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# Gendering Public Policy or Rationalizing Gender? Strategic Interventions and GBA+ Practice in Canada

Francesca Scala *Concordia University*
Stephanie Paterson *Concordia University*

## Introduction

Feminist politics throughout the West has undergone significant change in the past few decades, enhancing the position of the bureaucracy as a key site of gender politics (Walby, 2011). In Canada, replacing much of the gender equality policy architecture of the "women's state" is an administrative machinery that seeks to integrate gender into all policies and programmes. Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) and, more recently, GBA+, is based on the feminist /intersectional understanding that all policies have potential to impact social groups differently, thereby creating and sustaining unequal power relations (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003: Rankin and Vickers, 2001). As a result, and despite longstanding concerns over the role of bureaucracies in sustaining unequal gender relations (for example, Eisenstein, 1995; Ferguson, 1984; Stivers, 2002), federal public servants are increasingly expected to not simply respond to feminist knowledge(s), but to incorporate them into policy making and bureaucratic practice (Squires, 2007; Walby, 2011).

Francesca Scala, Department of Political Science, Concordia University, 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., Montreal QC, H3 G 1M8, email: francesca.scala@concordia.ca
Stephanie Paterson. Department of Political Science, Concordia University, 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., Montreal, Quebec H3 G 1M8, email: stephanie.paterson@concordia.ca

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Despite its origins in feminist activism and advocacy (for example, Burt and Hardman, 2001), the transformative potential of GBA+ remains a matter of debate involving concerns about its position within the bureaucracy (Grace, 1997), privileging gender over other axes of oppression (Hankivsky, 2005, 2012), policy instrument mix (McNutt, 2010) and adopting a technocratic-rationalist model, which not only squeezes out community voices (Rankin and Wilcox, 2004) but also reproduces gendered and gendering discourses that shape inequality (Grace, 1997; Paterson, 2010). Little is known, however, about the actual policy work required of GBA+ and how this reflects or resists the feminist knowledge(s) that give it shape. As it operates in and on bureaucracies, it is up to bureaucrats to interpret, adapt and operationalize GBA+ frameworks. Therefore, how bureaucrats interpret and apply GBA+, as well as the role of bureaucratic culture in helping or hindering GBA+'s transformative potential, remain matters of inquiry.

In this paper, we speak to this gap by illuminating how gender analysts navigate the complex terrain of gender mainstreaming in the Canadian federal bureaucracy. Inspired by feminist institutionalism and research on gender and organizations, the article explores how GBA+ analysts are simultaneously enabled and constrained by bureaucratic discourses and practices in their efforts to make gender and diversity matter in policy work. Feminist scholarship has shown that the worlds of feminism and bureaucracy are not easily reconcilable with early work arguing that state bureaucracies are inherently antithetical to the pursuit of women's empowerment and gender equality (Ferguson, 1984; Stivers, 2002). More recent work, however, reveals the bureaucracy as a potential site for feminist activism and the advancement of women's status and rights, and troubles the conceived antithesis between feminism and bureaucracies (Chappell, 2002; Lombardo and Verloo, 2007). Such work exposes the array of interventions, including institutional and discursive strategies, deployed by feminist bureaucrats in seeking change within their organizations. Moreover, challenging the binary between "resistance" and "co-optation," organizational studies of diversity work (Meyerson and Scully, 1999; Thomas and Davies, 2005) have also demonstrated how actors in bureaucratic settings effect change through complex and often ambiguous resistance strategies that simultaneously challenge and reinforce privileged discourses and practices. As such, we suggest that the gender analysts with whom we spoke act as "tempered radicals" who engaged in a number of strategies "to use multiple languages and small gains to garner incremental change" (Swan and Fox, 2010: 584).

