewing skills and learning how to conduct traveler examinations. Becoming skilled at evaluating "behavioral indicators of risk", unmasking nervousness or falsehood and assessing whether travelers come up with what can be deemed a believable narrative lies at the core of border guards' occupational identity. As demonstrated by Foucault's (1976) study of confession as a technology of power/knowledge, and Hahn's (1986) work on the

modern institutionalization of confession, interrogation brings about a series of procedures, strategies and techniques through which individuals reveal their identity and motives for crossing the border. For state institutions, this revealing process supports activities of identification and classification of individuals, as well as the regulation of populations. In other words, there exists an "inegalitarian configuration" inherent to the "general economy of the interrogation" (Proteau 2009b). Those who interrogate are authorized to exert symbolic violence (not to speak of occasional emotional and even physical violence) over the interrogated, who, in turn, may experience anxiety, coercion, intimidation and even humiliation.

Examinations at the border are inevitably subject to this hierarchical dynamic between representatives of the state and those they question. As evinced by Salter (2008: 58) in his analysis of face-to-face encounters between border officials and travelers, the "confessionary complex" in border spaces allows for opportunities to examine status (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity, citizenship) but also to evaluate the travelers' character. He writes that, "the border represents an important site of examination for criminal, sexual, class or labor-related deviance and the master deviance in international relations: the nature of mobility. In the border examination there is a questioning of our narratives of travel and belonging, which is adjudicated solely by the 'customs' agent of the sovereign. [...] It is this predisposition, this training toward unconditional, uninterrupted, and exhaustive confession of the traveler upon which the technique of listening at the border rely".



Here, I actively engage with Salter's suggestion that interrogation at the border is learned, therefore approaching *examination as an acquired practice*. Indeed, as we accept the above sociological reading of the dynamics of interrogation, we are left with the question: how do security professionals *learn* to initiate examinations, to ask questions, to read body language in order to assess "risk"? How are they taught to become suspicious of some mobility patterns, conducts, attitudes, social statuses and appearances while trusting others? Similar to the interrogation practices of police officers (Proteau 2009a), learning how to conduct face-to-face evaluations of travelers is a gradual process—its techniques both transmitted by formal training, between colleagues exchanging tips but also in the form of an experiential know how with its own logic of practice. We will see in the next chapter that interviewing and the ability to read "indicators" receive different generational valuation as investigative techniques in ports of entry. However, there is a continuity in the way experienced, mid-career and rookies testify to having learned these skills. Examination is presented as a craft that has to be honed and refined for years in order to be fully incorporated into the professional habitus of border guards.

*"The backbone of our job is that interview": the role of experience*

A recent recruit I interviewed opined that the teaching of decision-making (mainly to release a driver or send her to secondary inspection) at Rigaud lacks the nuances found on the job: "When a border officers takes decisions, it's every time... discretionary. How they teach it there [at Rigaud], it is more set in stone." Officers expressed that time and experience were the main teachers of good interviewing skills. In fact, learning how to interview has not much changed since Gilboy (1991: 577) wrote that airport border

officers "chiefly learn how to make decisions by 'working the line'". But the literature on decision-making at the border leaves unmentioned the ways in which officers differentially acquire interviewing skills depending on the groups of travelers they encounter. The reality of the job and the diversity of travel experiences require a variety of knowledges and methods deployed by officers conducting interviews at the primary inspection line.

Similar to airports, those who start at the traffic section learn the ropes of interviewing after encountering travelers with diverse backgrounds during repetitive hours of booth work. Later, they might spend a few years working immigration, exploring a wide-range of interviewing techniques. But those officers starting their career at the commercial section directly after their "Rigaud" training might not become as proficient in these skills. This can happen for a number of reasons. On the one hand, shipments and carriers are often pre-cleared, reducing opportunities for inquiries about the commodities that are about to enter the country. On the other hand, truck drivers constitute a more routine group of border crossers with predictable patterns of travel; they are generally familiar with border regulations and willing to respect them in order to keep themselves employed—a cross-border truck driver with a bad customs dossier is an unemployed driver. This routine is less likely to produce the variety of interviewing situations encountered by officers at the traffic and immigration sections.

This uneven terrain for acquiring interviewing skills is compounded by port of entry specificities. Some ports, generally small ones, do not include a separate immigration or

commercial section. In those ports where there is no division of labour between commercial and traffic work, officers tend to become more generalists than specialists. Border crossers also differ depending on the port of entry. Small rural ports of entry often see locals whom officers have searched on many occasions and even sometimes know by name. In big ports, some familiarity with truck drivers may be found since many truck drivers take established routings and may frequently cross the border at the same port—but such familiarity is not extended to general travelers with less frequent traveling habits.

A mid-career officer reflects on the ways he developed his interviewing abilities during the few years he spent working at the immigration section of his port of entry and compares them to those one learns while working "commercial":

Officer: "Well your interview skill gets better. I can truly say that the immigration aspect, I really think that a lot of our new people should start there only because if you don't have good interview skills, then you can't make cases because that's what a lot of your evidence is. If you believe somebody is working here unlawfully, you say: "So you work here illegally?" and the guy says "No" and you got nothing back and you got nothing to go forward with...you're pretty much done, right?"

Where customs is a little bit different because you're looking more for commodity based issues or tangible issues, I guess. And that being said it's like ok, well... if there's a gun here, if there's drugs here, it's going to be here. The guy can't say

something and it's going to disappear or it's not like I have to talk it out of the person, I can still go locate it. So you do have other options. Whereas immigration a lot of the time is ok... you do get some evidence but the vast majority of your evidence is done on this... this interview style.

Karine: Ok. So they teach you at immigration more interviewing skills than they would here...?

O: Not so much that they teach you, it's just a matter of picking it up over time because you do so many more interviews. I guess when you're in the primary [in the booth], let's say you get 30 trucks an hour, are you doing 30 interviews? Yes, technically, but how in depth are you going with that interview?

Whereas immigration, when... somebody shows up in front of you in there for the secondary, so you know the interview is going to be a lot more, I guess, than just cursory. You're actually going to go into some little more depth: "Where are you going? Where are you from?". Not that you wouldn't ask those things out in the booth but you're looking for more specifics, more details, because you want to make sure that they don't fit into a category of inadmissibility, so...

K: Ok. So what kind of details are you looking for in immigration that you would not look for in commercial? I'm trying to do comparisons in between...

O: In commercial... in commercial it's more "Ok, what are you bringing across? Is the entry done? Is the paperwork completed?". Things of that nature.

[In immigration] it's things like work permits. That's always... it's pretty much going to be the most common one... "are you working here without a permit?". "What are you coming up to do?", "Does your job constitute work?". If it constitutes work, and it actually turns out that it is work, does it fit under a criteria? Work without permit? Are you a NAFTA applicant ? If you're a NAFTA applicant or if you're coming through the NAFTA program, do you need a labour market opinion? So, in some categories, you don't need a labour market opinion, ok. And if you do need a labour market opinion, then it's a matter of ... ok, now let's say you throw a curve ball in there, the guy turns out he has criminality, so now it's a matter of ok, do you have to give the person a temporary resident permit to overcome the criminality, is it worth it ? Is it essential that this person is here ? (...) The backbone of our job is that interview and those... those indicators you see of the client. That is the core of what we do."

Paul, an experienced officer, reflects on how he honed his interviewing skills in order to be able to distinguish "good" from "bad" nervousness, including the following strategies: playing with the line of questioning in order to reduce the nervousness felt by travelers when they approach uniformed security personnel; separating those who drive together (truck drivers sometimes co-drive at two or three per truck, or they may be accompanied by a family member); developing "people skills" by working with the public and keeping a controlled attitude that refrains from triggering unnecessary nervousness. These embodied and affective abilities take years to polish and cannot possibly be taught in a nine-week college training. Paul recounts:

Paul: People are all nervous, everyone has a certain nervousness. But someone like me with more experience will be able to play with people`s nervousness. It is really easy to have a good idea sometimes. People who show up at the border are well prepared because they think that if they are together and if we ask all kinds of questions, well, they will find the answer together. But the person who wishes to lie well (...). You know, you prepare yourself [as a traveler] you build a story: "Ok, we say that we have been there 48 hours but we have only been there 24 hours"<sup>110</sup> and when you get to customs, well the two of them expect to be questioned together. Because they are in their environment, their car. But if you take them out of their environment, it will destabilize them. If you question them individually they will say: "Hey, which question did he ask you? Is it the same answer?". That way, you will often get the truth without having to open a luggage. (...)

And nervousness, well, it's natural. There is good and bad nervousness. I am used to work with the public so I will speak to people of something else. I will go over my questionnaire but [I will also ask]: "Where have you been? Did you see animals on the road?". I will get out of my usual line of questioning in order to decrease natural nervousness then I will come back with my more serious questions and if the nervousness comes back, then, it is an indicator for me. So playing with people's nervousness, it is a good way to work.

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<sup>110</sup> Officers often mentioned the 48 hours rule in their interviews. This is the minimum time one has to spend outside of the country to see her traveler's duty-free allowance on alcohol, tobacco and personal merchandise increased.

But if you can't even talk to people, if you don't have the aptitude to approach them, you will make them nervous. You can't be part of the problem, you can't show up with a menacing face. Everyone would be even more nervous. To the contrary, you have to be a person in control to get this bad nervousness to diminish, and then you can rebuild it because if you have something to hide, then it will show.

Karine: Good technique! Who teaches this here? Do you see this in Rigaud or is it only... [*he points at himself*]. Ok. It is a personal technique.

P: Yes, yes, yes. Well, it is the experience that speaks a bit. In Rigaud, it is a college, they have questions to ask and it is tic, tic, tic [*he raps on the table*].

My conversations with officers were a constant reminder that interviewing remains a craft learned over years of practice, with its trials and errors, performed within a work environment that impresses upon officers a logic of suspicion. Acquiring proper interviewing skills was seen as invaluable assistance in "catching bad guys", in ensuring compliance with taxation, trade and customs regulations and, more generally, in catching drivers who tell "lies". But with the irregularity experienced by rookie officers in field training opportunities, officers are not all created equal when it comes to their capacity to interview a traveler or a truck driver. Both officers quoted above developed individualized interviewing skills by working "immigration" and "traffic" for part of their careers. The former's "interview style" better reflect the in-depth nature of immigration interviewing and resembles the type of interrogation abilities acquired by police detectives (learning "how to talk it out of the person" or becoming skilled at "throwing

curve balls"). The latter insisted on being able to differentiate between forms of nervousness in order to produce accurate assessments.

In contrast, rookie "commercial" officers may have recourse to material props: shipment manifests indicating pick-up locations, drivers' log books listing hours spent on the road and routing, driver preclearance FAST cards indicating that basic criminality checks have been made, and finally, the content of the trailer/truck as well as those of the driver's cab. In addition, the role of the "commercial" border officer interview concerns not only the assessment of the truck driver but the evaluation of shipments for trade compliance and for the potential presence of smuggled tobacco and alcohol or trafficked commodities (e.g. drugs, counterfeit goods). We have seen in chapter 3 that all officers, whether working commercial, traffic or immigration, can rely on intelligence data, existing risk assessments and targeting on importers, carriers and drivers to carry out their interviews. But they also learn to look for what border authorities call "indicators".

*Learning to recognize "indicators"*

Richard: It all depends. Everybody kind of puts value into their own indicators differently. And that's kind of the key. No two officers are really the same. Something that you might think is a big deal "Hey, this guy's pulling his ear », this guy is answering a question in a manner that they don't find fitting, he's maybe overly nervous, or overly chatty, right ? That's one you see often. This driver is overly chatty ! Why are they overly chatty ? Well, they've been driving by themselves for about three days...They haven't talked to anybody.



Karine : Yes, there's that ! All drivers are chatty ! I did interviews with drivers...  
oh my gosh !

R: Yes, they listen to the banter on the CB radio and it's just... interesting to say the least, it's just sometimes... « I just want to talk to anybody ! ». And it's a matter of... « Ok but leave my booth ! Just go ! Just stop ! I don't care what's going on... ». And it's like you don't want to be rude, you want to be kind of polite, you want to be professional and at the same time it's like... I just want you to go ! Please ! Just go ! And again some people say that's a great indicator. And some people say... well excuse me, that's not a great indicator.

My interviewees spent an important part of their professional socialization practicing how to recognize indicators. Whether prompted to this effect or not, their interviews were replete with descriptions of how they could differentiate between a border crosser "telling the truth" or "lying" to them. As they become experienced in interviewing, officers develop a sensibility for travelers' body language and speech. Through this practical learning period, they develop distinctive understandings of human behavior, intentions and emotions. They also perfect what Salter (2008) calls "techniques of listening" through which officers explore how to attend to verbal and narrative cues.<sup>111</sup> Examining border crossers for indications of deception and nervousness thus make for a subtle craft. It does not come as a surprise that officers sometimes disagree on what constitutes a good indicator of nervousness, which itself could suggest deviance. For instance, a nervous

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<sup>111</sup> Here, Salter is probably inspired by Foucault's considerations on how an "art of listening" as a technology of the self first developed during Greek and Roman Antiquity and aiming to unmask truth, falsehood and dissimulation.

traveler may be a lying traveler. But not always. This variability is at the centre of officers' discretionary power and points to interviewing skills as a highly idiosyncratic learning process.

But what exactly is an "indicator"?<sup>112</sup> In her short article published in the border officers' union magazine, a "deception detection" trainer speaks to the myriad of physical, verbal and emotional signs (behavioral, tone-related and statement-based indicators, nervousness, micro-facial expressions and "gut feeling") officers learn to interpret as indications of nervousness, falsehood or that they use as a way to sense immediate danger: "The average Customs Officer has 30 seconds to peruse and verify documents, to look at and listen to the person they are interviewing, to detect deception and determine the admissibility of that person into Canada. [...] So here is the question: How do we learn to improve our skills in detecting deception? What tools do we now have in our toolbox, and what tools can we acquire in the future that will allow better detection within those 30 seconds?"<sup>113</sup>

Border authorities' reliance on indicators stem from an odd combination of teachings regarding how to read body language and pay attention to speech. Officers learn to recognize signs of nervousness and deception in Customs College and in short formal training courses they may attend throughout their careers. Some of these lessons are taken

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<sup>112</sup> Pratt (2009: 468) details particularly well the categories of behavior viewed by border authorities to constitute "indicators": bodily (sweating, rapid blinking, dress, alcohol smell) conduct-based (fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, tapping fingers nervously on the steering wheel), verbal (tremor in the voice, stuttering) and non-physical (bulky shirt as a sign of concealment), and narrative (inconsistencies in answers).

<sup>113</sup> D. Brown, 2008, "You have 30 seconds", Customs Excise Union Douanes Accise Magazine, Winter 2008.

from social psychology, neuro-linguistics and from what the deception detection trainer quoted above calls "cultural interview training", that is a more or less essentialist sensitivity to difference boiled down to paying heed to cultural variety in body language.<sup>114</sup> Officers may learn these lessons and look for "how intent transitions into a visceral mode of anticipation" (Adey 2009: 281). The search for malevolent border crossers is based on the assumption that their putative fear of getting caught may be perceived in their movements, micro-facial expressions and verbal features. This expert language circulates among security personnel and between security organizations. One of my interviewees had been trained by American security professionals in behavioral observation and profiling, a set of techniques inspired by studies of micro facial expressions led by the psychologist Paul Ekman (whose work was the inspiration for the television show *Lie to Me*). According to my interviewee, these trainers had themselves been taught by Israeli border security trainers who are known for their expertise in the transnational security community. Following these seminars, trainees reintegrate into their workplaces and can offer their own interpretation of these teachings to their colleagues.

