**WORKING WITHIN A STATE OF CONTRADICTION:
GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

Amanda J. Scott (B.A.H. Women's Studies, B.A.H. Psychology)

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work

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ii

ABSTRACT

This study explores the opportunities and struggles associated with state feminism through an analysis of Government of Canada gender-based analysis (GBA) initiatives. By using a feminist political economy theoretical framework, as well as by drawing on other feminist theoretical approaches to the state, the central question explored in this study is: What are the struggles associated with attempting to implement GBA in the face of myriad contradictions within the state in relation to women, and associated with state feminism more broadly?

This study is informed by feminist research methodology, and employs qualitative research methods. Primary and secondary documents pertaining to GBA and to theories of the state, women, and feminism were used to develop a framework for analyzing federal GBA initiatives. As well, interviews were conducted with ten senior-level GBA specialists working within six federal departments/agencies.

Based on the findings of this research, I conclude that there is, at present, room for both scepticism and optimism with regard to the potential of GBA as a means of advancing gender equality. Recognizing that challenges exist in relation to the political and bureaucratic contexts in which GBA is embedded does not undermine the utility of working to promote gender equality from within the structures of the state. It merely underscores the need to be strategic, to be cognizant of the limitations and contradictions of the state in which one is operating at any given time, and to foresee the possible costs in terms of long-term consequences that ensue from trade-offs made in the short term.

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In addition, this thesis could not have been written without the assistance of the ten gender-based analysis specialists who consented to be interviewed for this study. Special thanks to these women for sharing their rich experiences in such an open, generous, and thoughtful manner.

I like to think that everyone encounters in their life a moment or a memory that drives them to pursue a certain path or interest. My passion for researching gender issues grew out of a first-year Women's Studies course I took at Queen's University many years ago. The course was taught by Katherine McKenna, who inspired me and to whom I will be forever grateful.

Life has taken me on many twists and bends in the past year and a half. I question whether I would have ever completed this work without having in my life my wonderful circle of friends. It would be impossible and somewhat contrived, I suspect, to attempt to articulate all of the tangible and intangible ways in which my friends have been there for me. Mostly, I wish to thank them for making me laugh and smile, reminding me to take time to smell the roses, putting up with my rants on matters both serious and frivolous, picking me up and dusting me off when I needed it most, and inspiring me.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my family for their love, unconditional acceptance, and constant support. To my brother, Ian Scott, thank you for setting the bar high and encouraging me to follow my dreams. I am not sure how many other brothers (and scientist brothers at that) would venture out to women's bookstores to buy their sisters feminist literature. To my mother, Patricia Scott, thank you for teaching me through your own example never to give up, even in the worst of times. I commend you for your dignity, perseverance, and strength.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Appendices	viii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON STATE, WOMEN, AND FEMINISM	
I. Introduction	6
II. Divergent Theories: Feminist Perspectives on the State	7
Disengagement	8
Mainstreaming	10
III. State Feminism	12
What is 'State Feminism'?	12
Policy Machinery for the Advancement of Women	14
Femocrats: Caught in the Cross-Fire	16
State Feminism: Liberation or Co-optation?	18
IV. Reconciling the Debate	24
V. Working within a State of Contradiction	29
The 'Setting of the Setting': Situating GBA within the Current Ideological and Institutional Context	30
State Contradictions and Difference	34
Contradictory Priorities within the State	35
Exploring the Contradictions	39
VI. Conclusion	40
CHAPTER III: METHODS & METHODOLOGY	
I. Introduction	43
II. Defining a Methodology	43
III. Research Question	49
IV. Gathering Information	49
Research Design	49
Selection Procedure	50
Data Collection: Sources and Methods	52
V. Application of Feminist Principles	53
Reflexivity	54
Participant-researcher relationship	57
Insider/outsider status in feminist interviewing	57
Intersubjectivity	60
Ethics	60
VI. Interpreting the Information	62
VII. Limitations to the Research	63
VIII. Conclusion	65