The paper is organized as follows. First, we briefly discuss the feminist literature on the bureaucracy and the femocrat strategy, illuminating the institutional constraints and strategic practices that have been identified therein. Second, we provide a brief overview of GBA+ and its challenges

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**Abstract.** The debate surrounding the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming has revived concerns of co-optation of equality work and resistance first expressed by early feminist public administration scholars. In this article, we explore how gender analysts exercised their agency and carved out spaces within the bureaucracy to articulate and advance a gender focus in policy work. Employing discursive, institutional and relational strategies, gender analysts simultaneously used and pushed back against hierarchical bureaucratic discourses as they operationalized Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in the federal public bureaucracy. These micro-level acts of resistance, on their own, do not lead to social transformation. However, by creating spaces for feminist knowledge and activism within the state, these local strategies can contribute to the broader feminist agenda.

**Résumé.** Le débat entourant le potentiel transformateur de l'égalité des sexes a ravivé les inquiétudes de cooptation du travail en matière d'égalité des sexes et de la résistance exprimée en tout premier lieu par les premiers spécialistes féministes de l'administration publique. Dans cet article, nous examinons comment les analystes des questions de genre ont exercé leur potentiel et créé des espaces dans l'appareil bureaucratique afin d'articuler et de faire avancer l'égalité entre les sexes dans le travail sur les politiques. En employant des stratégies discursives, institutionnelles et relationnelles, les analystes des questions de genre ont utilisé et contesté simultanément les discours bureaucratiques hiérarchiques en traduisant en termes opérationnels l'Analyse comparative entre les sexes plus (ACS+) dans l'appareil public fédéral. Ces actes de résistance à un micro-niveau ne conduisent pas, en eux-mêmes, à une transformation sociale. Toutefois, en créant des espaces propices à la connaissance féministe et à l'activisme au sein de l'État, ces stratégies locales peuvent contribuer au plan d'action féministe plus élargi.

in the federal public bureaucracy. Third, we offer an analysis of the discursive, institutional and relational strategies deployed by analysts to bring gender and diversity considerations into the federal bureaucracy. We conclude with a discussion of how these local acts of resistance, while generally not perceived as being part of a broader, collectivist feminist project, can contribute to a social justice agenda.

## Feminism and the Bureaucracy: Prospects and Challenges

The prospect and challenges of pursuing a feminist agenda within and through the bureaucracy have been long debated by students of public administration and public policy. Early literature debated the (f)utility of state engagement (Ferguson, 1984) , as well as the strategic challenges presented by bureaucratic culture (Chappell, 2002; Findlay, 1997; Miller and Ravazi, 1998; Rankin and Vickers, 2001). For example, Ferguson's (1984) classic work highlighted the co-optive potential of the state, and therefore cautioned against state engagement. This perspective, however, adhered to a fixed binary of control versus resistance, where resistance was conceptualized as organized opposition to authority or repressive power. Social change, therefore, could only be achieved working outside

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of state institutions. More recent work, however, rejects a broad anti-statist perspective and instead highlights the potential of state institutions for empowering women and promoting gender equality. State feminism studies (McBride and Mazur, 2010) for example, have shown how women's policy machineries within the state have provided opportunities for feminist interventions and the development of progressive, women-friendly policies in several advanced industrialized countries. Moreover, while recognizing the gendered nature and gendering effects of institutions, feminist institutional scholars have demonstrated how "feminists can unsettle the entrenched norms in order to use institutions for their own ends" (Chappell, 2002: 11).

Feminist interventions within the state, however, are not without their challenges. Research on the "femocrat strategy," for example, unveils how feminist activists within the bureaucracy must navigate the bumpy terrain between the demands of their government employer and those of their feminist constituents (Chappell, 2002; Findlay, 2015; Malloy, 2003; Sawer, 1996). Faced with the "mandarin-missionary" dilemma (Miller and Ravazi, 1998), feminist bureaucrats often struggle to reconcile their professional role as public servants with their feminist identity and commitment (Eisenstein, 1996; Findlay, 1997). Bureaucratic norms and principles such as secrecy, neutrality, hierarchy and rule following, are often in direct conflict with their role as missionary, which calls for the active promotion of women's interests. In addition, femocrats risk being viewed as "having an agenda," thus potentially undermining their credibility and effectiveness within the bureaucracy (Eisenstein, 1996:87.). Moreover, with the emergence of hegemonic discourses emphasizing efficiency and individualism, "special interests" (that is, feminism) become the anathema of the neoliberal state, thus pitting femocrats against many of their peers (Findlay, 2015; Sawer, 1996; Teghtsoonian, 2000).