It is this combination of experiential know how, lay understandings of science as capable of producing objective and actionable facts about human behavior, the circulation and

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<sup>114</sup> To quote this trainer further: "Many years ago, when I first joined Customs, a senior Customs Officer told me that if people don't look into his eyes when he is questioning them, he automatically becomes suspicious of that person and is sceptical about their truthfulness. We've learned a lot since then. We have a much better understanding of cultural difference. We have research-based analysis that suggests that if eye contact is not made nor maintained, the person being interviewed may not necessarily be dishonest. Cultural interview training, as well as keeping up on more modern and scientifically researched interview techniques, keeps our Officers up to date and gives them the ability to recognize truly deceptive behaviour."

inevitable remodelling of these knowledges within local security communities, coupled with the higher level of discretionary power granted to frontline border officials, that makes officers' decision-making so problematic at the border. It is worth quoting Pratt (2009: 462) at length on this issue:

Whereas traditionally the standard of 'reasonableness' has worked to authorize commonsense knowledge in judges and juries, in the context of frontline border control the standard of reasonable suspicion strains to justify itself in rational/scientific terms by reference to objective and reliable risk indicators as defended by border control 'experts' but also, and centrally, by reference to the judgement of customs officers as constituted by their training and experience. This privileging of 'trade knowledge' (...) in the constitution of reasonable suspicion importantly complicates the traditional distinction between rational-scientific expert knowledge and the everyday knowledge flagged by the concept of 'reasonableness' that has always been crucial to the common law.

I now wish to add to this valuable insight. If the ability to distinguish indicators is primarily based on experiential learning, *different levels of experience* can be encountered in ports of entry. This is of particular concern since Canadian border services have hired hundreds of new officers in the past decade, and continues to do so in order to compensate for employee turnover (those who quit or obtain promotions). As recruits differentially learn interviewing skills and how to recognize indicators while on the job, they may not be able to make strong cases for criminal investigations, immigration admissibility decisions and court proceedings. In fact, in an internal audit about its

training programs, port of entry managers report that "poor note taking, inadequate interviewing skills and poor evidence handling by BSOs [border services officers] have resulted in the CBSA being unsuccessful in admissibility hearings and criminal investigations as the evidence provided was not able to withstand legal challenges".<sup>115</sup>

While the standard of "reasonable suspicion" is lower at the border, it remains a standard; faulty decision-making can also impact the legal standing of border decisions in courts.

Officers first become acquainted with indicators at Customs College. They are first taught without the more nuanced hints officers say they are called upon to interpret while at work. Richard explains the difference between what is learned in college and the reality of booth shifts:

We call them "Rigaud indicators". Because when you go to college, the indicators are blatant. Let's say you have an indicator in the person who does like, an ear pull.... I'm nervous. So I'm talking to you and I might be pulling out my ear, right? Well it might just be this, or it might just be like this. [*he mimics slight, subtle touch to the ear*]. Right? But Rigaud it's like... [*he mimics exaggerated pulling of his ear; we both laugh*]. They want you to see it and eventually it's starting... it starts to evolve. It's like... Ok. Ok, you notice that. Ok, ok, that might be something. Something you may gage, right?

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<sup>115</sup> Canada Border Services Program Evaluation Division Internal Audit and Program Evaluation Directorate, (2011), *Evaluation of CBSA Officer Recruitment and Port of Entry Recruit Training*, <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/agency-agence/reports-rapports/ae-ve/2011/poert-forpe-eng.html> (modified 11 April 2012; retrieved 23 July 2012): p.12.

Like the ability to recognize whether someone is "lying", learning to "trust" travelers and truck drivers as well as one's own risk assessment skills similarly evolves as an officer becomes more experienced. Rookies are more likely to apply "Rigaud Indicators" to behavioral readings of truck drivers but also to be more suspicious of border crossers in their enthusiastic efforts to do their job well. It is useful to compare this mid-career officer's thoughts on how he approached deception when he first started working at the border and the impact of experience on his ability to trust border crossers, with those of a rookie who discusses his use of indicators because truck drivers can "lie about everything":

Richard: If I look back and see myself now compared to seeing myself back then, well the experience... You obviously feel better about how you handle situations, but I just think... just a little more responsible, and not that I was really negligent or reckless but back then it was like ok, you'd fire in anybody who was even remotely suspicious. But when you first start, everybody's suspicious cause you're like... You don't trust anybody! Right [*smile in voice*]? And eventually, you kind of grow and learn and eventually... I guess you'd say you evolve, your skill gets honed, you learn about ... how to categorize people from people and do better risk assessments.

Sarah: Maybe [the truck driver] is a little nervous, but nervous could be something for contraband as well, like, you know, just those... You can hear it in their voice, they're stuttering, or they're shaking a little or they just look nervous

or doing those repetitive motions like, you know, tapping on their steering wheel and all those things that you learn in Rigaud...

Karine: OK! You've learn that. You learn these things.

S: That stuff, you do and that can apply [...]. And then, for example, alcohol or tobacco. Just recently the... The guy had gone to [nearby U.S. city], which isn't far, and told the primary inspection officer that he had been gone for two days, which is the minimum allotment to bring back alcohol without paying duties or taxes. And, yeah, he had some ridiculous story about why he was actually there for two days. Because there was no reason why he should be there for two days if he's just going to [U.S. city]. So he didn't have his log book available, which is one indicator, so you can't say "Oh, well it really shows you've been gone one day".

And just the stories as well, if they're really strange stories or if they're contradicting themselves, and ... yes, this officer was just: "Can you just take a look in his cab? Because, I think he's lying and, whatever". So sure enough, I found a receipt from the duty free going into the U.S., from only about a day before, so it shows he was in Canada, 24 hours before, even though he said he was gone for two days. Stuff like that, you know. It's not this big of a deal but, they'll lie about everything. Everything.

Interestingly, an experienced officer suggested his interviewing skills and effective use of indicators provides him with better enforcement statistics than those of rookies. Arthur

compares his skills in this domain with the lack of proficiency with indicators he sees displayed by a younger colleague—even suggesting, later on, that his opinion on his colleagues’ interviewing skills and their reading of indicators influences his willingness to be more or less thorough with inspections of trucks that are sent to him for secondary inspection.

Arthur: Well... the old training... It works. Indicators work. Example: there’s a young lady here (...). She’ll send in [many] trucks a day because she doesn’t believe anybody, even though she does not have good interview techniques. (...) I’ll send in five trucks in one week. And I’ll get two seizures because I interview properly and the indicators worked. Big difference! I have more stats than her but she sends in ten, twenty, thirty times more trucks than me. It’s important.

Karine: Really? Ok. So that means all these trucks have to be really checked. Properly, right? And it’s a lot of work.

A: A lot of work on something that... the indicator wasn’t there. So now, after you do 500 trucks from this person...and she sends in a good one...are you doing the same job as you are with somebody else who only sends in five trucks?

K: Maybe not.

A: Right.

K: Because you don’t believe that you will find something?

A: Well not... when you look: “Ah... her again! What is she doing?” right?



K: Hmm. I see.

A: So it's important. To know the officer who sends them in, too.

K: It gives you an... it's an indicator of...

A: It's an indicator of how well the interview went! [*Laughs*] (...) So on my first weeks here [working at the commercial section after being transferred from "traffic"]... or first months here, I send a truck in...And the guy says: "The officer...". He looked at my badge number [*on the refer to inspection form*] and he says: "Arthur probably asked you twice so you don't have to pull that crap on me." The guy says "Ok, he did". See, I always give somebody a second chance. Before I send him in.

K: And your colleagues know that?

A: My colleague knows and he says "No, I've seen his interviews", yeah. "He asked every question, sir". So they know.

Another senior interviewee offered a similar comment about his distrust of one of his colleague's interviewing skills, confirming that himself and other colleagues paid less attention to her referrals than to those whose detection skills he trusted (note that in both cases, these male officers doubted the enforcement competencies of female colleagues). In this way, peer evaluations of interviewing abilities along generational (and possibly gendered) lines have an impact on enforcement and customs-related decision-making.

Blending years of experiential learning, lay interpretations of scientific findings and formal technical teachings about how one can access the meaning of human behavior, affect and speech by reading a persons' body and voice, examination is an acquired practice located at the core of all frontline border officers' professional socialization. However, differences in field training experiences and individual officers' development of idiosyncratic interviewing techniques point to the variability of interpretations possible for signs of deception, truth and nervousness during face-to-face interactions between officers and border crossers.

### **Learning to Work “Commercial”: An Imperfect Case of Intergenerational Cooperation**

Canada has entered into a myriad of regional and bilateral free trade agreements with a number of countries (among others, U.S. and Mexico 1994, Chile 1997, Israel 1997, Panama 2010, Columbia 2011) or is currently negotiating with others (such as the European Union). While this transformation in the trade environment brings about a lessening of the tax collection role traditionally attributed to customs, there is a wide-range of activities that fall to customs. Accordingly, training to become a commercial officer is challenging. Trainee commercial officers are taught on-site to search trucks, trailers, truck cabs and merchandises in order to find hidden compartments, concealed drugs, illicit merchandise and firearms. In some ports, a rookie also learns how to operate a VACIS truck—that is, an x-ray vehicle that allows a rapid scanning of a trailer's contents without emptying it. In other ports, he trains to inspect small commercial

shipments imported by courier companies in a warehouse attached to—or located nearby—the commercial section.

In addition to adapting their enforcement skills to customs work, officers must become comfortable in customs' administrative and technological environment. A new commercial officer familiarizes himself with major customs forms and learns to release shipments electronically on ACROSS (Accelerated Commercial Release Operations Support System), the main customs database. He gets acquainted with a number of trade, environmental, agricultural and health regulations that he is required to enforce on behalf of a variety of federal ministries and agencies. While working at the commercial section, one can become skilled at recognizing counterfeit goods, the lumber species that necessitate a permit to enter the country or the type of fish and diet pills prohibited from importation. All customs regulations, policies and procedures are reviewed and explained in d-memoranda, enclosed in more than 20 thick volumes of detailed customs regulations. Designed primarily for commercial officers, "d-memos" explain customs regulations relating to topics such as warehousing, couriers, imports and taxation.<sup>116</sup> Diane, a seasoned officer, recalls an anecdote that speaks to the complexity of this regulatory knowledge a commercial officer must acquire and continues to accumulate throughout her career: "And sometimes we have to refer back because they change policy and procedures. So sometimes there are certain things... you want to ensure the direction you're taking is correct, so you go back to your d-memos. And we have a huge volume of

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<sup>116</sup> The complete list of customs-related d-Memoranda can be found at: <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/dm-md/menu-eng.html> (last modified 31 May 2012; last consulted 5 June 2012).

directives so... It's funny! A lady had come down one time from Transport Canada (they were doing a project with us) and so she says "I brought all my directives with me"... and it was just a volume! We have twenty-one... well actually twenty-two like that!"

Working at the commercial section also requires a basic knowledge of the harmonized system nomenclature (HS codes), an international customs tariff classification scheme for importations overviewed by the World Customs Organization linking each legally traded commodity to a 10-digit code. Ninety eight percent of all international trade is classified through this system.<sup>117</sup> The first 6 digits are internationally recognized classifications for commodities, the next two digits itemize the object, and the last two are for statistical purposes. These four last digits are specific to the importing country. Canada's classification system includes about 10,000 HS codes.<sup>118</sup> Beyond accumulating trade-related statistics, this classification system aims at designating countries of origin for imported products. This allows applying appropriate duties and taxes or establishing preferential treatment in cases where Canada entered a free trade agreement with the origin country. While customs officers do not memorize every single HS code, they familiarize themselves with those applying to the type of commodities that cross their port most regularly. The busier the port, the more a commercial officer needs to learn about health and environmental regulations as well as HS classifications.

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<sup>117</sup> World Customs Organization, *Overview: What is the Harmonized System?*, [http://www.wcoomd.org/home\\_hsoverviewboxes\\_hsharmonizedsystem.htm](http://www.wcoomd.org/home_hsoverviewboxes_hsharmonizedsystem.htm) (consulted on 26 July 2012).

<sup>118</sup> Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, *Harmonized System Codes: A Primer for Exporters*, <http://www.international.gc.ca/canadexport/articles/120224a.aspx?view=d> (last modified 26 July 2012; consulted on 7 August 2012).

Despite such complexity, the rookie officers I met had received no commercial-based training during the time they spend at Customs College—with the exception of basic food, plant and agricultural inspection. As the hiring and formal training at Rigaud emphasizes law enforcement and security-related knowledge and practices, officers who successfully complete the program are little prepared to proceed with the administrative routine of customs work. A new commercial border officer shadows an experienced one for a number of hours depending on the port—interviewees cited between 300 and 500 hours. According to Denis, who taught such courses, officers can obtain commercial training during a separate sojourn at Customs College after they have received a posting. None of my interviewees mentioned undertaking in-class training in their port-of-entry.

Therefore, the first few weeks on the job can be overwhelming for those rookie officers who are appointed to a commercial section just after succeeding at “Rigaud”:

Officer: They just paired me up with somebody and I would follow them out to the primary inspection line where I observed how they asked questions and do all the paperwork, and uh...everything. Everything inside, from paperwork to examinations, I would just see how they did things, because the problem is that... Rigaud was great. However, it doesn't teach you about commercial operations. So this is a completely different job from what I learned in Rigaud. So all of the paperwork was completely new to me, the computer system was new, everything was new.

Karine: You had not seen ACROSS...

O: No. No. So, it was just like... it was scary! It was overwhelming! There was so much new information and... and after, just taking in nine weeks of information [at Customs College] and thinking that you were going to be well to apply it, and not really being able to apply it, that was... that was tough. But, you'll still learn something new every day and... But I'm glad I'm here, it's a good job.

*Career officers: the institutional memory of ports of entry*

The task of training new commercial officers in the particulars of customs-related borderwork is left to those who spent most of their careers at the commercial section. Commercial field training is highly dependent upon port-specific organizational culture, norms and processes, as well as on its local institutional memory. But more importantly for my exploration of intergenerational relations in ports of entry, it is the instance where intergenerational cooperation and mutual support has been most visible during my research. Field training provides an opportunity to transmit to new cohorts of officers locally tested work methods. Career officers who take on the training of rookies do it as a matter of pride. A supervisor complained that recruits arrive at ports of entry barely trained in what he considered to be basic officer skills:

They don't search vehicles. We have to train them in the field, here. This is why when they get here, they don't know how to ask questions. They don't know how to search a vehicle in secondary. [...] I asked the question to [another supervisor in another port]: "Is it still like that?". He said: "We try to have this changed. They have seen a luggage, a hand bag, clothing but, what they do is they get the piles of

clothing out." But search a truck, search a vehicle [...] they don't do any examination of vehicles. We have to re-train them here. [...]

So we have to work with them to ask questions, listen to the answers, show them how to complete documents, how to search a vehicle in secondary. When they get out after 9 weeks they are... You can't let them loose. When they arrived in the offices and I said: "There is a vehicle". A rookie said: "Well, which questions do we ask". I said: "What? You have been—it was during the time when it was 11 weeks of training at Rigaud—I said you have been 11 weeks at Rigaud and they did not show you how?" "No". Holy cow, my jaw literally unscrewed. I told the other supervisor: "We have to do it all over again with them". [*sigh*]. I said: "What do they teach them during 9 weeks there?" I pull out my hair! Legislations, books and theory, its good but...

New commercial officers express their unmitigated reliance on their experienced colleagues when it comes to managing the intricacies of trade regulations. Many queries emerge out of practical problems to which junior officers are confronted daily: How do I process this exotic commodity? How do I assess the value and applicable duties on this antique object or this piece of art? How can I use this advanced feature in the ACROSS database? This commodity is under specific health regulations, but this carrier is part of a trusted trader program, so how do I handle this case? The supervisor quoted above speaks of these moments when enforcement-trained rookies stare blankly at their senior colleagues, wondering what to do with a challenging customs case. The supervisor adds:

"Older officers are a safety net when rookies are confronted with a situation. So, when it is not related to law enforcement, they wonder: "Ok, but how do we treat this?" That is when the older officer, with more experience, is able to say: "Look, I'll show you. Those are horses. Horses, they can't come in for more than 72 hours". Oh, wow! All of a sudden, they found that older officer interesting. They listen to him religiously, because they had no idea." Experienced officers find themselves providing guidance with databases, mentoring rookies in their inspection and interviewing skills, answering queries about trade regulations or correcting the occasional mistakes made by their rookie colleagues in filling out customs forms or releasing shipments on ACROSS.

