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**RESEARCH PROGRESS REPORT #3
(June 2019)**

***Development, diplomacy, and expertise:
Placing state bureaucratic labour in the CIDA-DFAIT merger***

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This is the third annual research report for the SSHRC-funded project *Development, diplomacy, and expertise: Placing state bureaucratic labour in the CIDA-DFAIT merger*, summarizing progress and achievements in the third and final year of new funding, May 2018 through June 2019. Research with remaining SSHRC funds will be ongoing through March 2020.

The project remains focused on the processes, impacts, and changes associated with the amalgamation of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), since 2013 within Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The research has to date examined how the merger of development, foreign, and trade policy institutions has altered the labour of professional officer-level experts and the role of policy expertise in the amalgamated department. As noted in the previous two research reports, this project aims to build a “labour geography” of Global Affairs Canada, examining the operation of and changes within the department as it works through challenges and builds on opportunities created by the merger, starting with the day-to-day work and professional identities of its development, political, trade, and consular officers. In the third year, the research has drawn attention to constructions and practices associated with ideas of professionalism within GAC, the role of training and knowledge at and for officers at the working level, and the relationship between headquarters and foreign posts and the geographies of rotational service.

Summary from Years 1 and 2

The first and second research reports, completed in June 2017 and June 2018, are publicly available by download as pdf files from the University of Windsor’s Scholarship at UWindsor catalog at, respectively, <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/1/> and <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/28/>. The first report summarized results from a pilot project carried out prior to obtaining SSHRC support and the first year of SSHRC project funding; the second report summarized findings from the second year of SSHRC funding. Several key themes regarding the CIDA-DFAIT merger and the evolution of Global Affairs Canada were identified in the first two reports:

- The importance of the CIDA-DFAIT amalgamation as an example of an important aid donor and middle power reworking connections between its development, diplomatic, and trade institutions, and of the difficulties inherent in such a merger, especially around forging a new, common institutional or corporate culture and the restructuring of internal mechanisms for reporting, classifying positions, and organizing policy expertise and experience.
- No singular set of best practices or ideal model exists for this kind of institutional merger between official development assistance (ODA) and foreign and trade policy institutions, though numerous developed states have undertaken similar attempts at restructuring in the

last two decades. The drivers of and obstacles for such mergers are context-specific and dependent on political conditions, leadership, and projects in each state.

- Challenges continue to exist even after amalgamation and have persisted for several years. The most important is also the most intangible, namely, the emergence of a perception that the department cannot effectively identify, organize, and deploy the skills and expertise that exist within its professional officer ranks. Compounding this is the relative lack of knowledge within each stream of the work carried out in the other streams; this is particularly the case between the cohort of trade and political officers from former DFAIT and the development officers from former CIDA. Even in year 3 of the project and six years following the initial merger, this remains the most salient point from the research.
- The amalgamation has had differential impacts within headquarters and in Canada's missions abroad, as well as between different geographic branches where the department has altered reporting mechanisms and information flow between posts and Ottawa. The size and location of the mission, the relative weight of political, trade, and development sections within the country portfolio, the position of the country in Canadian foreign policy, and even the physical layout of the mission's built infrastructure, all shape the amalgamation's impact on the mission and the relationship between the mission and HQ.
- Several dozen in-depth interviews with respondents in the consular, development, political, and trade streams, as well as an online survey conducted in November and December 2017, indicate that the emergence of a more cohesive and unitary institutional culture is slow to form at the working level. Interview participants often expressed concern with career advancement opportunities, distrust of management and human resources systems, pessimism about the value the department places on the working level, and an erosion of cohesive training programs and skills development. Many also noted positives and opportunities emerging from amalgamation over time, including chances to work with colleagues in other streams, greater understanding of other streams' work, and increasing attempts to create cross-cutting projects that brought policy areas together.

In the past year, the primary investigator has focused on these themes more fully, looking especially at the issue of recruitment, training, and skills development; institutional culture in the merged department, as expressed through the links between conceptions of professionalism, gender, work, and dress codes in the department; and the experience, importance, and organization of rotationality within the foreign service, including historical research and some comparison with the US foreign service, as well as emphasis on the physical space and variability of diplomatic missions abroad. The next section details specific research activities taken in the past year, followed by a summary of research findings.