In this context, femocrats must be particularly adept at navigating these "colliding worlds" (Malloy, 2003) and exploiting opportunities to seek change. Sawer argues, "Feminists who have worked in such machinery readily acknowledge the constraints and compromises involved, the kind of bilingualism required in dominant and oppositional discourses, and the need for strong pressure from outside to be effective" (1996: 23). Similarly, Miller and Ravazi refer to femocrats as "policy entrepreneurs," highlighting the ways in which "they identify new issues; skillfully mobilize facts that can serve as justification for action; and cultivate internal allies whose support can help promote policy change" (2013: 317, citing Polsby). Moreover, as policy entrepreneurs, femocrats need to be skilled in identifying and exploiting "policy windows" to push for change and be able to effectively link preexisting or new issues with broader discourses that shape both perceptions of problems and potential solutions. The femocrat strategy suggests that resistance, both inside and outside the state, is not

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always oppositional or radical; rather, resistance strategies can also entail taking advantage of existing discursive and institutional resources to advance gender equality work within an organization. While some would dismiss these strategies as simply co-optation practices, we regard them as acts of resistance whereby "individuals exploit the looseness around meanings in a constant and simultaneous process of resistance, reproduction and reinscription" (Thomas and Davies, 2005: 699). In this study, we explore the strategies employed by gender analysts in the Canadian bureaucracy to make gender matter in policy work. Institutionally, these analysts differ from femocrats in that they are not necessarily senior bureaucrats exclusively located in government agencies assigned to address specific women's issues. However, these analysts, many of whom identify as feminists, face similar challenges when conducting and advocating for gender analysis in their agencies.

## Gender-Based Analysis (+), Feminist Interventions, and the Canadian Federal Bureaucracy

Despite a long history of women's activism and presence in the Canadian bureaucracy, the idea that women's interests should be incorporated into the policy process is relatively new. It has only been since 1995 that federal public servants outside of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have used gender-based analysis to analyse the potential impacts of policy outcomes on women. Prior to that, gender politics in Canada was largely represented by the "women's state." Established in the wake of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in the early 1970s, the women's state represented a multipronged approach to women's issues that included women's policy agencies, an advisory council and support programmes for community groups. Alongside dramatic changes to this institutional architecture, including the disbanding of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and considerable decreases in funding for community groups among others, emerged an "integrated" approach to gender politics, which aims to apply a gender lens to all policies and programmes to expose and remedy potential disparate impacts.

As part of its international commitment to gender equality, the Canadian federal government signed onto the UN Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, which included adopting a gender mainstreaming strategy. The result was GBA, an expert-bureaucratic approach that was initially organized around a hub-and-spoke model, in which Status of Women Canada (SWC) occupied a central position with respect to development, implementation, knowledge mobilization and transfer, and evaluation, and where analysis was conducted by bureaucrats at the departmental

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level (Burt and Hardman, 2001). Since its implementation, GBA has undergone significant changes. For example, since 2007, GBA is required for all cabinet submissions, which is overseen by Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). In addition, the organization and administration of GBA has shifted from a hub-and-spoke model to a more integrationist approach, in which SWC remains centrally located, particularly with respect to training and skills development, but where all public service employees, beyond just gender experts, are expected to be trained in and apply gender analysis. In order to accommodate these new demands, GBA training is now offered mostly online. Finally, in 2011 GBA was formally reoriented towards GBA+, which "takes into account how gender interacts with identity factors, such as ethnicity, age, ability, geography and other aspects of identity among individuals and within broader social structures." (Status of Women Canada, 2016).