Nevertheless, intergenerational cooperation is favored or impeded depending on a port's specific configuration. In Windsor, the transmission of customs-related skills, knowledge of regulations and familiarity with commercial databases is rendered particularly difficult by a mix of infrastructural issues and union politics. With 28% of the road trade border crossings between the two countries, Windsor's three ports of entry (the Ambassador Bridge, the Detroit-Windsor tunnel and the truck ferry especially geared for trucks carrying dangerous materials) is the most important commercial port in Canada in terms of traffic and volume.<sup>119</sup> In Windsor, trucks referred for secondary inspection are sent to the commercial section. But, unlike any other Canadian port, this section is located 7 km away from the actual land border. This is a specific infrastructural arrangement resulting from the lack of space around the Ambassador Bridge, a private holding of the Detroit

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<sup>119</sup> Transports Canada, 2010, *Transportation in Canada 2010. Addendum*, p.A10. [2012, http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/policy/report-aca-anre2010-index-2700.htm#pdf](http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/policy/report-aca-anre2010-index-2700.htm#pdf) (last consulted 7 August 2012).



International Bridge Co., which is currently opposing both Canadian and Michigan's government plan to build a new bridge. This arrangement would regroup customs services under one location, but for now, local customs authorities must make do with split customs infrastructures. When sent for inspection or to deal with missing paperwork, referred truck drivers are escorted by border services cars through the streets of Windsor to the off-site customs office. There, trucks may be inspected and drivers may find clerical support as well as customs brokerage services.

Consequently, this particular division of customs labour means that at the bridge, commercial officers do not learn to perform secondary inspections and do not have to solve problem cases that are sent to the main office. The problems this infrastructural divide creates for the field training of commercial officers in Windsor are compounded by the dynamics of local union politics. Not every port negotiates its collective agreement the same way. In Windsor, line choice (the preferred shift and work location) is seniority-based. Aging officers tend to choose the off-site commercial section, which is seen as a quieter and less stressful place to work. Those officers with less seniority—and senior officers preferring to work traffic—are appointed to lines at the Ambassador Bridge and the Windsor-Detroit tunnel. According to my interviewees, no officer with less than 10 years of experience works at the off-site in Windsor, thus preventing the day-to-day acquisition of important trade compliance skills and commercial enforcement abilities by junior officers.

The Windsor case is unique, but its impact important given the significance of this port for the Canadian economy. Moreover, the current mass retirement of career officers is

creating challenges in all commercial sections of Canadian ports of entry, jeopardizing the handing down of the accumulated practical knowledge from seniors to rookies. As was the case for the Québec police in the 1990s and 2000s (Alain 2011), the CBSA could well be soon facing a “generational gap” that could jeopardize its “trade facilitation” mandate. Newer officers hired and trained at Customs College with a focus on law enforcement progressively replace, with little on-the-job training in commercial operations, experienced officers with trade compliance skills. As further explored in the next chapter, this is a significant development for thinking the governance of mobilities through borders as two generational approaches to borderwork meet in ports of entry.

### **Learning to Play the Part: Displaying Authority at the Border**

Speaking of border “performativity”, Salter (2011), following Butler, theorizes borderwork as a “stylized repetition of acts of sovereignty”. Through daily gestures (interrogating, deciding, searching) through which they “perform” a state’s authority in border spaces, security professionals incorporate, enact and convey the illusion that there is an essence to this authority on a specific territory. While the term “performativity” might be better applied to matters relative to individual self-expression and resistance to social scripts and institutional demands than to the requirements of bureaucratic settings, the main idea behind Salter’s proposition remains worthy of attention. Indeed, the work of frontline security professionals entails the development and perfecting of motions, acts and postures that clearly and repetitively display state power. Taking their inspiration from symbolic interactionism, Alain and Pruvost (2011) suggest that the professional socialization of enforcement workers entails modifying one's presentation of the self and,

by extension, one's relationship to the public and the outside world (*rapport au monde*): "Recruits not only learn formal policing skills but also espouse the conduct and mindset appropriate to their new occupation, discovering "a variety of positionings, know-how and internal discriminations. In all cases, professional secrecy surrounds the conversion process: trained professionals now find themselves in an asymmetric and hierarchical relation with their 'clients'" (Alain and Pruvost 2011: 268; personal translation).

Aside from the training of new recruits through the stressful experience of Customs College, my research underscores another informal but central dimension of border officers' professional socialization. In the words of Conti (2009: 410), frontline security and policing professionals working in face-to-face interactions with the public have to learn how "to play the part": "A key element of the training involves a moral socialization in the norms of copresence that accompany the police status", that is to say, the elements regulating the interactions between those granted with the authority to represent the state and enforce the law, and those at the receiving end of this authority. During her first years at work, an officer becomes slowly acquainted with what the organization expects her to demonstrate and with what, in return, she should anticipate from her interactions with the public. If she has earned the right to represent the state after attending Customs College, she also has to learn how to embody this authority. These displays of authority are experimented with, rehearsed and polished throughout one's career.

This apprenticeship in demonstrating authority is no small feat. Officers are aided in that task by their uniform, their firearm and their repressive tools (batons, handcuffs), all

material symbols of their capacity to legitimately use force. They benefit from extended legislated powers that far outstrip those of police officers—including verification of personal identification details and the possibility to perform arrests and searches of personal belongings without warrants. Nevertheless, adopting authoritative gestures, attitudes and manners, learning to speak in ways that can be simultaneously respectful, imposing and distant, building the confidence to always keep eye contact with travelers in order to both impose respect and “detect deception” as well as learning to carry with ease a firearm and other policing tools, are all embodied dispositions that take time to master. In order to acquire the emotional restraint and bodily conduct expected from them, officers experiment with a variety of speech and bodily adjustments. These “techniques of the self” are critical to the successful display of state authority at the border and therefore make up a significant border policing tool.

*The uniform does not make the officer*

Being required to display self-confidence and a modicum of experience when you are in your twenties, fresh out of “Rigaud” and dealing with impatient travellers (many of whom are older than you) gives rise to encounters that offer a few teachable moments. Thomas, a rookie officer, recalls a recent altercation with a driver:

Two weeks ago, I got a bit confronted by a 51 years old man. There were two normal vehicles that entered into the commercial section because they were commercial vehicles. So for security reasons, I could not see the person because of [the location of] my booth, so I told the gentleman: "Could you tell the person

who follows you to back up?". So he said: "Yeah, really?!" and then it went downhill: "Idiot! Listen young man, I am 51 years old, I won't get shit on by a young punk". And I said: "Ok. What does age have to do in this story? I have a job to do, I have my work methods and I have to respect them".

These altercations also present a strong gendered component. Arthur, a tall and muscular senior officer, proudly described how he came to the rescue of a young female student officer who was faced with some difficult travelers:

But they know that I'd be there for them [young officers] also, so...If I see them getting in trouble, I'll say: "Excuse-me, can I help you?". And that stops the confrontation. (...). Yeah. Out front [in traffic] there were officers so bad, we had students...they'd make the students do every car while they sat down on their...behinds and did nothing. I'd watch this young student, maybe 20 year old young blonde, go to a car surrounded by six guys [travelers] and she'd be backed over in the back seat trying to find if they got bottles and all six guys were down and: "Hum, ah..." I walked over and said [*he raps on the table*]: "Get up here now!", and the young lady: "Thank you very much." She was frightened to death.

Denise, a young officer of colour interviewed during this research, confided that she was processing paperwork at the booth one day when a driver said she was beautiful "for a woman of colour". Yet, it is not only young officers who are subjected to prejudice. A senior traffic officer I met while on a tour of her port of entry told me about a situation she had dealt with the previous evening. A traveler was refusing to comply with her

instructions (i.e. paying duties on personal goods bought abroad), arguing that he would not take orders from a woman.

These anecdotal descriptions of sexist and racist comments and behaviors from travelers, of altercations, arguments and even instances of intimidation and harassment directed at young and/or female officers from members of the public who feel privileged or entitled enough (by being white, male, and/or older) to question these officers' authority point to a dynamic seldom explored by the critical border and security literature. On the one hand, we generally assume that power relations in border settings favour security professionals and immigration authorities. This assumption has been verified time and again. Security professionals at every level of the border policing hierarchy remain widely unaccountable for their actions and decisions. The interdiction and detention of refugees (Aiken 2007; Macklin 2005; Pratt 2005), the accumulation and exchange of personal and biometric data on travelers and establishment of no-fly lists by security authorities (Bennett 2008; International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group 2010) are among the practices that clearly support the thesis of extensive if not extraordinary state powers in border settings, and the few recourses and remedies offered to border crossers.

On the other hand, however, border officers remain street-level bureaucrats with low-level positions in the security field. Consequently, during concrete, everyday situations involving travelers and border officers at the land border, social status classifications (age, race, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, class, etc) intersect in ways that can but do not necessarily privilege border officers. As illustrated by these stories, the uniform does not always bring about deference from border crossers; border infrastructure and the spatial

arrangement of ports of entry, however impressive, do not automatically create compliance with border regulations. The effective display of authority by officers is sometimes rigged with uncertainty, especially regarding gendered assumptions intervening in daily encounters at the border. Therefore, in order to tilt the balance of power in his favour, a border officer has to sharpen the affective dispositions associated with a position of authority. During their first years in the field, border officials, and especially female officers, acquire a series of informal gendered behaviors that help them look the part. While we tend to take for granted the performance of authority by uniformed state representatives, some of my interviews with female officers particularly highlight the slow process of embodiment entailed with borderwork.

*Authority as a gendered apprenticeship: Alice and Elizabeth*

The experienced female officers employed at land border sites can be counted among the first cohorts of women to have entered Canadian border services. Like Alice, many were first hired as clerks for the commercial section of their ports of entry at the end of the 1970s or during the following years, only to later find their position jeopardized a decade later. Following 1989, commercial operations became increasingly computerized, thus diminishing paperwork requirements for the carrier industry, importers and exporters and—by extension—lessening clerical labour needs at customs. Canada Customs and Revenue proceeded to cut administrative staff—which was historically overwhelmingly female as a result of an explicit gendered division of labour in ports of entry—in border offices. These clerks were told they needed to apply for officers' positions if they wished

to keep being employed. Like many of her colleagues in the same position, Alice joined the traffic section as a trainee officer once hired after qualifications and tests.

Now a senior officer close to retirement, Alice is pleased to have escaped the “monotony” of clerical work. But she was shocked by her rapid passage into traffic, where the regular confrontation with travelers contrasted with common practices at the commercial section:

Alice: I spent a year in traffic and after that, I asked to get back here [the commercial section]. I did not like traffic because the clientele is different. They are people who you don't see again so they are much more aggressive. They are mean and not easy to work with. (...) And in those years, I did not have enough character so, with the first clients who were quite aggressive, I had tears in my eyes quite easily. But we develop a character.

I find truck drivers much more pleasant to work with. Because we see them again, and I did not have... Anyway, I am not an officer who is really really severe and mean. I am quite polite, and I say "vous" [*formal address in French*] to everyone... I never had problems. (...) Even though these are men who sometimes have criminal records and all, but it goes well.<sup>120</sup>

What I found really lame in traffic is that because you are a woman, you always have to prove everything.

Karine: You always have to prove...?

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<sup>120</sup> Alice's specific comment about criminal records concern the 1990s and early 2000s. Nowadays, truck drivers with criminal records are less likely to cross the border in either direction as both Canadian and US border authorities have started strictly enforcing interdictions to entry for travelers with criminal records in the past decade.



A: ... prove your authority. Because men will try to overpower you [*prendre le dessus sur toi*]. If there is a woman who accompanies them, there is a bit of jealousy because then, the sir is nice and the lady doesn't like it. So I find that lame. You don't have that on the truck drivers' side.

For sure, they are "tough" and "rough" [*in English*], but if you keep your authority... You do your job, you don't have to be friendly with them. You don't... You do your work, that's all. I don't have problems with anyone.

K: That's good to know. At first, I was wondering if women with truck drivers... You know, we have a stereotype about them.

A: For sure you stand up for yourself [*tu prends ta place*] and for sure, if you start buying into their stories...It would be easy, you know, that a truck driver starts flirting with you, but if you stay correct and stand your ground, you won't have any problem. Don't get into friendships or anything of the sort. You have to keep... your... your position. [...] At work, I am at work, but outside, I am... Look, I have fun, and we can... We laugh a lot, I am even teasing. But at my job, this is how it works. You know, I will be very polite with people if they tell me jokes, I'll laugh but it stops there. I don't deviate and become friendly with them. I am also very respectful of the clientele. (...)

K: Do you think that this experience is different from that of your male colleagues?

A: At first, it is probably more difficult. But I shaped my own personality that way. And now, this is who I am. And since I learned lots of psychology when attending CEGEP [*post-secondary college system in Quebec*], I am able to approach the majority of people by looking at them and starting to talk to them: "Okay, this one, I have to talk to him this way, I have to be careful with this particular aspect." (...) Even with other employees, I get along with everyone because I know how to approach people.

For Elizabeth, a young looking but experienced officer with gentle manners and a soft voice, working in a masculinized environment such as the border makes women officers more firm and exacting in order to be respected:

Elizabeth: You are in a booth and there are two booths open, but curiously, there are more truck drivers on one side than on the other. That's because truck drivers all say to each other [in their CB radio] "Ah! There's a nice little girl!" So now, you have a line-up or it's the other female officer who has it! [*laughs*]. So you are wondering: "Why do I have more?" And suddenly you hear a comment in a truck driver's radio.

Karine: Is it because you are supposed to be friendlier?

E: Yes. That's it, that is the only reason why. "She is nicer this one, she makes you cross faster."

K: Are you nicer?

E: No. If there is something, I think that women, we are stricter than a man can be I think. We don't want to be taken for fools and we do not wish...One should not necessarily trust physical appearance.

Martin (1999: 111) argues that "police work involves substantial emotional labor on the part of officers, who must control their own emotional displays and those of citizens, who often are encountered at their worst—injured, upset, or angry". My interviews confirm that borderwork also requires emotional labor. But in addition, the experiences of female officers in learning how to carry themselves as individuals granted with the authority of the state underscores how the professional socialization of border officers also requires the gendered shaping of their conduct and of specific affective capabilities.

Alice did not adopt the commanding behaviour favoured by some of her colleagues. She does not wish to display her authority too forcefully; she "is not too mean or too severe". Nevertheless, she had to readjust her conduct in the commercial environment to avoid being harassed or have her authority being challenged by truck drivers: "But I shaped my own personality that way. And now, this is who I am". Since becoming a border officer, Alice looked for ways to remove manifestations of familiarity and friendliness that could be interpreted by drivers as a display of vulnerability or that would generate situations in which she would no longer be in control. For this purpose, she designed a series of distancing strategies: "not getting involved in friendships", "keeping your authority and your position", "stand up for yourself and stand your ground", "remaining polite" and "be respectful of the clientele", "not getting involved in their stories", "not letting them flirt with you", "not deviate and become friendly with them", "use *vouvoiement*" in addressing

them, which permits leaving "a little gap between the two of you". In turn, Elizabeth labors at not "be[ing] taken for a fool"; she sees herself as having to be "stricter" than her male colleagues, having to work against gendered stereotypes that cast her as softer, more flexible and "nicer".