CHAPTER IV: SITUATING GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS	
I. Introduction	67
II. State Feminism in Canada	68
Canadian Federal Women's Policy Machinery	69
The Women's Bureau, 1954	69
Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1970	72
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, 1971	76
& Office of the Coordinator on the Status of Women, 1971	
Office of Equal Opportunity for Women, 1971	77
Women's Program, 1973	78
Canadian Advisory Committee on the Status of Women, 1973	80
Integration Policy, 1976 & Status of Women Canada, 1976	83
State Feminism in the 1980s and Beyond	88
Struggles in State Feminism from 1954-1995: A Post-Mortem	91
III. Contextualizing Gender-Based Analysis	92
Canada's Commitment to GBA	92
What is GBA?	98
Why Do GBA?	100
Applying GBA	102
Legislative/Policy Context	103
Institutional Infrastructure	105
Status of Women Canada (SWC)	105
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	107
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	107
Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)	109
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)	109
Health Canada	110
Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)	110
Department of Justice	111
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)	112
IV. Conclusion	113
CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS	
I. Introduction	115
II. Strengths & Achievements of GBA	116
GBA as a Progressive Initiative	116
Development of Tools and Methodologies	121
Awareness-Raising and Training	122
Development of Gender-Based Research, Data, and Indicators	122
Changes to Policies, Programs, and Legislation	124
III. Challenges Associated with GBA	125
Technical Challenges	126
Analytic and Data Resources	126
Institutional Challenges	128
Human and Financial Resources	128
Systematic Implementation and Application	130

Accountability, Monitoring, and Reporting	135
Consultation	139
Overall Coordination and Leadership	146
Conceptual Challenges	148
Finding a Consistent Language and Conceptual Framework	148
Vision of Gender Equality	150
Ideology	153
From Women to Gender: Depoliticization?	157
Diversity	160
Political Challenges	164
Political Commitment	164
Securing 'Buy-In'	164
Resistance	166
Requirements for and Limitations to Political Commitment	168
Political Climate	169
GBA within a 'Pecking Order' of Interests and Priorities	170
Working within a Chilly Political Climate	172
A State of Contradiction	176
Bureaucratic Context	177
'Learning to Fox Trot & Waltz at the Same Time': Fitting GBA into the Mainstream	177
Working to Satisfy Two Different Masters	179
Advocate vs. Analyst	180
Identification with Feminism	183
The Struggle for Legitimacy	188
The Need to be Strategic	189
IV. Lessons Learned	194
Lesson 1: Implementation is as Important as Policy Itself	195
Lesson 2: Capacity Building is Key	196
Lesson 3: The Need for Patience	199
Lesson 4: Baby Steps (or the Need to Understand GBA as an Incremental Initiative)	202
Lesson 5: The Need to Foster Greater Knowledge Exchange	204
V. Overall Potential of GBA	208
VI. Conclusion	210
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION	212
Appendix I: Letter of Introduction	217
Appendix II: Informed Consent Form	219
Appendix III: Interview Guide	221
Bibliography	223

List of Appendices

Appendix I: Letter of Introduction

Appendix II: Informed Consent Form

Appendix III: Interview Guide

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 1995, under the leadership of the Liberal Party and in response to international commitments arising from the Beijing *Platform for Action*, which obligated signatories to implement a gender analysis mechanism into state processes, the Government of Canada adopted *Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. The *Federal Plan* mandated the introduction of *gender-based analysis* (GBA) in federal policy analysis and decision-making as part of a new vision for the advancement of gender equality in Canada.

GBA is defined as a process that “assesses the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies, programs and legislation on women and men...with an appreciation of gender differences, of the nature of the relationships between women and men and of their different social realities” (SWC 1996a, 4). It requires federal departments and agencies to incorporate a consideration of gender differences at each juncture of policy, program, and legislation development, and not merely as an add-on exercise.

The decision to undertake GBA in the Government of Canada “precipitated a flurry of activity throughout federal¹ departments and agencies around how to best integrate a ‘gender lens’ into the policy process” (Rankin et al. 2001, 3). Various federal departments and agencies are now experimenting with a mix of approaches to GBA that best mesh with their specific mandates.

¹ GBA initiatives have also been undertaken in a number of provinces and territories. However, the scope of this research is limited to the federal context.