Despite the federal government's expressed commitment to support GBA/+, a 2009 report by the Auditor General (OAG) found its application across departments to be inconsistent and incomplete (OAG, 2009). It also noted that there was limited evidence to suggest that GBA was informing policies and programme initiatives. These findings prompted the SWC, with the support of TBS and the Privy Council Office, to develop an action plan to improve training, strengthen the role of central agencies in the implementation of GBA and better monitor and assess progress. While these initiatives led to some improvements in GBA practice, a follow-up report by the OAG in 2016 found that gender-based analysis continues to be missing or incomplete in most federal departments and agencies (OAG, 2016).

As the Canadian experience with GBA+ reveals, implementation is cited as a crucial factor in its success (Meier and Celis, 2011). To date, however, much of the scholarship on gender mainstreaming and gender-based analysis has focused on evaluating the "nuts-and-bolts" of programme design, and their consequences for gender equality and transformative politics. Less attention has been paid to how gender mainstreaming is implemented by those required to contend with and interpret the edicts of GBA+ policy in their day-to-day work. No longer the remit of gender experts located exclusively in women's policy machineries, the implementation and championing of GBA+ is now left to local bureaucratic actors. In performing their work, GBA+ analysts, like femocrats, are required to balance the often competing and contradictory demands of the bureaucracy with those of the feminist knowledges that inform GBA + . To do this, they must navigate the complex space between bureaucracy and feminism.

Drawing on interviews with 13 gender analysts, we seek to uncover the opportunities and challenges of advancing gender-based analysis in a bureaucracy that values neutrality and regards any form of advocacy with suspicion. Given the small sample size of the study, we cannot generalize

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our findings to the entire Canadian civil service. Instead, our aim in this qualitative study is to describe and to understand the prospects and challenges of gender-based analysis as perceived by those who practise it in their day-to-day work as bureaucrats. We also wanted to give voice to gender analysts who, through their beliefs and actions, help shape the meaning and practice of GBA+ "on the ground." In doing so, we heed Eyben's (2012: 7) advice: "If we want to understand better how gender mainstreaming works in practice we need to pay closer attention to analysing what they [feminist bureaucrats] do and how they do it."

During 2013 and early 2014, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 federal-level gender analysts. Most interviews took place in workplace settings, though one opted to be interviewed at a coffee shop and one at her home. The interviews lasted between 60 and 85 minutes. Two interviews were group interviews, which included three participants each, and one person completed the interview questionnaire in print. While the majority of our participants were recruited through personal contacts and the federal government's official employee directory (GEDS), some were recruited via an invitation sent out by the Director of SWC. We also used the snowballing technique to identify and recruit additional participants. Our sample included representatives from both central agencies and line departments with varying levels of public service experience (four years to 40 years), and who were involved in different dimensions of GBA+, including development, training, and application. All respondents indicated support for the idea of gender equality and intersectionality, with ten respondents self-identifying as feminists. All interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. We returned interview transcripts to the participants, inviting revisions or additions to the text. Transcripts were then coded to identify salient themes with respect to the challenges and strategies of "doing GBA+" in the federal bureaucracy. Identifying references were removed to protect the identity of participants.

## Discursive Strategies

As a form of policy work, GBA+ is tasked with bringing an intersectional perspective into the development and analysis of policies and programmes. GBA+ analysts are responsible for providing information and knowledge on the potential implications of policies on women and other social groups. Like other policy analysts, they provide knowledge aimed at informing policy processes and outcomes and serving the public interest. GBA+ analysts, however, have the added obligation of pursuing social equity aims within a public bureaucracy characterized by hierarchy, neutrality and formal rules and procedures. They also have to contend with New Public Management (NPM) and its technologies of performance

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measurement and central auditing that value efficiency and effectiveness in policy work over democratic governance and social equity. In the context of NPM, policy work is expected to be evidence based as opposed to driven by ideology or subjective values. Evidence-based policy making (EBP) has been endorsed and adopted in many countries as part of a broader commitment to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government policies (Young, 2013). Regarded as a neutral and authoritative approach to policy making, EBP is said to produce policies that "deliver desired outcomes effectively, with a minimal margin of error and reduced risk of unintended consequences" (Townsend and Kunimoto, 2009: 6).