### **The Significance of Women's Work for Understanding the Security Field**

What light does the increased presence of women in border officer ranks shed on the contemporary transformation of bordering practices? We should not assume that only female officers are dealing with difficult border crossers. Both male and female rookie officers may have to work through problems and design their own line of approach depending on the cases. Rather, at issue is the fact that rookie female officers, consciously or not, design specific gendered distancing strategies *because they are women working in a masculinized security environment*. They thus appear to some members of the public—and some work colleagues—as being “out of place”. In a fascinating analysis, Cowen and Siciliano (2011) examine the current re-incorporation of underemployed men of racialized and working class backgrounds within private security and military industries in the U.K. and the U.S. Such reconfiguration of the labour market points to the securization and militarization of the social in a struggling economic context. They see in this trend the redeployment of traditional forms of masculinity characterized by "machismo, strength and physicality" that had recently rescinded socially, and the construction of femininity as unsuitable to these securitized institutions: "The expansion of accumulation through insecurity is furthermore contingent on the paradoxical revalorization of a form of masculinity that has recently been diagnosed as

"redundant""(Cowen and Siciliano 2011: 1518). Similarly, I have shown how the push for the adoption of the firearm represents a general shift towards a policing sensibility that privileges a masculinized understanding of borderwork as strenuous and dangerous.

However, as border organizations integrate into the security field, veering towards more law enforcement, building on risk management schemes and intelligence-sharing while arming their frontline workers, these organizations hire an increasing number of women. Where in the hierarchy of these organizations these women are deployed remains a matter for further investigation. Consequently, the concurrent masculinization of borderwork, and—if we follow Cowen and Siciliano (2011) other sites in the security industry, law enforcement and the military— happens simultaneously with the hiring of women in at least some of these organizations. In the case of borderwork, women's increased presence in the security field problematizes the taken-for-granted masculine character of the state's authority at the border. Alice and Elizabeth's reflections regarding how they learned to perform authority at the border are particularly significant in the context of increased officer hiring by Canadian border services since 2006 and given the relative historical novelty of women's presence in policing and security institutions as enforcers. There is currently no empirical research, either ethnographic or survey-based, that concretely examines this gendered shift.

At the same time, female border officers' experience confirms Pruvost (2008) and Rabe-Hemp (2007; 2009) observations regarding the integration of women into police forces in France and the U.S., respectively. These authors point to an increasingly gender-neutral mode of professionalization of police officers, including access to professional

hierarchies. But authors interested in the integration of women into police forces also underline the demands made upon female officers regarding their disciplined conformation to masculinized forms of conduct. Similarly to Heidensohn's (1995) comparative work on UK and US women police officers, my research shows that female border officers perform a masculine role when they put on the uniform. I have shown that women border officers put much labour into acquiring the bodily language that comes with embodying state authority. Consequently, together with a study of the re-emergence of hegemonic masculinities in security practices, analyses of gender relations within enforcement organization should think through the tensions and paradoxes created by the interactions between traditional conceptions of police and security work and the increasing number of women found within enforcement organizations.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the practically uncharted terrain of border officers' professional socialization. It demonstrates the need for borders, security and transnational policing scholars to pay attention to the ways in which security professionals learn their trade. In fact, examining how security aptitudes, skills, norms and language are transmitted, acquired, and transformed between security personnel allows shedding an original light on dynamics of change in the security field. By comparing the hiring and training experience of career and mid-career officers with that of rookies, my findings demonstrate the continuities, transformations but also the unique features in the contemporary professional socialization of Canadian border officers. I considered how, regardless of the efforts of border authorities to hire officers attracted by the enforcement-

related aspects of borderwork and despite new official requirements that prospective candidates accept postings anywhere in the country, it is often attachment to place and the job security offered by a federal service position in economically struggling borderland regions that keep attracting potential recruits at land border ports of entry.

I have also outlined how officers are now further exposed to border authorities' shift towards an enforcement mentality when training at Customs College. I argue that this is where they acquire a generational approach to borderwork that they hang on to as they join ports of entry—a point I further explore in the following chapter. Given the sociology of policing literature on professional socialization showing that field experience often undermines the academic training received by recruits, we have seen this is a surprising finding. However, it can be explained by the alignment between officers' prior expectations about their work and the novel enforcement orientation of their hiring process and of their College training. The chapter also underlined how border officers' professional socialization remains dependent on field training. Through intergenerational teaching and individual testing of different investigative and interviewing strategies, rookie officers build up a regulatory knowledge and a series of skills that only experience can sharpen. A final issue of professional socialization that particularly confronts female officers is the distancing strategies they come to develop throughout their career as a way to establish their authority in a workplace defined by masculinizing features.

This chapter and the preceding one painted the background for examining that which could explain the current generational shift in approaches to borderwork. While seniors

were trained for trade compliance and tax collection tasks and expected to pay attention to local economic needs, rookies are taught to focus on risk management and enforcement work. I now turn to border officers' narratives about how their different professional socialization produces generational tensions in ports of entry. These narratives illustrate the depth of the organizational change experienced by border officers as enthusiastic and enforcement-minded recruits integrate close-knit work teams cumulating 10 to 30 years of experience.



## Chapter VI. Of "Dobermans" and "Hush Puppies": Generational Struggles at Canadian Customs

### Introduction

In the last chapter, I have shown how two generational approaches to borderwork emerge from distinct modes of professional socialization related to corresponding temporalities of border control. Implementing the mandate attributed to border authorities at a specific point of its history—whether by enforcing the law or by being a tax collector—requires the acquisition of a set of embodied dispositions. Nonetheless, there is no guarantee that these dispositions will stand the test of time. As seen in chapter 1, Bourdieu (1979) argues, regarding the hysteresis of the habitus, the dispositions developed at a certain moment of a field's historical trajectory can become unsuited to this field's subsequent transformations. Insofar as the field is made up of relations of power within which positions are distributed, and the habitus points to a set of dispositions acquired in this field and structuring practices and representations, I wish to shed light on the trajectory taken by the security field by paying attention to security professionals' struggles over positions within this field as well as to the registers of distinction they mobilize in order to secure these positions.

My research is revealing on both counts. This chapter accounts for these struggles as well as to for the register of distinction to which these struggles relate. Field-based approaches to security often highlight the struggles *between* different security agencies and actors for resources and power. As put forward by Dupont (2006: 87), "in the expanding

organizational field of security, the multiplication of institutional actors and corporatist interests that seek to enhance or maintain their position has created many sources of friction and opportunities for power struggles, overt or covert (...). The *ad hoc* negotiated adjustments and arrangements that emerge from the resolution or stabilization of those struggles determine in part the pace and nature of changes in this particular field" (Dupont 2006: 87). However, these struggles also unfold *within* security organizations. They are productive of internal hierarchies that shape these organizations and contribute to transforming the security field's dynamics. At stake in these struggles is the very meaning and purpose of their work.

Accordingly, I argue that these internal hierarchies intersect with security professionals' changing categorizations *of their own practices*. Ample scholarship has illuminated the classificatory procedures of border workers as they relate to the ranking of persons and commodities along risk scales that become articulated with judgments on belonging, citizenship and social status (Côté-Boucher 2008 and 2010b; Sparke 2006; Stasiulis and Ross 2006; Wilson and Weber 2008). Border crossers may be labelled through racial, gendered and/or classed categorizations (Browne 2010; Heyman 2001; Macklin 2006). In addition, borders allow for classifications and surveillance of things (Adey 2004), either through biopolitical readings of that which is deemed healthy or disease-born (White 2012) or categorizing commodities and trade for taxation purposes.

Little explored by the critical border and security literature, however, are the ways in which internal classifications in security organizations authorize, promote or dismiss specific security practices and knowledges and how, by extension, these classifications

may have bearing on the regulation of mobilities in border spaces. Accordingly, following the common assertion in the sociology of policing that use of force represents an existent but not definitional aspect of policing (Brodeur 2007), Proteau and Pruvost (2008: 8; personal translation) argue that the everyday practices of policing and security professionals "are less marked out by the use of force and physical violence than by a variety of registers, conscious or unconscious, of distinction which allow to impose oneself—or to attempt to—as a 'real' professional".

In order to explore these dynamics in more detail, this mainly ethnographic chapter extensively draws from border officers' narratives regarding their daily activities. It primarily emerges from mid-career and experienced officers' reflections about competing generational visions of border control in ports of entry. Through explicit references to "generations" or labelling some of these practices as "old ways" and "new ways", Canadian border officers categorize know how, skills, training, regulatory knowledge, professional attitudes and work methods according to distinct value scales from which they determine what constitutes a job well done; these scales correspond to what I call *generational approaches to borderwork*. Through an investigation of intergenerationality in the commercial sections of Canadian land border ports of entry, this chapter tells the story of the marginalization of tax collection and ambassadorial understandings of borderwork and of the downward social mobility within the security field of those senior officers associated with these roles. It also sheds light on the promulgation of new internal categorizations of recognition and esteem—favoring academic credentials over work experience and insisting on officers' capacity to coordinate technological aptitudes

with interviewing skills—and of the everyday consequences of these organizational transformations upon border officers' work routines, relations with colleagues and promotional prospects.

Consequently, this chapter's principal contribution is to underscore the role of generational struggles between frontline officers in the constitution of the security field. Particularly, I wish to provide empirical material to sustain my claim that these struggles testify to the co-presence of competing temporalities of border control within this field. A caveat is therefore necessary: instead of examining in-port generational tensions from a purely interactionist perspective, I argue that these struggles are shedding light on the challenges presented by the transition of borderwork to an enforcement and security logic for frontline security professionals. Taking into account the experience of social demotion of some experienced officers and the privileges granted to their less experienced colleagues as well as the progressive abandonment of particular approaches to borderwork, this chapter contributes to a fine-grained understanding of the structural dynamics shaping contemporary border control in North America.

### **Generational Struggles in a Small Port of Entry**

*William:* But I would tell you that the challenge of the coming years, what I find difficult is the whole human relations aspect. (...) I think we are not adequately tooled to deal with three generations of workers together. The X, the Y and the Baby-Boomers. (...) Because it's the flow of the river, it goes too fast and there are some... I understand, they are close to retirement, they wish the river to flow more calmly. And [there are] the Dobermans. They bite everything that's around

them, it's not moving enough for them, not enough fighting. You know, not enough action.

*Karine* : The Dobermans are the new officers?

*W*: Yes, the new ones. In a way, that they show themselves to be willing, that's one thing. That they diminish the old generation, that, it's a pity, I find it pathetic, (...). Before, we did not have these problems because they were groupings virtually of the same age. We had war veterans. When I started as a student, there were a lot of war veterans.

*K*: Really? Who worked for customs?

*W*: Who worked for customs. These were posts that were given to them. When you come back from the war, it's normal that you are taken care of. We make you work for customs. And, these people, a lot of them were traumatized by the war and, hum... They wore their medals but I can't say they scored much, you know, that they were a big, big value in the office in terms of work. But we had, by our education, we had that notion of respect towards these people. We sat down with them, we chatted, you know, we understood that they had lived something and you know, that with time, they would retire and all. Whereas now, the young ones, here, they say to the others: "You should think of leaving, that wouldn't be a bad thing. You know, the new ones are coming in, that would give them some room". You know, it is very disrespectful. (...)

*K:* What are the differences of philosophies between these generations? So, for instance, the new generation is just fresh out of Rigaud. They get here, they are newly trained. How do they approach their work compared to the older generation?

*W:* They are more law enforcement. They see the gun coming. They see themselves as the police of the border. The old generation, they were hired as public servants. They collected duties and taxes, customer service and, when the situation required it, they did repressive interventions. Whereas today, the repressive side is much more put to the fore.

*K:* In their training?

*W:* Yes and also because our mandates are: drugs, missing children, firearms, pornography, money laundering and all that. So the principal mandates concern organized crime, concern people of real bad faith. Whereas before, they said to people: “Well, listen, this is a tourist clientele who comes for a ride and once in a while, you will find someone who will tell you an unbelievable story”.

The young ones tell the old ones: “You are not on board anymore for enforcement matters. You are preventing us to do a good job”. And the old generation says: “Yes but look, for us, public service is important”. And, for sure, it takes a big thing before they start taking measures against a person. They will rather give warnings and say: “You shouldn’t have done this”. But the young one, he wants it

now: "He lied to me. We intervene, we seize the goods". You know, they do mini-contests between themselves, to see who will catch the most [infractions].

K: The young ones.

W: The young ones. So if you are young and you are paired with an old officer who doesn't want to do too much, well, he's hurting you in your competition with the other. Like two young officers together. You see the picture?

K Yes, yes.

W: (...) And, in contrast, there are paperwork cases that are a bit more complicated. So the newbie doesn't know how to do them. So he says: "You, Dave [*experienced officer*], are you aware why..." And then Dave feels like saying: "Hey, smarty pants, you who wants to see me retire, figure it out by yourself if you're so clever when you just get out of Rigaud". (...)

But the young officers to whom I speak of economy, they don't give a damn. (...) When I tell them "Well we need to protect the Canadian economy", they answer "Hey, it's so expensive in Canada". They don't see their interest. So the young ones, they will say: "We do law enforcement. We catch bad guys, that's what we do". And the collection of duties and taxes, the economic protection aspect of our work: "Let's leave that with old Hush Puppies, you know, they don't feel like running after the ball anymore, we'll leave them that."

K : Hush puppies are going to retire.

W : So we will be left with the new generation. So I said: "Let me ask you a question. You are my little Dobermans. You are good, it is true that you have flair. You work well. Can you swear that in 30 years, you will have the same determination, the same motivation, with all that we went through here: to ask for, to want things and to be told no, to be snubbed. In 30 years, if I visit you, you will be the same as what you are now, all fired up? Let me doubt that. Let me doubt that". So we left it there, you see. It is all suppositions. But it is part of the conversations that we have to have between generations who live together.

My interview with William was a turning-point during fieldwork. While commented on by many of those interviewed, nowhere were generational tensions between officers more clearly expressed. Without any prompting to that effect (we had just been discussing his retirement plans), William introduced the issue himself, an indication that he took it to be significant—he even suggested that if I could reflect on these generational differences and provide solutions to deal with current generational tensions in ports of entry, my dissertation would be particularly useful.

The specificities of the small port of entry where William works certainly do not help him with what he calls his "human relations challenge". At the same time, these local distinguishing features contribute to shedding light on the intensity of intergenerational tensions between colleagues in this port of entry, exacerbating everyday tensions between officers. In this port, officers—who are overwhelmingly male—are responsible for clerical work and learn to perform both traffic and basic commercial tasks. In contrast, all other visited ports of entry had separate commercial and traffic-immigration sections.



Commercial services in these other ports also benefited from having their own clerks—generally female employees—who dealt with paperwork and statistics and were responsible for part of the front desk services to importers and truck drivers.

In this small border crossing, rookies and experienced officers (there are few mid-career officers) are constantly required to interact. Because at each shift, work teams count no more than 3 or 4 officers, the port lacks both the softening impact of a larger work team and the possibility, on any given shift, of forming groups of officers sharing generational ways of working acquired during their professional socialization. This situation is not improved by the compactness of the facilities. At each of my visits, officers profusely apologized for receiving me in a workspace where everyone steps on each others' toes, and many dreamt aloud of the day when calls for infrastructural investments to remodel and expand the port would actually be heard in "Ottawa". Furthermore, remoteness from urban centers and national hiring procedures create a high employee rotation rate for this small port. In contrast to past practice whereby rookies were hired from a local pool of applicants, young officers often leave after two years—the minimum period stipulated in their contract—and apply to be relocated in ports of entry or offices close to home. Consequently, the irritation of experienced officers at constantly having to repeat in-port training with new recruits was evident in my interviews at this port. I heard similar echoes of frustration in another mid-size port.

According to William, the arrival of rookies in this port of entry disturbed its narrow age distribution and taken-for-granted work routines: "Before, we did not have these problems because they were groupings virtually of the same age". But what William

attributes to age can also be related to a more complex set of relations that made border officers so familiar with each other. After their upbringing in the region, they were hired by border officials who were locals themselves and were likely to know their parents and families. A few years afterwards, officers supplemented their professional socialization working at the port of entry by attending Customs College, where, as mentioned in the previous chapter, they reviewed enforcement, tax collection and trade compliance regulations. In addition, before border services renewed its investment in staffing at the end of the 1990s, senior officers had worked together at that port of entry for well over a decade and had gotten to know each other's habits and characters. Experienced officers I interviewed in this port told me how that they used to play an "ambassador" role for Canada. They also fostered sustained relations with neighboring communities. Local truck drivers, carriers and businesses have been counting on these relations and on the help of the local port of entry when they were uncertain about customs procedures. During summers, they supplemented their labour needs with student officers, some of whom were hired from their own families—the supervisor in this port had appointed for a few years his own son while he was a university student.