Year 3 – Research and Dissemination Activities

Since June 2018, the following research and dissemination activities have been completed. Data collected have been analyzed and summarized by the PI and with the support of a graduate research assistant at the University of Windsor who is currently in the Department of Political Science MA program.

- In-depth interviews with several individuals identified as term employees or ‘early career officers,’ here defined as within the first 12 years of their careers at GAC or its predecessor institutions.
- A multi-day visit to a Canadian mission in Africa to conduct in-depth interviews and observe the functioning of a foreign post where the majority of Canada-based personnel work in the development stream. Including the interviews with early career respondents and those interviewed during the mission visit, approximately 85 interviews in total have been conducted as part of this research project.
- Content analysis of approximately 30 interview transcripts with retired US foreign service officers conducted by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) and available to the public via the ADST website at <https://adst.org/oral-history/oral-history-interviews/#gsc.tab=0>.
- Presentation of research on institutional culture and dress codes in the merged Global Affairs Canada at the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG)/International Geographical Union (IGU) joint conference in Québec City, QC, in August 2018.
- Presentation of research on rotationality and the Canadian and US foreign services at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG) in Washington, DC, in April 2019.
- Submitted papers to *Political Geography* and another academic journal, with the former published in April 2019 as an open access article (available for download at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0962629818303032>), and the latter revised and resubmitted in June 2019.

Year 3 – Research Results

Preliminary findings from the past year of this research project are summarized below. These build primarily on data from interviews and the mission visit, content analysis of primary materials such as interviews, and secondary literature reviews, as well as papers presented at the CAG and AAG conferences in, respectively, August 2018 and April 2019.

Institutional culture, dress codes, and ‘professionalism’: Over the course of numerous interviews, many participants had noted work clothing as a kind of shorthand or visible marker

of institutional culture. Participants often made these points in passing as a way of delineating differences, in particular, between the development stream (with reference to Birkenstocks and ‘hippie clothes’) and the political and trade streams (epitomized by a well-tailored men’s suit) and were linked to older and more entrenched ideas about the differences between DFAIT and CIDA prior to amalgamation. Though the PI sometimes asked directly about clothing stereotypes, especially in interviews in years 2 and 3 of the research, participants often identified or joked about such stereotypical clothing on their own in discussing how they perceive and navigate institutional and cultural differences post-amalgamation. In the past year of the research, the PI collated the points regarding work clothing from numerous interviews and developed an analysis of this in relation to diplomatic and institutional culture and the role of gender in shaping differing perceptions of work and professionalism in the department.

As noted above, the different streams of work undertaken by officers in GAC often remain siloed, and ideas and stereotypes about development officers in Birkenstocks or foreign service officers in suits and ties reflect these divisions. Gender is relevant here as a framework for understanding why these stereotypes persist, even when they are not borne out in practice (i.e., very few actually wear Birkenstock sandals to work at GAC). As the public service in general and the foreign service in particular have become more open to women, the informal codes that express the relative political and social importance of one’s work, the institutional place of that work within GAC, and the ‘professionalism’ of those undertaking it, have shifted as well. The formal men’s suit-and-tie remains, in many ways, the taken-for-granted yardstick of professional appearance and political importance, though the CIDA-DFAIT amalgamation has destabilized and reordered many longstanding patterns and practices in the department. Informal, everyday understandings of the link between clothing, gender, work, and professionalism are part of this. The PI presented a preliminary version of this analysis in August 2018 at the CAG/IGU conference in Québec City, and along with research assistant Joshua Bowman, has developed it into an article-length manuscript for academic publication. A revised version is currently under review, and will be shared with respondents once accepted for publication.

Recruitment, training, skills development, and the FS-IA exercise: As noted in the summary of previous years’ research, one major point of emphasis that has developed is the sometimes ad hoc nature of training and skills development, both at the outset of officers’ careers and across the length of their career in the department. In general, respondents have indicated that the training received by trade, consular, development, and political officers when they begin working in the department differs markedly according to position and stream, as is to be expected, though political officers in particular have noted the erosion of training programs that formerly created more distinct cohorts and uniformity of experience and skills within the FS ranks. The department’s move to a competency-based system for regular review and promotion within the working levels makes a focus on recruitment, training, and skills development vital to the ongoing process of amalgamation, the development of a cohesive and productive corporate