Despite these constraints, GBA+ analysts found ways to "work the spaces of power" (Newman, 2012) of bureaucratic discourses to bring gender considerations into policy work. A common discursive strategy used by our interviewees was to frame their equality work as neutral and usable policy knowledge, thereby linking it to the broader rational mission of EBP. One analyst described advocating for GBA+ in the following way: "If the best advice is that we have to look at all of these different communities, or all these different groups, and the intersecting factors of diversity, then you're doing your job. " Another interviewee also explained how she reconciled their personal commitment to social justice with their work as a public servant. "So am I an advocate? Yes, and advocate for the best possible advice. Am I an advocate for equity? Yes, because I think that supports the best possible evidence." These statements reveal that in advancing GBA+, analysts were not just passive recipients of the EBP discourse of neutrality and value-free analysis. Rather, they actively sought out ways to (re)interpret EBP to include gender and diversity concerns.

The majority of participants in this study openly identified themselves as feminists, describing a feminist as someone believing in gender equality, women's empowerment and social justice. However, while the majority of our interviewees acknowledged the feminist origins of gender mainstreaming, they chose to downplay the feminist intent of GBA+ in their work due to the negative connotations associated with the word feminism. One analyst, for example, explained that "selling" GBA+, especially to men, meant avoiding references to feminism. "You want to sell it, and you want to sell it to people who don't know how to do GBA+, particularly men—I will say, I have no problem saying that—and old school. So you have to kind of separate that notion of feminism from GBA + ." Another analyst explained that while she personally viewed GBA+ as a feminist policy, she would appeal to the discourse of professionalism when describing the merits of GBA+ to colleagues. She stated, "Personally: yes, feminist. But when I'm talking to all my colleagues, I talk about 'This is our policy as an agency, and as professionals we have to find the most effective way to implement it, because our research is showing that it makes a difference in the impact on poverty at the country level.'"

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The interview data substantiate previous research that shows how actors engaged in gender mainstreaming efforts would often downplay its feminist origins to avoid any potential backlash or hostility within their organizations. Several studies on international NGOs, for example, revealed how gender focal points would dissociate their work from feminism for fear that they would be branded as "male-bashers" or "man-haters" (Desai, 2002). GBA+ analysts in our study used a similar strategy in their efforts to make gender matter in a public bureaucracy that was not itself gender neutral. They conveyed an inherent understanding of the potential barriers they would face in advancing equality if they were to openly embody a feminist presence when promoting GBA+ in their organizations. As one analyst recounted, **"**I wouldn't call the work that I do here feminist in any, like in any conversation I'd have with my superiors, I wouldn't use it because it is an explicitly politicized approach, right? … I think saying that you take a feminist perspective on something, it immediately gets associated with the political movement in that sense and less with a way of doing [policy] that might be more equitable." This quotation illustrates a strategic awareness among GBA+ analysts that in performing their work, "a non-feminist (or even anti-feminist) position is the bureaucratic standard, and a feminist position is a deviation from the norm" (Findlay, 2015: 72).