The inclusion of new officers disrupted the habits of this tightly knit port of entry. Hired through national and standardized procedures and often recruited from cities, rookies show up in ports of entry with college and university degrees in hand. Their heads are filled with the training they received at Customs College, whose revamped curriculum stresses law enforcement and security issues. They are hired expecting to be armed in the near future. As William puts it, these young officers are "willing": they turn up at work

prepared—and expecting—to find missing children, seize drugs and find concealed weapons. But what they encounter in this small port makes for quite a shock. They mainly perform routine administrative work, they process a limited number of local truck drivers who cross the border five times a day, as well as locals coming back from a 15-minute trip across the border to fill up with gas—a habit quickly adopted by many officers at that port. These rookies expected action and are ready to "bite", but they find themselves in a quiet community reliant on their port-of-entry for cross-border work, business, reception of US parcels and occasional shopping.

Furthermore, in contrast to their experienced colleagues, they do not have decade-long relationships with locals. Villagers comment on seeing these new young faces in town and readily discuss whether these rookies are friendly or whether they "overstep" their powers. Finally, these trainee officers soon realize they cannot be armed like their colleagues in bigger ports because this port of entry is too small to accommodate a safe storing space for firearms. These new circumstances create the need for many adjustments on the part of both rookie and senior officers; it is not surprising that sometimes, tensions arise between the two groups. As we shall see next, some of these tensions concern contrasting valuations of customs officers responsibilities, particularly regarding tax collection and the protection of the economy; a remnant of the past for some, a significant task for others.

### **"Speaking Mandarin": Remnants of Economic Protectionism**

In the wake of the liberalization of trade flows and of the creation of extended global commodity chains, the tax collection mandate of customs organizations has been losing its significance both as an economic protectionist measure and as a source of state revenue. As reviewed in chapter two, North American border services have adopted a market-based orientation for their customs operations, in line with World Trade Organization and World Customs Organization rules and in the spirit of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The creation of the CBSA in 2003 and the insertion of customs services within this new border agency—after being the responsibility of the Ministry of Revenue for more than a century—is an indication of this re-orientation. The Canada Border Services Agency Act also reflects this direction of the CBSA's redesigned mandate: “The Agency is responsible for providing integrated border services that support national security and public safety priorities and *facilitate the free flow of persons and goods*, including animals and plants, that meet all requirements under the program legislation” (emphasis added).<sup>121</sup>

Nevertheless, Canadian customs continues to regulate commodity flows by imposing anti-dumping measures and duties on goods originating from countries not bound to Canada by a free trade agreement. It also maintains a myriad of trade compliance regulations, thus restricting access to the Canadian market to certain types of commodities and requiring, for instance, permits for dangerous goods such as explosives used in the mining industry. Customs forbids the entrance of some other commodities

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<sup>121</sup> Government of Canada, 2005, "Canada Border Services Agency Act", *Justice Laws Website*, <http://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-1.4/page-2.html> (last modified 11 July 2013; last consulted 15 July 2013).

seen as dangerous to the health of Canadians or to the environment. Live Asian carp, a fish threatening to invade the Great Lakes and damage its ecosystem, is currently under such interdiction. But generally speaking, the current economic mandate of Canadian customs is one of trade facilitation. Given this strong border policy orientation, one would expect to find border officers adopting a conception of their economic role that reflects their legislated mandate. Yet the daily reality of border control in ports of entry does not always mirror this open-market regulation approach; some mid-career and experienced officers display a keen interest in economic protectionism. This interest is fostered by a concern for the economy of their region and, sometimes, a critical view of North American free trade.

These officers, having spent most of their careers involved in borderwork, have had time to gauge the importance of their port of entry for the local and regional economy. Some, like William, are thus dismayed at the lack of interest displayed by their junior colleagues in the matter. William's protectionism stems from a concern for local jobs and businesses in a region dependent on a few economic sectors. One of those is forestry, made vulnerable by importations of cheap foreign lumber for construction sites and by years of Canada-U.S. struggles about lumber duties. The whole border region has also suffered from the imposition of U.S. visas on Canadian forest laborers after the 2008 economic downturn. A few times during his interview, William claimed economic protectionism constituted a fundamental part of his functions:

I say: protect the economy and favour the economy. This is why we tolerate but also keep in check our tolerance regarding gas, alcohol and cigarettes because

there are people who sell those goods in Canada. I educated our officers a lot here. (...) I said: "If you had a garage here and people could go and rent a car in the United States for cheaper, and that you would close your doors, you would not be real proud of your customs office. You would say: "They don't do their job, they should protect my business because I too have the right to make a living". There, they realize that yes, this is protecting the interests of Canadians (...). We have a role to play in this as well, while arresting people who are not supposed to end up in Canada. But new officers, all they want to do is law enforcement. It is as if the economic aspect of our jobs, they don't care. (...). So when I talk to them of the protection of the economy, it is as if I speak Mandarin.

Preoccupied by the state of their regional economy, other experienced border officers in different ports of entry broached the topic of economic protectionism by launching into a critique of free trade policies. Charles, an experienced officer, spoke at length about what he considered to be the negative impact of NAFTA on the Ontario manufacturing sector, the automotive industry and the transportation sector. He witnessed these impacts daily in his hometown but also in the changing type of commodities that cross at the port of entry where he is employed. Raymond, the experienced officer quoted at length in chapter 3, commented on the serial manufacturing closures in his region, their delocalization in non-unionized Mexican and U.S. rural areas and how his neighbours were now making ends meet through low-paid service-based and menial jobs.

The reader might remember Ronald from chapter 2 where he is quoted commenting on the upcoming disappearance of the Canada-U.S. land border. Ronald also saw his work

with protectionist lenses. Customs is a second career for Ronald. This is not exceptional. Four of my interviewees became customs officers either after being laid off because of downsizing or after working during one or two decades in economic sectors that ended up in difficulty. This experience shaped Ronald's outlook on the purpose of his work as a border officer. He analyzed with subtlety the impact of global economic changes on regional economic conditions. He discussed at length the interrelations between the economic downturn and the current decline of the manufacturing sector in Ontario and reflected on the consequences of these structural economic changes upon his work. Of particular interest is Ronald's description of an "educational" intervention he made during an extra shift he worked at the traffic section of his port of entry:

We had a group one time coming to go in a camp up around somewhere in Northern Ontario. Two guys, they got pulled in for an ID check and they had 80 pounds of bacon. I said: "Where are you going with this?". "Well, taking it to our camp in Northern Ontario". "Where is your camp?". "In Parry Sound". I said: "Why don't you buy your bacon in Parry Sound". "Well, it's expensive". I said: "Well, you can't bring all this in. You're taking it back". The two guys [said]: "We're going to feed everybody at the camp". I said: "Not today, you're not. You're going to buy it in Parry Sound". You know what I mean?

That's the kind of education that I think the CBSA needs to get out there more. If I was to wrap it up, I'd say: we're supposed to be here to protect Canada. We're protecting the people in Parry Sound, the businesses in Parry Sound, as well as

local businesses. You know, if the government of Canada chooses to allow certain entitlements to travelers, we need to enforce those entitlements.

Canadian and U.S. regulations are quite strict when it comes to the importation of food in small quantities. Interviewed truck drivers during this research project never failed to complain about how they are made to throw out food stored in their truck fridges by U.S. customs officers—a significant personal loss as diminishing wages have led drivers to eat frequently in their trucks rather than in truck stops and restaurants.

It is possible to analyse Ronald's action in this instance as discretionary. Indeed, he could have ruled the bacon to be for "personal use". But of particular interest in his story are his reasons for sending back these vacationers; these reasons were not related to food safety concerns but stemmed from his belief in economic protectionism. For protectionist officers, the application of taxes and duties are meant to safeguard Canadians' livelihood and remains an essential aspect of their work. Consequently, their understanding of their mandate is at variance from the official economic partnership language adopted by Canadian border and foreign trade authorities (Gilbert 2007), whose current policy acquiesces to increased security measures at the border in exchange for a continuation of free trade with our southern neighbour. In contrast, Ronald comments on a relationship he considers to be unequal and asymmetric. His analysis echoes in many ways scholarly works about continental trade relations produced by Canadian political economists:

I just think that people need to realize, maybe it's protectionism on my part, because I see protectionism everyday from the US. I think we just take things lax in Canada. Where I think we should become just like them, as protectionists as



them. Because if we protect our own jobs, then... They're not going to do it for us. I've always seen them allow things, their people coming to Canada, they don't care about taking Canadian jobs, right? So, that's the only thing. I think we're a little lax on our, some of our regulations, our enforcement of regulations.

Ronald also thinks of his role as one of tax collector:

And that goes right from the containers that move back and forth, and articles of international trade like the actual containers. Drive around and look at the back of people's yards. How many containers say [company name]? You know, it's not that much to import a container into Canada but people are making a business of it, sell them in Toronto. Right? They're \$2500 a piece. Sure it's not much tax but every little bit helps, right? If you're collecting the tax you're supposed to then we won't have to generate more revenue another way. So, that's just my thought.

Strictly speaking, Ronald's insistence on revenue collection is not exactly at odds with Canadian regulations: the collection of applicable taxes and duties is part of his legislated responsibilities. However, the preservation of the historical revenue generating aspect of customs is increasingly questioned at the federal level. In 2007, a Canadian Senate report proposed to raise personal exemptions at the border in order to focus border officers on high risk travelers and shipments.<sup>122</sup> At the time, the government refused to do so, citing protectionist arguments—the quasi parity with the U.S. dollar encourages many

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<sup>122</sup> Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, 2007, *Canadian Security Guide Book. An Update of Security Problems in Need of Solutions: Border Crossings*. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/SEN/Committee/391/defe/rep/rep10mar07-e.pdf> (last consulted 11 July 2013).

Canadians to shop south of the border. But since then, federal authorities reconsidered this position. As of June 1, 2012, personal exemptions were raised from \$50 to \$200 for a 24 hour trip, and from \$750 for a seven day trip to \$800 for a 48h absence from Canada. The scope of discretion for officers such as William and Ronald has been narrowed; they now find fewer regulatory resources for protecting local businesses from cross-border shopping.

### **"I Want to Look You in the Eye": Arthur's Generational Interviewing Abilities**

I argued in chapter 1 that despite the burgeoning scholarship on the techno-material culture of mobilities surveillance in border spaces, we know little of whether and how border enforcement technologies and tools are concretely integrated into the policing practices of frontline security professionals. As I began to show in preceding chapters, the variety of security tools and technologies that make up border policing has been transforming work processes in ports of entry. Customs and border enforcement interventions now entail negotiating between face-to-face encounters, referrals to information technology and diverse customs programs.

Officers speak at length about generational difference, especially in regards to how truck drivers and travellers are evaluated. Interestingly, interviewees associated my questions about their work routines with the respective value of computers, interviewing skills and visual indicators of nervousness, and characterized the use of these tools as indicative of generational approaches to borderwork. Their assessment of these differences are based on competing classifications about the respective reliability and relevance of these methods for contemporary border control. Particular uses of technologies and work

methods become associated with "old ways" and "new ways" of doing enforcement work and these approaches are opposed in competing portrayals of the steps and techniques involved in making a release/refer decision, assessing a truck driver and a shipment or investigating them further at the secondary inspection docks.

One interview was particularly revealing about generational approaches to borderwork in the wake of contemporary technological changes. Throughout his interview, Arthur, an experienced officer, kept insisting on his proficiency with visual and behavioural assessments privileging face-to-face interactions with drivers. He boasted of his interviewing abilities, which he had developed over the years. Even his manner of speaking during the interview was a reminder of the embodied nature of these skills: he spoke in staccato sentences, his speech shaped by years of asking short questions and getting short answers; he uttered a sentence then waited for a reply on my part; he sometimes answered a few questions with a question of his own, testing my knowledge. In this way, years of interviewing travellers and truck drivers have shaped Arthur's manner of conversing; when he is interviewed, he recreates the quick back and forth dynamic of the booth where he spent hundreds of hours honing his interviewing skills.

Arthur: That's what I'm here for. To protect. I try to do that every interview. Yeah... they asked me, after 9/11, what has changed in my job. I said nothing. They go "what do you mean, nothing?" I say "I interview every person the same way." (...) How do I know who's high-risk or low-risk without an interview? [short pause] Do I know you're high-risk or low-risk? Without knowing you?

Karine: Maybe you received intelligence, or...

A: Well receiving intelligence is different. If I have the intelligence in front of me. I listen to the intelligence, I send them in. But if I don't have intelligence... our intelligence system is weak. We have a program out front and where we run everybody's ID<sup>123</sup> but only... what's in there is what we input into there.. (...)

So the guy from Texas, first time here, we have nothing on him. So now I have to really concentrate on his eyes. And a lot of young officers, because they're not used to it, they're more used to computers... So when I'm interviewing—as a young officer now, keying: “Where do you live? How long you've been away?” [*he mimics typing and looking at the computer while asking questions*]. The eye contact is missed. (...)

And I try to learn... like I... I can do very well on the computers. I learn. I'm not... I'm not afraid of them. I will learn, but I just... old ways. [*short pause*]

I want to look you in the eye.

An experienced officer with limited technological literacy, Arthur admits having difficulties using the databases at his disposal and distrusts intelligence. For him, "nothing has changed" in the past decade in borderwork. Despite having access to an array of enforcement and customs databases, this officer prefers to treat each interview as an occasion to "look people in the eye"; he puts his emphasis on visual evaluations based on direct face-to-face interactions with truck drivers. As a result, there are no previously established, trustworthy high and low risks categorizations for this officer who treats

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<sup>123</sup> Arthur refers to the lookout system to which border officers have access while in their booths.

every traveler and truck driver uniformly. When one is skilled at interviewing, no data, no intelligence is really necessary to evaluate a traveler or a shipment: there is only the truck driver, the officer and the relation they establish in a 30 seconds interview at the booth.

Arthur's comments have significant implications for theorizing risk management as a generational approach to borderwork. The official policy of border agencies regarding risk assessment is based on the assumption that intelligence-led border policing and information technologies classify mobilities into risk profiles, therefore focusing officers' attention on certain types of travelers and goods. Paradoxically, in its attempts to be critical of the use of personal data and risk categorizations in traveler assessment, the literature on border security often echoes this policy assumption. However, where both border studies and security policy assume a too neat integration of surveillance technologies in everyday work routines at ports of entry, I found diverse skill sets that influence which and how technologies are integrated into decision-making at the border. These abilities range from the more mechanic (such as limited, slow or quick typing abilities) to those that require more advanced technical skills—for instance, having adequate knowledge of information technologies to access the data available in customs and enforcement systems. If an officer is capable of accessing that data, it still remains to be seen whether the data is used and in which circumstances, as well as the particular empirical ways an officer integrates risk management data into her decisions. Such findings problematize the generalized but unsubstantiated belief in much border and security literature that security professionals necessarily draw on information

technologies when they are available and that they use these tools in an analogous fashion.

*Computing: "It's going to take away a lot of the abilities of an officer"*

It should not, however, be assumed from this interview excerpt that most career officers do not refer to the databases and border control technologies at their disposal. In fact, most of those interviewed—experienced, mid-career and rookies—believed customs and enforcement databases to be useful. It is the particularities of their use and the significance they gave to these technologies that differed. While surveillance technologies, risk assessments as well as criminal and intelligence data are consulted on a daily basis by frontline border officers, it is important to consider how generational dispositions shape their everyday use and their valuation as enforcement tools.