culture in the department, and the successful recruitment of the next generation of GAC officers. The PI sought out ‘early career’ (defined as in the first 10-12 years of their career in GAC and/or CIDA and DFAIT) and term employees in the past year of research to examine whether and how newer entrants to the department’s ranks view these issues, as they had less or no experience with the predecessor institutions’ systems, and will likely spend the bulk or entirety of their careers in the merged department (barring, of course, further institutional shifts). Eleven early career and term respondents, recruited through snowball techniques, were interviewed from February through June 2019. As indicated in survey results collected in year 2 of the research, the primary variable that shapes one’s position on the benefits and challenges of the CIDA-DFAIT amalgamation is years of working experience in the department and its predecessor institutions. Discussions with early career and term employees suggest that newer hires tend to have a different perception than more senior colleagues of the department’s ability to merge and bridge different streams’ work and mandates, the career opportunities that might be available to them across streams, and the skills and competencies that will be required and how to obtain them. This cohort is by no means uniform, however, and while the sample size is small, these respondents, along with others who fit the same early career and term profile interviewed in the first two years of this research, indicate some general trends that need more attention in the final year of the research project funding.

These are first, that knowledge of training and skills development opportunities and newly introduced competency maps and terminology is uneven across the department; second, that the ability to take advantage of opportunities remains uneven and in part dependent on one’s immediate manager, physical location, and budgetary constraints; and third, that establishing useful long-term professional networks in the department and among colleagues increasingly occurs through extended social networks imported from officers’ educational institutions (such as Carleton University’s Norman Paterson School of International Affairs) or through ad hoc event and cohort groupings that often rely on social media organizing or individual initiative. This also relates strongly to the ongoing exercise in which the department is converting several dozen PM positions at missions abroad to FS positions focused on international assistance. This exercise has come up in almost all interviews conducted in years 2 and 3 of the research, and has generated considerable anxiety at the working level. Many, though by no means all, respondents suggest that GAC’s communication of the benefits of converting positions for individuals, missions, and the department as a whole has been inadequate, and that the process by which officers applied and were selected for the new FS positions has been opaque and unfair. Yet some respondents also noted that such positions, crossing streams while also testing the flexibility of HR systems and employment classifications, are likely to become more common and perhaps necessary under the conditions following from the CIDA-DFAIT merger and the need to make the department’s many mandates and streams more coherent and complementary.

Rotationality and living and working at mission: The past year's focus on rotationality as a condition of work in the foreign service is a new front in this project and for geographies of diplomacy generally. Rotationality is a fundamental feature of almost all states' diplomatic institutions and foreign services, and in the research conducted so far in this project, the PI and the research assistant have examined examples from Canada and the US across three themes related to rotationality and living and working at missions abroad: first, embassy location and design; second, the relationship between rotationality, social and workplace cohesion, national interest, and transnational culture in the foreign service; and finally, the extended character of diplomatic work and its relationship with family life and work-life balance. These themes have built from historical research and data collection through interviews and embassy visits within this SSHRC-funded project, and will be, along with the focus on recruitment, training, and skills development, one of the two major themes in the final year of SSHRC funding. The PI and research assistant Joshua Bowman prepared and presented an initial paper identifying the three themes identified above for the AAG conference in Washington, DC, in April 2019. The focus on rotationality and the work and life of officers at missions abroad adds to an understanding of the institutional and social relationships between foreign posts and HQ, and the nature of social life at mission, not just within GAC but in diplomatic institutions more broadly.

Year 4 – Planned Research Activities

In the final year of SSHRC funding, the PI will continue to focus on two major themes identified above: first, recruitment, training, and skills development as a primary component of how expertise in GAC is produced and reproduced; and second, how rotationality operates in the foreign service to organize institutional culture, diplomatic work, and social life at missions abroad. A second research assistant, an undergraduate student in the University of Windsor's International Relations program, will join the research team in fall 2019, and papers based on the presentation given at the 2019 AAG conference and detailed above will be prepared and submitted for publication in academic journals. The PI will conduct a further 5 to 10 interviews with term and early career officers, as well as additional secondary source research and collection of primary materials such as documents related to competency frameworks and workspace changes. The PI will also seek to conduct at least 5 interviews with individuals in GAC's human resources section. The fourth and final research report for dissemination in summer 2020 will provide a more comprehensive presentation of research findings across the breadth of the research project, and will offer a set of policy recommendations for departmental stakeholders to consider.