To mobilize support for GBA+ in their agencies, it was important that analysts, who are mostly cisgender women, not be perceived as using their position to advance a feminist agenda. Instead, guided by the "logic of appropriateness," they would appeal to the bureaucratic notions of neutrality and impartiality that are highly embedded in the Canadian bureaucracy (Chappell, 2002). One interviewee, for example, reconciled GBA+ with bureaucratic neutrality by emphasizing it as a managerial tool for maximizing efficiencies. "You're still neutral, though, because the reason you are advocating for a [GBA] analysis is … to achieve efficiencies and maximum impact. In theory, you're not doing it to promote a particular agenda." In doing so, however, GBA+ analysts would simultaneously exploit and reproduce the masculine, cultural scripts of "rationality" and "objectivity" that underpin bureaucratic discourses and practices. For example, several interviewees thought GBA+ would get more traction in the bureaucracy if championed by male senior managers and co-workers. One interviewee stated, "A lot of people, when think GBA, they think women's issues; they think feminists, ideology … So I think sometimes having a male helps, just because it un-jades you a little bit. Because you're like 'Oh, oh, I thought a woman was going to be talking about this.'" In linking GBA+ to the notion of masculine objectivity, GBA+ analysts both enacted and reproduced the differential subject positions within bureaucratic discourses, with women subject to greater scrutiny about their objectivity or bias when conducting their policy work.

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## Institutional Strategies

As bureaucrats, GBA+ analysts work in a large organizational environment governed by rules and processes put in place to ensure accountability and transparency. The "audit culture" (Shore, 2008), a product of NPM, has become a mainstay of organizational life in the Canadian federal bureaucracy. Guided by the need to improve efficiencies and effectiveness, bureaucrats are devoting more time on performance reporting and satisfying accountability requirements than they are on actual policy development and analysis. Gender mainstreaming in Canada has not been immune to the influence of NPM and the audit culture. As part of the Treasury Board's Management Accountability System, gender mainstreaming has become an exercise in bureaucratic "box-ticking" rather than an essential element of policy analysis.

Several interviewees relayed how GBA+ no longer plays a role in the development of strategic policy in their organizations. Instead, it is often relegated to the planning stage, concerned with guidelines and procedures rather than substantive policy analysis. As one interviewee explained, "The GBA person is not located within the [strategic policy] shop; they can't attend those meetings; they don't get the heads up that this work is under way. They're only seen at the very end, when it's being routed through the planning—so what I've noticed is that a lot of GBA people are being moved to planning shops, and the planning shops are only involved at the very end when we're reporting on end-of-year stuff. And so that's where it becomes about tick-offs." The experiences of interviewees are reflected in the 2009 Auditor General's Report on GBA, which found that "few of those that are performing GBA can provide evidence that demonstrates these analyses are used in designing public policy" (OAG, 2009: 2).

While the majority of our interviewees lamented the compliance-seeking and box-ticking approach to GBA+ in the Canadian public service, they nonetheless leveraged government reporting and accountability requirements when advancing gender matters in policy work. The 2009 OAG report was an especially useful institutional lever for building capacity and mobilizing support for GBA among senior and middle-managers. As one GBA+ analyst explained, "I think if we didn't have this government of Canada requirements… forget it. But because we had this other thing [the report], and trust me, we used it. It was phenomenal. Like, it was our hook. And that was just a huge thing as a means to push [GBA] up. It kept it legitimate." Another analyst relayed how the report, and its criticism of a certain department's implementation of GBA, prompted action on the part of senior managers. "In '09, the Auditor General report, we were … hit. And I think that's why we started providing the training for employees to increase capacity. So that could have been one of the levers to get us going off the ground."

Organizational practices and procedures were also used as entry points for making gender matter in policy work. Several of the analysts we spoke