As illustrated by the excerpt above, Arthur has strong views regarding the greater emphasis put on information technologies by his younger colleagues and the diminished importance given to visual evaluations in decisions to release a truck driver and his shipment or to send him to secondary inspection. These views are widely shared. Many career officers expressed variations on this theme, lamenting what they see as the lack of attention paid by their younger colleagues to interviewing skills and visual indicators of risk, such as signs of nervousness in drivers. Like Arthur, these officers mimicked in interview an imaginary rookie officer concentrated on his computer screen, entering information provided by a truck driver but not paying visual attention to him and failing to make eye contact—in practically the same terms and gestures as Arthur.

We were discussing the introduction of e-Manifest, the system that integrates risk management and customs assessment in his port of entry, when my interviewee, Nathan, claimed that there was a clear loss of officers' skills at the frontline since the introduction of data management technologies into the decision-making process:

Nathan: Oh I think that it's going to take away a lot of the abilities of an officer. Because the computer on the line for instance. We have to make sure of the licence plates, and we have to do this, and we have to do that. So you're concentrating on a computer when you should be concentrating on the people. Most of your communication is body language. Eyes darting to the left for instance. If you ask me a question and I was telling you the truth, if I was to dart my eyes, it would be to the right, if I was telling you the truth. If I had something to hide, I'd be darting my eyes to the left. And there's no stopping yourself from doing that.

Karine: Is that true? I didn't know that.

N: I read an RCMP interview book and I went on the line, right after I read it and I was interviewing a guy and his eyes kept darting to the left. I asked him for alcohol and tobacco. And no, didn't have anything. But I kept asking and looking at his eyes... All these computers, all these CDRP and FAST cards,<sup>124</sup> they've taken all that kind of.. We're losing what we used to do: look at people. We're using computers now, to get these people through where we should. A good

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<sup>124</sup> Similar to FAST, Commercial Driver Registration Program (CDRP) cards used to be provided to truck drivers working for pre-approved importers.

officer will put all the stuff he needs in the computer and then, start his interview. But we are doing the interview as we [*mimics typing notes, looking at a computer screen while talking*]... You know?

Another experienced officer, Paul, makes a comparable assessment of the importance of *seeing* in risk assessment and doubts the efficiency of young officers' over-reliance on computer-generated data in their assessment of travelers:

I would say that young people today are easily turned towards computer systems. There is a situation and it is computers right away and we forget our body and our person [in front of us]. To the contrary, I am a guy who will leave computers aside and see the person and talk with him. (...) Once I have a profile in mind, I leave the person and start searching—driving licence and stuff.

It is not like this with young people nowadays. Right away, they are searching on computers. Meanwhile, the person has time to empty his pockets and throw out his things everywhere. So I'll try to teach them that.

While Richard, a mid-career officer, similarly saw the importance of interviewing skills and risk indicators, he disagreed with giving more worth to interviewing skills over other technological enforcement tools:

Some people put a little more weight in the tools that we have. And some people don't. It all depends, it may vary... we have a tool that's called ion scan.<sup>125</sup> That's

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<sup>125</sup> The ion scan detects drugs particles on a person (hands, clothes) or an object (dollar bills, steering wheel, etc). The border officer swipes with a cloth the object or body part to be tested and gets it analysed by the scan. These drug detection devices are also used in airports.



the perfect example. I mean sometimes it's a great tool to... I guess you'd say... rule out a client. Let's say you check the guy out and he comes back negative on the ion test. Fantastic ! Let's say he comes back positive for marijuana. Ok, so now I'm thinking: "OK this guy at the very least uses marijuana. Ok, well let's gage his credibility now." How are we going to gage credibility ? I'm going to bring the guy in and I'm going to start interviewing him.

*Thinking beyond the interviewing/technology opposition*

Whether the importance of face-to-face interactions at the border has decreased in border security remains a debated topic by specialists of surveillance and bordering practices. Lyon (2008: 36) claims a "general decline of face-to-face relationships" in airport-based border assessments, which he explains by the increased reliance on computer data in the filtering of cross-border mobilities. Crosby and Rea (forthcoming) dispute this conclusion. On the basis of detailed ethnographic research undertaken at a major European airport, they argue that face-to-face examination remains the central investigative method supporting filtering, profiling and admission decisions at the border. I would like to contribute to this debate by de-centering the conversation from its focus on a face-to-face-interaction-against-databases dichotomy.

First, and that is a point well-understood by Crosby and Rea, in examining the significance of different methods of border policing, one must pay attention to the *port-specific organization of work* and to the *organizational features of border policing particular to a designated border space*. This means that depending on the location (e.g. a maritime port, an airport primary inspection line, a customs-bonded warehouse, a visa-

delivering office), and on the financial resources at the disposal of security organizations, the recourse to border technologies, intelligence or interviewing might be more or less significant. A commercial section at a Canadian land border port of entry does not process as many border crossers as the traffic section located next door. Similar to other "legacy systems" inherited from the customs services from the 1990s and still not replaced because of budgetary constraints, the main customs database, ACROSS, is archaic by today's technological standards. However, the nature of commercial officers' responsibilities (i.e. application of customs regulations and programs as well as evaluation of truck drivers, shipments, carriers and importers) still involves a significant technological input into the work of officers.

In addition, I propose that it is *the interactions between interviewing, surveillance technologies and border programs* that should be the focus of our attention if we want to understand the identification and examination procedures now characteristic of border control. My interviewees' narratives are replete with evidence that the introduction of a variety of enforcement-related technologies in land border ports of entry is productive of new bodily dispositions that challenge established borderwork practice centered on *seeing*. The valuing of interviewing skills as the form of knowledge *par excellence* that an officer develops during her career is thus slowly eroding. It does not follow that the ability to properly interview drivers has been replaced by a sole recourse to computers, databases and other drug detecting devices; physical examination is rather turning into one investigative technique among a few enforcement and surveillance tools made available to border officers.

Thirdly, and most importantly for my argument, my research with Canadian commercial land border officers suggests paying attention to *the generational reliance on different methods of profiling and examination at the border*. I have shown in chapter 3 that while it is commonly agreed upon that discretion and the ability to conduct interviews is central to the occupational identity of border guards, border technologies, intelligence-led analyses and preclearance programs remove some decisional power from border officers' hands and threaten this self-understanding. Furthermore, the structuring of different experiences of professional socialization must be taken into account when examining the recourse to intelligence and databases in relation to more traditional hands-on investigative methods at the border. Paradoxically, the integration of risk-based technologies within work routines in ports of entry is experienced by some career officers as a process of deskilling. Good old-fashioned “looking in the traveler’s eyes” is losing its precedence as a privileged enforcement technique, while a multiplicity of computer-based forms of risk assessments requiring an entirely different set of analytical and technological abilities are introduced in border enforcement. Constituting the core of their know-how and of their identities as border officers, the importance of career officers' hard-earned interviewing skills is debated *in commercial officers' own classifications of what constitutes a reliable method of inquiry at the border and of the order in which these methods should be used*.

By insisting on the interviewing skills they consider fundamental to their trade, these officers shed light on the struggles over the type of credentials and know-how that are recognized and esteemed in their workplace. In a process not that different from the one

lived by industrial workers confronted with the devaluation of their know-how with the automatization of industry (Pinçon and Rendu 1986), these border officers experience with some nostalgia the diminished importance attributed to their practical knowledge by their newly trained colleagues. What defined their ability and value as border officials, and what provided them with prestige—for instance catching a smuggler on a "cold hit", that is, without any prior information and with the sole help of a feeling that "something just does not feel right"—is threatened by the introduction of various technologies, programs and actors in border decisions. If we believe the direction given by the CBSA towards more intelligence and automated data analysis in the work of commercial border officers, the recent closing of small ports of entry and even the discussions on whether to replace border officers by machines in remote ports, officers who push for a return to and prime reliance on risk indicators, face-to-face interactions and eye contact with drivers and travelers are on the losing end of the battle.

### **Senior Officers and Being "Out-of-the-Game"**

With the remodelling of their mandate, the introduction of new enforcement and data management technologies and the arming of younger officers, aging officers sometimes feel they are "out of the game". This experience may be compounded by health problems (work or non-work related) and an increasing difficulty to adapt to the incessant rolling of a night/day shift routine. In fact, the physicality of the work is becoming too challenging for them, both given the changing nature of their work and because of their aging bodies. Their injuries may prevent them from bending, kneeling and crawling during trucks and cars inspections. The contemporary approach to borderwork emphasizing enforcement

also entails a new kind of physical effort that these older officers might not be able to manage: they simply cannot train to obtain a firearm (even if some of them would be interested in doing so) and start dreading their control and defense tactics training. In such cases, these officers have different options. Traffic officers may be transferred to the commercial section, which is considered a less stressful work environment, given light duties or be exempted from night shifts, given administrative positions or—if capable of using technologies—posted as targeters (low-level intelligence analyst position).

These officers worked quite hard during their interviews to conceal their symbolic (or effective) demotion in their port of entry. In order to do so, they used different narrative strategies. Some took advantage of the interview to describe their feats when they worked at the traffic section. My interview with Nathan illustrates this tactic well. Nathan used to be a successful traffic officer but was injured and had to quit "working the line". Having spent more than a decade away from the frontline, the anecdotes he tells are starting to date—for instance, he refers to ID cards that have now been replaced with new identification technologies and trusted traveler programs. Nathan received compensatory work after being incapacitated:

Nathan: I'll tell you what happened. I damaged my knee and I had three operations on it. So I can't work the line anymore. I would give my right arm to be back in traffic.

Karine: Why?

N: Because that's what I like to do. I love playing the mind games with the traveling public. You know, I've done quite well at it. When I was [at the traffic section], four years in a row, I was the number one enforcement officer. Guns and drugs [*he lies back on his seat and boost his chest in pride*]. I got a kidnapper, I got bank robbers, I got plaques on the wall. I got all kinds of awards. But then I broke my knee and it never got better, so then I had to argue with them to give me another job that wasn't on the line. So we finally came up with a job, so...

K: And the job is..?

N: It was counting cash at first. (...) I was accommodated. (...) So I ended up being cashier for a while and then they opened up a [risk analysis position].

Injured officers' enforcement skills are certainly helpful in undertaking tasks such as risk analysis, targeting and training other officers in the use of enforcement databases. However, it is interesting to note that low-level analyst positions at the CBSA can be filled by officers selected not for their risk management abilities but following a health and safety accommodation.

The critical border and security literature does not pay much attention to this labour-related aspect of risk management. We may assume that security professionals make an optimal use of the various possibilities of analysis and categorization offered by these tools. In chapter 3, I have shown how the very possibility of having recourse to computerized border technologies is embedded in conflicts between management and frontline officers who would prefer targeting to remain a local responsibility rather than

centralized in a few risk management "hubs". Nathan's story tells us that, aside from inquiring into how technologies impact the division of labour in border spaces, we need to examine how computer systems are operated by border workers on an everyday basis, and who exactly sits in front of the computer screen. While computer-generated lookouts, risk analyses and enforcement databases are available, my interviews demonstrate that these tools are differentially used by border officers endowed with uneven technological skills.

Officers with limited technological literacy are seen by their colleagues as unable to do their jobs properly. These officers are dependent on their computer-savvy colleagues to obtain data and use the databases at their disposal. When I interviewed Jacob, he concealed his troubles with computers by explaining how he learned to use risk management tools with his younger colleagues:

Well, for sure, some are more... I would say that these databases, I learned them especially with the new officers who were hired... who went to [Customs] College and who learned them at College. Then they came to the office and it is more by working with them that I learned... Well, we did not have training on this, it is a process of learning through practice if you wish. (...) And... no, it is taking the trouble to learn it, and you know, it is a tool we use daily....

Two interviewees speak of the difficulties with computerized systems experienced by officers such as Jacob:

Paul, experienced officer: So computers are important but if you have been working for 30 years and never touched a computer and you are scared of doing so, what do you do with those people? We have a lot of people like this. So we hope they will be paired with someone who has the skills. But alone, these people are out of the game more or less. They don't follow the technology. You know, computers are like reading and writing. When you don't know how to use them, you are behind everyone else. We have some people like that in our region. They are good officers, good experience, but they don't have access to computer data and are unable to find them if there is a need to. So they are... That's a problem.

Denis, mid-career officer: The older officers, they were hired at the time we collected taxes. They had to transform the way they work, to adapt. Take [*colleague name*]. He started 35 years ago and is one year from retirement. He has seen big changes. For sure, for him, everything goes fast, he is more on the defensive. [He asks:] "Do we do all this, is it really justified?". You know, we destabilize him. It has been 25 years one way and the last 10 years... [*he quickly breathes out, mimicking the wind*].

During his interview, Jacob was tired. His speech was slow. He was working on a week of night shifts and had barely slept 4 hours that day. A three decade routine of night shifts/day shifts was taking a toll on him. He was impatiently waiting for his coming retirement and spoke at length of the sophisticated calculation of hours and days of work that established when he would be able to do so. Jacob was ready to retire.



### *Marginalizing strategies*

An out-of-the-game officer may be singled out for his "old ways" through a variety of organizational and everyday marginalizing strategies. On the one hand, these officers may also be pushed to the margins in their everyday interaction with their colleagues, who employ a variety of demeaning strategies. Paul, a knowledgeable and experienced officer who feels at ease in a computerized environment and who trains rookies when they first join his port of entry, mentioned that he is sometimes confronted with the disapproving comments of his trainees who question his methods, insisting that: "This is not how we learned it in Rigaud". Colleagues may also disregard career officers who experiences difficulties with technology. I have shown that they may doubt their reliance on interviewing skills rather than on customs and enforcement databases or disagree with their interest in protecting the local economy or in trade compliance.

On the other hand, organizational practice may also contribute to push "out-of-the-game" officers to the margins. Years of night shifts in those ports where shift distribution is not seniority-based creates a long-term fatigue that can make an older officer less attentive and focused. Furthermore, this officer's suggestions may be increasingly ignored by supervisors and his expertise, gained after years working "on the line", ceases to be sought and recognized by management. His work experience gradually becomes at odds with organizational changes in the techno-material culture of his port of entry. This officer is passing from a position of authority, which granted him colleagues' esteem, to that of an aged officer who is smiled at patiently, sometimes mocked and generally not

taken seriously. He is now "an old fart"—as Arthur labelled himself when reflecting on his career.

Arthur protested what he considered to be the unfair demotion of his status at his port of entry. Having developed health problems while working traffic, he had been transferred to the commercial section. He believed he was "getting more lines" than some of his colleagues. Booth work is often considered by officers to be boring, lonely and repetitive. In that context, receiving more lines can be interpreted as a sign of a loss of prestige in ports of entry. At least, this was Arthur's interpretation. Having spent most of his career at the traffic section, he was especially recognized for his interviewing skills but proved quite unknowledgeable about trade-related customs regulations and customs and enforcement databases during our interview. He nevertheless wished to keep face, even sourly suggesting that young female officers received preferential treatment for their good looks: "I like to be treated equally, not harassed. (...) You should get three lines, I should get three lines, you shouldn't get two and I shouldn't get four. (...) Is it because you're a female and the boss wants to look at you all day? It's not fair to me [*laughs*]. Yes... So... Discrimination... You shouldn't discriminate".

As they grow older and former colleagues start retiring, out-of-the-game officers progressively lose their professional networks. They become somewhat forgotten while the institutional memory of their port is being reshaped with the influx of new officers, supervisors and managers who did not know them during their prime years. When he sometimes visits the traffic/immigration section, Arthur meets new faces: "And the young officers they look at me: 'Who's that old guy?' They don't know who I am! It's kind of

funny". Replaced by new officers posted at the traffic section who are more familiar with contemporary enforcement methods, this senior officer cannot fathom the reasons why he is cast aside in occasional special operations at the border: "They have projects, and they'll go about with the RCMP, the local police, immigration and they'll do stop stings. I used to work with them. I don't get that privilege anymore. They don't seem to ask. And I don't know why. I still like doing my job". If being part of these joint operations confirmed the regard he received for his enforcement skills, being overlooked contributes to his feeling of marginalization.