The purpose of this study is to explore the achievements and challenges associated with state feminism broadly, and with federal GBA initiatives in particular². I offer an assessment of the possibilities that GBA offers, and of the constraints on its potential to advance gender equality. By applying a feminist political economy analysis to GBA, the central question to be explored in this study is: What are the struggles associated with attempting to implement GBA in the face of myriad contradictions within the state in relation to women, and associated with state feminism more broadly? Flowing from this overarching question are a number of sub-questions: In what ways do the political climate and bureaucratic context in which Canadian federal GBA initiatives are implemented define and constrain the possibilities and limitations, and strengths and weaknesses of GBA? How much space and manoeuvrability can exist within the state to work on gender equality policies such as GBA? What does this mean for the capacity and effectiveness of GBA overall? What challenges are GBA specialists facing in relation to their work? Is there any evidence that GBA is making a difference? What could be done to enhance GBA?

My focus on GBA offers an opportunity to revisit important debates about the state, women, and feminism. The incorporation of feminist issues within the state has been a significant point of tension among feminists. Analysis of GBA in this study is underpinned by feminist theoretical debates regarding the potential of state feminism initiatives, women's policy machinery, and bureaucrats to promote meaningful change in

² The argument can be advanced that GBA is not explicitly a 'state feminist' initiative as defined by Howell (see Chapter II) because GBA purports to mitigate *gender* inequalities rather than advancing *women's* equality specifically. However, given that women are disadvantaged in Canadian society relative to men, the majority of gender inequalities revealed by a gender analysis would point to potential deleterious impacts on women. As well, GBA's realization in the federal government evokes many of the same struggles and challenges historically associated with state feminism. As such, I have chosen to examine GBA as a specific example of state feminism.

the sphere of gender relations. Critical attention to initiatives such as GBA can illuminate the limitations and opportunities associated with working to achieve gender equality through the institutions of the state.

This study analyzes GBA within the context of the politically constrained and gendered arena in which it is operating. Feminist political economy instructs us that contexts matter. GBA, as a strategy for mainstreaming gender issues within government departments and agencies, cannot be examined separately from the context in which it has arisen. I argue that the political and ideological context within which GBA was launched is central to understanding its contours and its impact. I also contend that there are trade-offs involved in the brokering of gender equality policy within the current neo-liberal political climate as well as within a bureaucratic environment.

This study is informed by feminist research methodology, and uses qualitative research methods. Primary and secondary documents pertaining to GBA and to theories of women and the state were used to develop a framework for analyzing federal GBA initiatives. As well, interviews were conducted with ten senior-level GBA specialists working within six federal departments/agencies.

My rationale for conducting this research was to better understand the struggles associated with state feminism and with pursuing GBA within the context of a state that is profoundly contradictory in its treatment of women. Can this context meaningfully accommodate GBA?

GBA was promoted to the policy community as representing a “fundamental shift in the way government will think and act” (SWC 1996b, 1-2). The five-year timeframe set for implementation of the *Federal Plan* came to a close in 2000, at which point the

Government of Canada agreed to embark upon further actions and initiatives to accelerate implementation of GBA within the context of the Agenda for Gender Equality. It is important now to take stock and consider what has been achieved, what the strengths and limitations have been, and what key lessons we may discern with respect to GBA to date. In doing so, it becomes possible to highlight major considerations for future progress.

On the face of it, the movement to GBA in 1995 appeared as an improvement over earlier policy-making initiatives since, in theory, it incorporates gender. However, as a structural social worker³, I am keenly aware that it simply cannot be taken for granted that a new policy is positive, negative, or neutral in its impact; rather, each new policy must be explored for its implications. In order to effect social change, social workers must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of any particular strategy. It is therefore imperative to critically analyze GBA. I take as a starting point the position of Donna Baines (1996, 187-88), who sums up the importance of critical analysis in social work:

It is important for social workers and activists to understand that social policies and everyday social work practices are not neutral... Rather than defend these policies uncritically, we must understand the history and roots of the various concepts and constructions that underlie some of the central policies of the welfare state. Such understanding can help us to deconstruct policies and practices in our everyday work and social action environments, as well as to develop creative and critical strategies for social change.

As noted above, the original five-year implementation period for GBA has recently passed, yet little has been made publicly known about how GBA is functioning,

³ Structural social work emphasizes the ways in which social contexts shape personal and social problems. It focuses on the interaction between individuals and the social, political, and economic dimensions of society. Structural social workers concern themselves with individual change as well as broader group, organizational, and institutional change. Emphasis is placed on changing interactions between people in order to transform social structures in ways that build cooperation and equality.

and what future directions may be warranted. This study seeks to redress this dearth in information by contributing to the existing discussion of GBA.