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to were critical of GBA+ being understood primarily as a template checklist for memorandum to cabinet (MC) and TB submissions. However, they often relied on these information artifacts to ensure gender considerations were addressed in their organization's policies: "Even if they don't identify any gender dimensions, they have to demonstrate why there aren't any gendered dimensions. So, it's never the case that the analyst can say there are no gendered dimensions and leave it at that. The evidence, either way, always has to be presented. It's self-checking in that regard." For a former senior analyst, embedding gender in all aspects of an organization's processes and procedures constituted a localized and small-scale form of feminist resistance: "You know—because, if you're going to be a femocrat, it's got to be in the computer system, it's got to be in the contracting language, it's got to be in the evaluation language, it's got to be in the template for results reporting, it's got to be on the vice president's checklist, that they do this and they do this, it's got to be—modules for the speech writers." Rather than simply subjected to the disciplinary technologies of NPM (Thomas and Davies, 2005), GBA+ analysts exploit them to mainstream gender in the work of their organizations. This strategy, however, is not without its drawbacks as it can serve to reinforce GBA+ as a tool to enhance procedural efficiency rather than equality outcomes.

## Relational Strategies

As feminist practice, gender mainstreaming is regarded as a site for bringing together state actors, women's groups and feminist researchers in the pursuit of women-friendly policies and programmes. While gender mainstreaming, in terms of content and processes, varies cross-nationally, it is said to rely on three key pillars: national policies and bureaucratic machineries; women's movements and social justice organizations; and feminist research (Hankivsky, 2008). The links between these three pillars are deemed to be crucial for maintaining gender mainstreaming's feminist intent and transformative potential (Squires, 2007). As Einarsdóttir, notes, gender mainstreaming requires "coalitions, alliances and partnerships between the different sets of experiences and knowledge that the three pillars represent" (2003: 2)."

Today, however, women's organizations and feminist scholarship have become less important to the task of implementing gender mainstreaming the federal public service (Hankivsky, 2008; Paterson, 2010; Rankin, 2001). Indeed, in our study, building and sustaining relationships and networks with women's organizations did not figure prominently among the relational strategies of GBA analysts. One GBA+ analyst, for example, acknowledged the added value community consultations would bring to GBA+ in their agency. In practice, however, staff shortage, finite

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resources and lack of time meant that civil society groups were very seldom consulted during the various stages of policy deliberations. As one GBA+ analyst noted, "The way we describe GBA is that consultation should be the first thing … So we do advocate for that, we always say it's one of the most important parts of GBA. However, the way the government works right now, we never have money, there's never time—time is also very funny. It takes time to consult, and money, and we have none of those apparently anymore."

Alliances with feminist researchers and activists were also not part of the relational strategies used by GBA+ analysts to make gender matter in their policy work. Hankivsky's study (2008) found that academic theorizing on gender and public policy has had little impact on how gender mainstreaming is understood and practised in the federal government. This finding is substantiated by our interviews, which conveyed a minimal level of interaction with outside feminist and gender researchers when performing their work. One interviewee, for example, noted that due to budget cuts, the use of university or community-based research in GBA+ had diminished in her agency in favour of in-house data. "We would contact external researchers to do different things—that money was severely cut and so most of the research that's happening now there is internal." As a consequence, the work of GBA+ analysts is far removed from feminist academic research and expertise.

GBA+ analysts also described working in isolation from others within the bureaucracy. Once part of larger teams of policy analysts, the majority of our interviewees found themselves in functional silos, working alone and away from other policy and GBA+ analysts in their departments. As one interviewee explained, "It's like sometimes people didn't know 'who is the GBA+ unit, where are they?', because they were hidden in the weeds … If you go on the government electronic directories service, you will not find GBA + . So as an analyst, if you don't know your portfolio well, and you're just coming in, how are you going to know?" Budget cuts, lay-offs and the perception that gender mainstreaming has been achieved have diminished the visibility of GBA+ work in the public sector. It is not surprising, therefore, that in making gender matter in policy work, GBA+ analysts focused their attention not on building coalitions with external actors (such as women's movement and academic researchers); rather, they sought out opportunities to generate awareness and support for GBA+ within the bureaucracy.