The teasing by colleagues also contributes to this sense of marginalization. Arthur complains of occasional stigmatization by other officers: "I know they tease a lot (...) Young people think old people are old, right? And they have no respect to begin with". Commenting on an occasion when supervisors did not notice that an officer had not shown up for a shift, he adds: "They made a mistake. They don't even know that he's not in, three hours later. So that's why they're not very good supervisors. I offered to train them but they laughed at me because I'm old". The teasing can even turn into disparaging comments. Recall that in the first excerpt in this chapter, William tells of one of his experienced colleagues being advised by rookies to retire: "Whereas now, the young ones, here, they say to the others: 'You should think of leaving, that wouldn't be a bad thing. You know, the new ones are coming in, that would give them some room'. You know, it is very disrespectful."

Some career officers see their view of themselves as qualified border workers seriously challenged when they are removed from the position in which they excelled, when those

who knew about their achievements do not follow them in this new position or simply retire, when confusing new risk management technologies are introduced or when rookies bring in a new approach to borderwork acquired in Customs College. Much of what characterized their work environment and provided them with an identity as border officers—colleagues, enforcement skills, customs programs, computer systems, management—has been modified and, for various reasons (e.g. difficulties with technologies, health problems, ageism, lack of continuing training), they find themselves unable to keep up. Associated with a past temporality of border control, they are pushed away from the centre of action and into the margins of the security field.

### **Generational Struggles over Promotions**

The uneven educational achievements of officers combined with federal service promotional patterns—based on internal competition made of practical and formal written tests—are creating tensions over career advancement in ports of entry. In fact, while experienced, mid-career and rookie officers have achieved distinct levels of seniority, they also benefit from unequal academic credentials. Most career officers I met during fieldwork had acquired a high school, and in some cases, a college degree. Meanwhile, mid-career and rookie officers held college degrees (often in Law and Security) or graduated from university in disciplines ranging from economy to education and labour studies.

Better diplomas provide enhanced access to promotion. As elsewhere in the Canadian federal service, the CBSA promotional system rewards university education and is based on civil service competition. Such a system tends to privilege academic credentials and

testing abilities over years of practical experience and operational abilities, thus favouring younger officers for advancement. This promotional dynamic sometimes generates awkward situations within ports of entry where younger officers with less experience are promoted to a supervisory position, overseeing the older, experienced officers who trained them. This unequal distribution of resources and status produces generational tensions between newer and more experienced officers.

My interview with Paul illustrates this dynamic well. At times, our conversation seemed copied word for word from Bourdieu's reflections on generational struggles over resources and status—the "young" claim access to advantageous positions and pay with their diplomas while the "old" insist on having their work experience recognized. An experienced officer, Paul has cumulated different functions over the years, and worked as acting supervisor, targeter, trade compliance analyst and in-port trainer. When a position of supervisor opened in his port, he expected to obtain it on the basis of that experience. However, a much less experienced officer got the position after ranking better at written tests. Since then, Paul continued working as an officer. He considers that he has "regressed" and makes clear his frustration about this turn of event. "He took my place," he says, "I was his boss" (as acting supervisor) before this newer officer was promoted.

There is an evident bitterness in Paul's tone of voice when he speaks of this missed opportunity:

If you wish to eliminate lots of people, you raise your criteria. (...) You wish to apply on a posting, well it is expensive to do interviews, even though a person

would be well qualified. (...) You need to find a way to rapidly eliminate candidates. They found a very difficult test which advantages (...) a young person just out of school because it is all fresh in his head. But the old one who has been here since 25 years, they eliminate him automatically. (...)

It advantages the young. So we have young people who manage older ones. (...) So, let's say, you have a business that you run for 30 years and you have staff who has been there for years. If you wish to have someone to take your place, you will take an older employee and you will say: "You know the drill". But if you show up with a young one who has been working for you for a year and then you say: "Ok, you will manage all my staff"... The government does that right now.

Interestingly, despite being a border officer, Paul does not consider he is part of the "government". He rather sees himself as a worker whose career path has been compromised by the same type of administrative rationality that characterizes his daily encounters with the drivers he processes. Paul's remarks further supports my conclusions in chapter 3 regarding the increasing distrust felt by frontline border officers towards "Ottawa" (here "the government") yet points to the generational facet of this feeling. In fact, Paul's assessment of generational tensions in ports of entry regarding the distribution of privileges is echoed by other career officers who had been overlooked for promotion opportunities. This was the case for Mario, who regretted not having finished his undergraduate degree and saw this as a handicap to his advancement. He had applied to higher management positions without success: "To have an undergrad degree is always

better in order to go up in management. There are barriers for me. (...) It is much more difficult for us to pass competition for promotions compared to a young officer who has just gotten out with a university diploma (...)"

Senior officers' acrimony is sometimes rendered in a demeaning fashion towards young supervisors. Supervisors' enforcement abilities become less relevant as they spend more of their time designing schedules, producing enforcement and trade-related statistics, searching for ways to cover overtime and leaves or dealing with paperwork and other problems that arise at the counter with truck drivers and customs brokers. Occupied with day-to-day management issues, they are less likely to proceed to arrests and other enforcement actions. An experienced officer had wished to become a supervisor but could not, in part because he did not study past high-school. He commented in demeaning and gendered terms on what he considered to be the un-masculine and deficient use of force skills of one of his current supervisors. For him, borderwork was primarily physical, and despite the administrative requirements of a supervisory position, he was of the opinion that this supervisor failed at displaying strength and a level of virility appropriate to the job: "This guy, younger than me, who is now supervisor, is quite pleasant but he is not even able to handcuff properly, and that should give you an indication (...) About supervisors: I don't like them, they don't know their job. (...) I know how to handcuff someone. I play hockey, I'm a tough WASP guy."

In some ports of entry where shift distribution is based on seniority, mid-career and senior officers can compensate for their limited access to promotions with a firmer hold on shift and line choice. I have shown in the last chapter that this is the case in Windsor,

where experienced officers are the ones who mainly staff the off-site commercial section. This type of distribution of positions within ports of entry depends on the local union's negotiating process for collective agreements. Seniority-based shift distribution may impose evening and night shifts on younger officers who contest this imposition as unfair, since it intervenes with their social lives or because it becomes more difficult for young parents to organize childcare. Involved in collective agreement negotiations in his port of entry, a rookie officer claimed that the acknowledgment of seniority regarding work lines was unfair for young officers: "Nobody was happy". He argued that these negotiations left lingering tensions. Since then, young and older officers prefer associating with their generational peers while at work. The unease in this part of his interview was palpable; this was a touchy topic in this port of entry.

*Incoming retirements: Vincent is "waiting for the geyser"*

A recent recruit complained of what he conceived as his other young colleagues' disrespect for the border officer profession and their willingness to quickly move up the hierarchy. Thomas, who holds a university degree, associates this wish for a swift promotion—and escape from shift work—with a depreciation of the profession of customs officer:

I really have trouble with that. You know, someone who has done 35 years at Customs, as a customs officer, I respect that. It's wonderful. And I think we are in a generation, those under 30, under 35, they come in and they already see themselves: "I intend to become an investigator" [*i.e. attached to the CBSA intelligence unit*]. So in less than two years, they apply and... (...) You see, I can



tell that in our generation we don't have... I had good discussions with people of my age in relation to that and I am one of the only ones who holds this point of view: "You see yourself doing shifts all your life?" [*mimics sarcastic tone*]. Well, if it ends up that way, yes.

This evaluation of rookies' lack of commitment often came up in interviews, but generally with career officers. William commented that, unlike his younger colleagues, he was "tattooed with the organization": "Me, you could have walked all over me, and I would have stood up and said: 'No, for the organization, I will keep going and deliver'. But now, you find less and less dedicated ones. (...) Well, it's a choice, but dedicated ones who will put on 3 or 4 hats [...] When these people will have quit, you will have a new kind of organization. A younger organization, but, as I see it, not as dedicated as before. They will do their job, they will follow instructions and they will ask for everything they can get".

Alice holds similar views. Always ready to cover shifts for sick or unavailable colleagues, she labels "individualistic" the attitude of those younger officers hired since the mid-2000s who refuse to work overtime as do their older colleagues. She reflects on what she sees as young officers' poor work ethic:

Young ones lose a lot today because everyone is looking after number one. I find that generation... it's special. (...) Bosses thought we [experienced officers] were complainers, but youth today... They are just starting! (...) In the end, we do lots of overtime. Because there are many young officers who refuse to work nights,

weekends or more than their contracted hours, so we lack staff. (...) So it is often older persons who... [cover for these shifts] (...) Of course it is by choice, it is not an obligation, but often, we'll do it and say: "Look, they are in trouble, I'll do it. We'll help them [managers]". This is an important change. Yes, big change. But, I say, it might not be that difficult for bosses, because bosses are young too. So they have the same mentality. (...) In the end, older officers are affected when they see this young generation acting this way, thinking this way. But bosses [supervisors] are from the same age group, so they have the same mentality, they don't see things the way we do".

Versions of these remarks were repeated, demonstrating how my interviewees "put generation in service of the belief that older and younger people today possess fundamentally different attitudes about how a person should relate to his or her work", and how such belief relates to the perception of a "sense of entitlement" in young people and their "work to live" rather than "live to work" ethic—a contemporary discourse well rendered by Foster's (2013: 200) discussion of discourses about generations at work.

What particularly interests me is how officers deploy these discourses in order to make sense of the ways in which current transformations in the security field impacts daily borderwork. Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) have brilliantly shown how the current socio-economic context favors the emergence of a new type of subjectivity at work where labor does not require as much an attitude of dedication to an employer as a commitment to geographic mobility and an acceptance of widespread social insecurity sustained by precarious employment. However, contemporary cohorts of officers who grew up in this

context are hired in a state bureaucracy that still expects a certain sense of long-term dedication to public service and the ability to work within a hierarchical structure increasingly modelled on policing organizations.

My interviewees deliberately and repetitively drew my attention to the fact that, nowadays, a border officer position represents less a career option than a first step in an individualized and ascending career path within the security field. In contrast to their experienced colleagues who spent their careers working as frontline border officers and were "tattooed with the organization", recently recruited officers see the border agency as a level playing field offering diverse possibilities for career advancement. This notion of border services as a land of opportunities is especially strong for rookie and mid-career officers with the necessary credentials. Denis, hired at the end of the 1990s, was enthused about the array of career possibilities awaiting a border officer. He described how someone employed by the CBSA can become a supervisor, a chief of operations or an analyst and noted that officers could even be deployed overseas in international airports. Other officers spoke of the possibility to be transferred to the CBSA's headquarters in Ottawa, a significant social status leap in the border organization, yet sometimes viewed critically by officers who would prefer such positions to be available regionally. This was Samuel's (quoted in chapter 3) but also Richard's opinion: "That's always the thing, you know if you work for the government, everybody wants to be in Ottawa and it's like pff... Well everybody has this elitist idea of it. If you go to Ottawa, you're really doing something". As seen in the last chapter, rookies do not all aspire to move away; those

working close to home generally express the wish to stay put, but still think of exploring the different positions offered in their region.

In fact, these officers are waiting for incoming retirements to create a staff reshuffling in the entire border organization—including ports of entry, regional in-land offices and Ottawa's headquarters. Vincent, who holds a university degree but has only a few years of work experience at the border, provided a useful metaphor for illustrating the great expectations of young frontline border personnel. He was "waiting for the geyser", seeing himself at the bottom of a gushing spring, naturally ascending the promotional ladder after the retirement of older managers.

There is an increasing gap between the expectations raised by improved educational credentials of contemporary cohorts of officers, a selective enrolment process and a demanding training on the one hand, and the repetitive, routine-like and monotonous nature of frontline borderwork on the other. This gap has also been underscored by Alain and Grégoire (2008) in the case of Québec police officers. At the same time, this new breed of officers shows individualization needs (e.g. career prospect, self-realization, life-work balance) that especially contrast with the demands of policing and security organizations that still require a modicum of *esprit de corps* and self-sacrifice from their recruits (Marcotte and Dion 2011).

In policing and security organizations, as in all bureaucracies, most frontline personnel is destined to be employed in the lower echelons of what—despite Vincent's reversed geyser image—remains a pyramidal rank structure, with most positions to be filled at the bottom of the organizational ladder. The CBSA employs about 13,000 persons, more than

7,200 of whom work as uniformed officers and another sizeable number as administrative staff. In a context of budgetary restrictions, current retirements do not necessarily open up new positions. In one particular port, rookie officers kept applying to different positions that remained "acting" (i.e. temporary). They could hold them for a few months but these positions were not officially opened to competition that would have led to more permanent promotions. Coupled with recent budget cuts in border services that are reducing intelligence staff, rookies' prospects of promotion face organizational constraints.

It remains to be seen what impact these trends will have on these officers' attitude towards their work over the years. Perhaps, as Marcotte and Dion (2011) suggest in the case of police officers, these recruits will bring change in the security field with their improved education and their less "tattooed", more nuanced commitment to the security organization for which they work. In fact, research on the relation between policing and education suggests the importance of educational and promotional schemes in designing a novel occupational ethos; university education would provide officers with a critical perspective and offer the potential to change policing into a more "sophisticated institution" (Lee and Punch 2004: 233-249). Or perhaps William was right when he asked the rookies he trains: "Can you swear that in 30 years, you will have the same determination, the same motivation, with all that we went through here: to ask for, to want things and to be told no, to be snubbed. In 30 years, if I visit you, you will be the same as what you are now, all fired up? Let me doubt that. Let me doubt that".

## **Conclusion**

When questioned about their daily work practices, officers offer a complex portrayal of their use of border control means and their significance for accomplishing borderwork. Taking its cue from these descriptions, this ethnographic chapter closely detailed how distinct generational approaches to borderwork are embedded in the work routines and conceptions of border control held by frontline Canadian security professionals. In particular, I examined how generational struggles in ports of entry point to a security field-specific regime of distinction. By conferring esteem or potentially leading to in-port marginalization, the everyday practices of border officers involve a wide register of struggles for prestige, which is made manifest in officers' variegated access to higher pay and promotions, in their understanding of the purpose of border control and their selective recourse to enforcement tools.

By embodying "old ways" and "new ways" of performing borderwork, officers problematize official understandings of border control. Approached ethnographically, borderwork does not appear as a clear-cut "security and trade facilitation" mandate already formed and clearly presented on a platter to security professionals for its straightforward implementation. In contrast, officers' narratives suggest the variability of concrete security practices and their anchoring in intersecting but distinct temporalities of border control. Consequently, generational approaches to borderwork are one of the tangible manifestations, particular to security organizations, of contemporary transformations in the regulatory role given to the Canada-U.S. border. As such, studying generational tensions in ports of entry sheds ethnographic light on the effects of the

recent passage of customs authorities into the security field and on transitioning organizational cultures of border control.

## CONCLUSION: Border Control as Practice

### Introduction

I began this dissertation by exposing an ethnographic *parti pris* inspired by the scarcity of empirical research into the experiences and practices of border officials. My intention was to provide a fine-grained analysis of the dynamics shaping the daily work of frontline security officials involved in the regulation of cross-border commodity flows. I described in my introduction how I set out to do research in a closed social world, the Canada Border Services Agency, and how my focus evolved as I advanced my research. From an investigation into how security and open-market logics interacted in border officers' work, I became interested in the ways in which the practices of security actors intersect with, shape and transform border priorities as well as the organizations involved in the governance of borders.