GBA+ analysts described building and maintaining strong horizontal and vertical relationships within their organizations as a critical component of their work. Through informal and formal networks, analysts worked to get buy-in from senior managers and co-workers for GBA+ in their units. Many interviewees emphasized that their work as GBA+ analysts was often dependent upon and made more effective by the presence of GBA+

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champions among senior management. As one analyst stated, "Like, if your manager says GBA+ is important, and needs to be done, you're gonna care. If your DG either never talks about, doesn't know what it is, or says, 'Eh, whatever, isn't that just for women anyways? We don't do any of that.' Then you're not going to care… it's never going to be part of your working environment." The formal authority vested in senior and middle managers in the bureaucracies made them powerful allies for analysts seeking to enhance GBA+'s legitimacy in their organizations. By targeting senior management, however, GBA+ analysts simultaneously exploit and reinforce the hierarchical, "command and control" type of leadership that is often been viewed as detrimental to feminist activism and mobilization.

In recent years, however, GBA+ champions have largely disappeared from the upper levels of the bureaucracy, leaving analysts to pursue other strategies, at the margins, to build support for a gender perspective in policy work. Rather than rely on the individualistic, top-down championing of GBA+ by senior managers, our interviewees worked horizontally, through informal networks, to mainstream gender in their organizations. One GBA+ analyst, for example, noted how open communication and strong relationships with other bureaucratic actors facilitated GBA+ analysis in their organization. "If the relationship that I have with the project leader is good, and they're interested in GE [gender equality] … if that communication is open, then I'm better able to support that person, so that they can better promote GE with their partners in the projects that they're developing. So I think that relationship is really, really key." Another GBA+ analyst, who self-identified as a femocrat, also favoured working through informal networks and across functional units to ensure gender was embedded in all aspects of her organization's policies and administrative processes: "What I learned is, don't go to … the Senior Committee and say, 'We need to have mandatory reporting in the system.' We take the computer guys for coffee all the time. 'When are you doing the next update? Do you think we could get three little boxes?' ….Those are the people you talk to." In these texts, we discern how, by focusing on collaboration, trust, and team work, analysts also resisted the traditional, administrative conception of leadership that prevails in the bureaucracy (hierarchy, control, authority and division of labour) in favour of a relational model where goals are achieved through "acting collectively, persuading, consulting and influencing" (Kirner and Rayner, 1999: 4).

## Conclusion

Our study foregrounds the debates of classic feminist public administration scholars regarding the often precarious position in which gender analysts find themselves, caught between women's voices and authoritative

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discourses, as well as concerns about co-optation and resistance. To address these challenges, the analysts in our study exercised their agency and carved out spaces within the bureaucracy to articulate and advance an intersectional focus in policy work. Employing discursive, institutional and relational strategies, gender analysts were simultaneously constrained and enabled by dominant bureaucratic discourses and technologies to make social location matter in policy work. They positioned themselves and their work as GBA+ analysts within the broader discourse of efficiency and evidence-based policy making and used audit technologies and templates to mainstream gender and diversity in their organization's programmes and processes. While this strategy did not produce transformational organizational change, it did lead to small gains in increasing the likelihood that equality issues were given more serious and systematic attention within their agencies.

Our findings underscore the importance of moving beyond the simple binaries of resistance and co-optation and insider/outsider positionings to understand the dynamics of feminist interventions within the state. While grassroots mobilization and collective action remain the cornerstone of resistance for the feminist movement, resistance also plays out at the micro-level in the individual actions of feminist insiders. Our study showed that in navigating the colliding worlds of feminism and the bureaucracy, the analysts in our study were not merely passive receivers of dominant discourses and processes; rather, they actively and creatively used them in their efforts to mainstream gender and diversity in the Canadian federal bureaucracy. It is important to note, however, that these strategies can be problematic in the way they can serve to legitimize gendered discourses and practices (Parsons and Priola, 2012). Moreover, these micro-level acts of resistance, on their own, cannot bring about emancipatory change. However, by creating spaces for feminist knowledge within the state, these local strategies, in combination with feminist activism and women's organizations, can contribute to the broader feminist agenda.

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