At the end of this research journey, what have we learned? Dedicated to the exploration of the micro-politics of border control at the Canada-U.S. border, this dissertation makes a series of arguments. Starting with the case of "commercial" border services officers, I have detailed how these officials organize, perform and understand borderwork and the repercussions for our comprehension of border control and security. While I was concerned with detailing the specifics of customs operations for Canadian border authorities, I also investigated—from the perspective of border officers—the implementation of an array of legal, administrative, technological and organizational reforms and their consequences upon the working lives of frontline security professionals. Most notably, I demonstrated that the incorporation of Canadian customs



into the security field—that is, its gradual replacement of economic protectionism and of a relative ambassadorial stance with an open-market logic and a border policing sensibility—has not happened overnight. It remains an unfinished process—one that alters the very meaning of borderwork. As a result, questions such as: What purpose should border control serve? How should it be performed and by whom?, come up in subtle and unexpected ways time and again. For instance, such questions arise in the manner officers evaluate and sanction a truck driver, in their decisions to associate with some colleagues and not with others, and in their appreciation of the relative effectiveness of a particular technological tool or of a more traditional policing technique. Through officers' accounts, border control emerges as a set of mediated processes that can be studied in specific contexts and local settings, and as an activity caught amidst tensions between security actors contending with the disembedding dynamics constitutive of the security field. Consequently, this dissertation makes a fundamental claim. By combining the insights of the sociology of policing and the sociology of generations, with those of border and security studies, I have ultimately argued for a better appreciation of *border control as practice*. As soon as security is considered to be enacted, with observable—and sometimes unexpected—effects on border policy, it can no longer be viewed as the sole result of discursive, political, legislative or technological changes. These changes are always intertwined, incorporated and challenged in the everyday work of security officials.

Approaching border control as practice means starting with a series of mundane questions that focus on what security actors actually *do*: What are the everyday practices of border

security professionals? What are their tasks, roles, tactics and strategies? What are their work routines and habits? What resources do they rely on for border governance (technologies, infrastructures, training, enforcement tools, legal powers and policies)? How do they cooperate or compete with other agencies intervening in border spaces? Which kinds of networks and social relations do they foster?<sup>126</sup> Providing answers to these questions certainly helps to alleviate our deficiency in empirical knowledge of the intricacies of border policing. But such investigations must go beyond detailed descriptions of borderwork. In fact, examined from the everyday experience of institutional border actors, the question of practice thus becomes essential for understanding contemporary problematizations of security. As a set of legal, expert and technical responses to complex political and economic problems that threaten to impede or illicitly benefit from the global circulation of privileged people and commodities (e.g. terrorism, drug traffic, migrant smuggling), a variety of actors (from politicians, policing officials and bureaucrats to industry stakeholders) present different, and sometimes contradictory, answers to issues raised by the governance of mobilities. It is these answers that come together under the label of "border control". Taking security as a set of variegated practices that maintain complex relationships with security discourses, legal regimes and border-related policies, a sociological approach to border control adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of security. It does so by investigating how these answers are negotiated "on the ground" in the practices of security professionals, and with what effects on border priorities.

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<sup>126</sup> I have developed these questions together with Federica Infantino in a call for paper towards a collaborative publication project undertaken with Mark Salter and forthcoming in *Security Dialogue*.

This approach has helped me uncover some unique dimensions of border control, leading me to formulate four propositions explored throughout this dissertation. First, in its most simple expression, *frontline border control is a learned endeavour* requiring a particular shaping of security professionals' embodied practice over time. Achieved through formal and informal aspects of their training, this process contributes to the production of historically anchored forms of conduct. In addition, border officers' generational accounts of transformations in border control suggest that *borderwork evolves in a more multifaceted temporal world* than we previously thought. Nostalgia, anachronism, the future, the contemporary are all invoked by border officers as they classify their practices and that of their colleagues. Thirdly, far from only leading to their deterritorialization, *the diffusion of borders is productive of changing regulatory and policing dynamics at the local level*, which—intertwined with the political economy of border regions—carries significant consequences for thinking the organization of work within security agencies. Finally, the disembedding of border control invites us to reconsider *how we approach issues of power in border control*, including border officers' concrete use of their legal powers but also the political clout of low-level security professionals. This includes how they themselves think, and problematize, border control.

### **Practice I: Frontline Border Control as a Learned Endeavour**

I have highlighted in chapters 4, 5 and 6 how the introduction of a variety of enforcement-related technologies in land border ports of entry produces new sets of bodily dispositions that seem to challenge established borderwork habits. Inquiring into the slow incorporation of the firearm into work routines, chapter 4 allowed for the

examination of the everyday experience of guns for frontline security personnel and its significance for understanding borderwork. My fieldwork gave indications that, even while firearms remain incompletely introduced in Canadian ports of entry, gun training is already substantially modifying officers' conduct. Guns heighten a sense of vigilance in those who carry them and favour the embracing of an occupational sensibility more attuned with an understanding of border control as a law enforcement activity.

Nevertheless, it takes time to nurture, foster and develop such habits. In fact, there is a more or less long process involved in getting acquainted with this techno-material culture; border officers need to learn how to use these tools and incorporate them into their work routines. Arguing that more fundamental changes accompany the shift towards arming and the armed training of officers, chapter 5 explored the distinct strategies through which career/mid-career and rookie border officers have learned the skills, attitudes and know-how specific to their occupation. Intertwining the incorporation of long-standing and more recent bodily dispositions, these strategies are based on different conceptions of borderwork. Removed from ports of entry, the officers' hiring and early learning has been streamlined. Starting at Customs College, both the curriculum but also the informal aspect of this training (including the stress and fear of failure experienced at "Rigaud") are central to the adoption of a policing sensibility by current recruits.

However, I have also shown how becoming a border officer presents significant continuities. In particular, I have suggested that everyday borderwork activities such as examinations—that is, interviewing travelers, looking for "risk indicators" or searching vehicles—are acquired practices. They require a significant investment in honing

techniques of listening and seeing that are passed on from experienced to rookie officers, and adjusted as each officer makes these techniques his and her own. Finally, I have shown how this process includes an apprenticeship in the art of perfecting attitudes, motions and postures that are at the basis of officers' ability to display authority when faced with travelers and truck drivers. This apprenticeship entails gendered nuances—female officers especially experience the need to sharpen the affective dispositions associated with authority.

The ways in which security professionals learn their trade have been overlooked in literatures exploring the operations of security, surveillance, global policing and border control. Moreover, there has been little investigation into the influence of this learning process upon the conduct, self-understanding and sensibility of frontline security officials. In the hope of alleviating this deficiency in our empirical knowledge, my research with Canadian border officers has shed light on how dynamics of change in the security field are closely related to the reform of the professional socialization of border officers. By doing so, it underscores the importance of viewing border control as a learned practice.

## **Practice II: The multifaceted temporalities of borderwork**

As policing and security agencies are increasingly subjected to an organizational instability that transpires in their modes of professional socialization, those agencies tasked with securing cross-border mobilities tend to employ security professionals with nuanced understandings of how their work should be done, by whom and for which purposes. If border control is considered to be a learned, acquired practice, the next step

is to investigate how historically anchored conceptions of borderwork are acquired during the professional socialization of security professionals. These conceptions can be found interacting within these organizations as security actors debate the appropriateness of security strategies, border technologies and enforcement methods in different contexts. These debates—reviewed in chapter 6—are reflected in the everyday tensions and ordinary disagreements between my interviewees over the effectiveness of examination methods and the usefulness of enforcement databases or over the variegated importance of experience, technological skills and post-secondary education. Moreover, they point to the richness and complexity of the temporalities in which borderwork is deployed. It is the interactions between these approaches, techniques and understandings of security, and the ways in which they are constructed differently as contemporary or antiquated by security actors, that gradually became objects for investigation during this research project.

As argued in chapter 1, empirical research into the practices of security actors reveals that, even if they are often characterized by a concern with uncertainty and by an array of political and technical interventions geared towards its pre-emption, the actions, understandings and sensibilities of security professionals nevertheless appear to be entrenched in diverse temporalities of border control. Different representations of skills, training, know-how, attitudes and enforcement tools come together in ports of entry along temporal scales that are defined in generational terms. By speaking of borderwork as a generational practice, I wished to avoid any substantialist understanding of the notion; generations of border control are not reducible to specific groups of persons with given

social usages circumscribed in time. In contrast, generational approaches to borderwork combine elements of what border officers see as being the old and the new—the past and the future—coming together in their practice. My research particularly underscored how these temporal assessments allowed border officers, as well as the agency they work for, to classify them along scales of distinction that opened or limited access to a series of perks and resources. These occupational understandings and different experiences of professional socialization—combined with such classifications regarding the more or less contemporary character of borderwork practices—point to how border officers deal with recent transformations in their line of work. The discordant but intertwined temporalities of border control deployed by my interviewees thus point to the socially constructed and subjective experience of time and change within the security field.

### **Practice III: New articulations of the local in border policing**

As much as they are concerned with the governance of mobilities, it is widely acknowledged in border studies that border authorities now extend their reach outside and within the geopolitical limits of the state. A major contemporary phenomena, this diffusion of borders led to a renewal of social scientific interest in borderlands. Since the 1990s, studies of borderlands gradually expanded into investigations of deterritorialized borders—legally blurred (some say exceptional) spaces characteristic of our globalized condition that facilitate some of the most significant political and economic interventions of our time. However, this does not mean that borders are simply disembedded without any anchoring in settings where people and things move. Diffused borders remain inhabited social worlds. My research illuminates the aspects of disembedded border

control that are made possible by the everyday labour performed by security officials posted in ports of entry and, as such, it demonstrates how the diffusion of borders is also productive of changing regulatory and policing dynamics at the local level. As we have seen, these dynamics unfold in two ways. They appear early on during the professional socialization of officers and they later manifest themselves in the everyday work life of frontline security officials.

We have seen in chapter 5 that while former hiring and training procedures encouraged continuity in work habits and in officers' concern for a port's impact on the local economy, the reform of the Canadian border agency in the wake of its incorporation into the security field includes the development of new models of professional socialization for border officers. These models now promote a national hiring process that is meant to introduce non-local recruits in ports of entry, as well as to develop a more marked interest for law enforcement in new officers. Nonetheless, I have shown that the transforming political economy of Eastern Canadian borderlands, including the gradual disappearance of well-paid, unionized and stable employment in those regions, represents major arguments for attracting prospective officers. Changes in the hiring and training of officers thus contribute to reshape recruits' understandings of their impact on local residents and businesses, but they do not remove local considerations from their professional socialization.

New articulations of the local in border control can also be found in a remodelled division of labour in and between ports of entry. Chapter 3 described how, following the gradual centralization of intelligence-led border policing in risk management centres, the



introduction of industry-based risk management and the automatization of aspects of customs clearance, frontline customs officers have seen some of their former tasks and decision-making abilities removed to other locations. But these transformations have also intensified officers' resentment and suspicion towards higher management in the border agency in face of variegated trends that undermine their traditional wide-ranging and legally entrenched discretion at the border.

#### **Practice IV: Revisiting officers' powers and political influence**

I introduced the ethnographic part of this dissertation in chapter 3 by illustrating the distinct occupational sensibility of commercial border officers and underlining how a significant part of this sensibility rests in undervaluing their own authority over truck drivers. It may then seem surprising to read that officers' ability to use discretion has effectively been reduced. I consider what we learn about discretion, but also more broadly regarding the power dynamics in which officers locate themselves as they attempt to find their way in the security field. Throughout this dissertation, I have suggested that transformations in the meaning and practice of borderwork have had significant consequences on frontline border officers' effective authority and on how they establish themselves as influential security actors. As border officers have become one among many public and private security officials involved in regulating an increasingly diffused border space, researching how and when low-level security professionals can concretely act requires a nuanced view.

It is commonly accepted that border officers in most countries benefit from exceptional policing prerogatives, which, in Canada, are entrenched in customs legislation. The

literature generally (and correctly) emphasizes how officers may use these powers in ways that discriminate against certain types of travelers or that associate vulnerable border crossers with risk rather than recognizing their need for hospitality as they are fleeing want and/or conflict. But, this recognition of the sometimes violent character of contemporary border control should not prevent an investigation into the increasing material limitations on frontline security official's discretion. Such an investigation needs to be contextualized: it is highly probable that an immigration border officer in an airport might have more use for his legal discretion than a commercial officer at the land border. But as border control has been technologized in ways that remove some of this authority beyond ports of entry and distributes it to a plurality of other security actors—including higher-up border officials—frontline border officers are relinquishing their monopoly on decision-making in border regulation matters. This new division of labour between both ports of entry and other security actors, along with the partial deskilling of commercial border officers and their related loss of clout, has modified their understanding of discretion. My interviewees appear to view this discretionary power both as a symbolic reward and as a response to administrative and technological complexity in their work. In addition, Canadian border officers have strategically negotiated, as a politically organized group and with relative success, these transformations in their work and their overall social status as border actors in the security field. However debated in ports of entry, their union's campaign to obtain arming can be understood as a way to strengthen their members' position in a domain of multiplying governance actors by posing border

officers as *bona fide* border law enforcers. Low-policing officials can actively shape border control priorities through collective organizing, lobbying and media coverage.

## **Conclusion**

It is a miserable, grey and humid winter day. I have driven to this port of entry to interview a funny, chatty and self-assured border officer. Gesticulating across the table from me as we sit in a meeting room in his port of entry, Richard wonders aloud what would make an "entertaining" interview for me. Would it be a dull description of his use of different customs programs and technologies, or the exciting enforcement tales he has been telling me about for the past two hours?

Richard: Well, let me ask you: what's the more entertaining interview? Is it the BSOs or is it anyone doing E-manifesting<sup>127</sup>? Like I mean... [*laughs*]. I mean I don't know, you tell me, you could say the E-manifesting, I won't be offended but...

Karine: No! But that's why I didn't interview people in Ottawa or... I just interview BSOs...

R: It would be like watching paint dry.

K: Because I wanted to know more about what was happening at the border on an everyday basis.

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<sup>127</sup> As a reminder, e-Manifest is the new umbrella program which fusions customs and enforcement data collection for risk analysis. See chapter 3. BSO stands for Border Services Officer, the official designation for most of my interviewees.

R: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty much business as usual most days. And most days you're coming to work, you're not arresting people, most days, you're coming to work...

I think the best way to describe it is you always hear people say: "Oh you guys must do a lot, hey?" and I think... I usually don't get into the details of it but normally I'll say: "There is more than you hear about, but less than you may think." It is what happens at the border. More enforcement than you'll read about in the paper happens at the border, but less enforcement than most people think happens at the border. And the reason is because most people [travelers, drivers] are pretty good, right? You watch "Cops", or you watch "The Border" [*television series*] or you watch whatever, it's like guess what? Every single night, they're taking somebody down and it's like well... You know, that's not the case.

At the time, neither Richard nor I could know that his fascinating stories and his manner of telling them, combined with his colleagues' long descriptions of their use of "e-Manifesting", electronic declarations and customs clearance programs, of how they proceeded to secondary inspections and how they interviewed truck drivers, would represent essential elements of the arguments presented in this dissertation. While tales of enforcement cued me to the transforming occupational identity of commercial border officers, descriptions of everyday work routines provided indications of a changing division of labour within ports of entry and led me to further investigate the importance of generational tensions between border officers. It is my hope that after having read this story of the passage of Canadian customs into the security field, we have a better grasp of

everyday, "street-level" borderwork, where "there is more [happening] than you hear about, but less than you may think."

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## Appendix A: Interview Schedule

- 1) Are you from the area?
- 2) How did you get into the CBSA? Tell me about your work history.
- 3) Could you tell me about the training you receive(d)?
- 4) Can you tell me about your work routine?
- 5) Could you tell me about working with other branches of the CBSA, with other Canadian government agencies and with US partners?
- 6) What sort of information do you use in your work?
- 7) Could you describe how you worked before you had access to these different sources of information and technologies?
- 8) Could you describe what happens when a truck driver stops at your booth?
- 9) How do you decide to refer someone for secondary inspection?<sup>128</sup>
- 10) Have you ever refused entry to Canada? On what grounds?
- 11) Could you tell me stories of interception of illegal goods?
- 12) There are many programs of which truck drivers, carriers and shippers may become a member, or need to participate in (ex: e-Manifest, PIP or FAST). Could you tell me stories about these programs and how they participate in border security?
- 13) How do you know you are doing a good job?
- 14) Since you started working as a border agent, what changes did you observe in border security?
- 15) How did events and agreements such as NAFTA, 9/11, lumber crisis (and others) impact your work?
- 16) Where you would like to be in 10 years?

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<sup>128</sup> Restricted question, see introduction.