This study is organized into six chapters. Following this introduction, **Chapter II** reviews the literature on existing and divergent feminist theoretical perspectives on the state, women, and feminism. It also explores emergent feminist theoretical work offering a way of recasting old debates pertaining to feminism and the state. GBA is positioned within the theoretical framework of feminist political economy as an overarching theoretical framework for this study. **Chapter III** articulates the methodology and methods used in this study. **Chapter IV** reviews the history of Government of Canada state feminism initiatives and women's policy machinery, situates GBA within that history, and provides an overview of GBA. **Chapter V** discusses the achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and overall potential of GBA through an analysis of primary and secondary documents, and based on findings from interviews with ten GBA specialists in the federal government. **Chapter VI** presents some final thoughts about working within the context of a contradictory state. It also offers some conclusions about GBA, particularly with respect to areas for further progress and consideration.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON STATE, WOMEN, AND FEMINISM

I. INTRODUCTION

Catharine MacKinnon (1983, 635) once ruefully remarked that “feminism⁴ has no theory of the state⁵.” Fifteen years later, Georgina Waylen (1998, 2) lamented that “there has been a lack of useful feminist theorizing on the state.” While neither of these statements is completely accurate, it is, however, the case that feminism has no widely agreed-upon or completely developed theory of the state.

This chapter will provide a theoretical framework through which to analyze GBA. The starting point of this chapter is that there are differing feminist analyses of the state and differing views on the potential of state feminism to promote gender equality.

Feminist concerns with the state must ultimately lead to the question of political strategy. Melanie Randall (1988, 14-15) explains that, “In the same way that there is as of yet no unifying theory of the state’s relationship to women’s oppression, there exists no coherent or cohesive feminist strategy for dealing with the state in contemporary society.” This chapter will present both sides of an ongoing feminist debate regarding feminist strategies and the state, termed by some as the dilemma of ‘in and against the

⁴ I would like to express from the outset that the problem of defining ‘feminism’ or ‘feminist’ is difficult to resolve. The terms are central to the phenomenon I am investigating here, yet there is much controversy among women’s movement activists, self-defined feminists, and women’s studies scholars about what is meant by these terms and whether a particular action or practice is feminist. In this thesis, I will be using the working definition of feminist offered by Stetson and Mazur (1995, 16) who state: “An ideology, policy, organization, or activity is feminist to the extent that it has the purpose of improving the status of women as a group and undermining patterns of gender hierarchy.”

⁵ Like the term ‘feminism,’ the term ‘state’ has been variously interpreted. In this thesis, it primarily refers to those decision-making bodies and bureaucracies associated with governments. However, it is important to note that the term has a broader interpretation in the current literature, designating not only government bureaucracies, but also the judiciary and those institutions, such as schools, hospitals, daycare centres, and Children’s Aid Societies, that are funded by governments. As well, the term is sometimes used to refer to the social relations involved in being a citizen of a particular country or territory.

state' (Rai 1996), and explore more recent conceptualizations that offer a way to move beyond this debate. It will consider some of the opportunities, constraints, and struggles associated with state feminism, and interrogate the potential of state gender equality initiatives, such as GBA, to promote meaningful change.

II. DIVERGENT THEORIES: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATE

The second wave of feminism, arising in the late 1960s, was crucial in bringing issues such as pregnancy and childbirth, violence against women, and the need for childcare into the political limelight. As women organized to bring about legislative and political change, the role of the state both in perpetuating women's subordination as well as potentially bringing about positive change and undermining existing inequalities came under scrutiny by feminist scholars (Howell 1998).

Feminists across the world have theorized the state in a number of ways. Until recently, most feminist analyses of the state focused on the state as either potentially good or bad for women as a group, and questioned whether the state has the possibility of advancing progressive strategies for women. Much of this debate centered on exploring whether the state is "irretrievably an institution of men's power" or rather is "a form of power in society which is contested and malleable" (Randall 1988, 10). Melanie Randall observes that the central query underpinning this debate is whether or not we can "ever expect state power to be used to achieve the goals of women's liberation." There have been two main schools of thought⁶ on this broad debate, which are occasionally referred

⁶ It is important to note that the two schools of thought I am describing here in my theoretical discussion of feminism are being outlined in their 'extreme' form. In order to clearly demarcate the variations in approaches, I focus on differences. However, in actual fact (and certainly in practice), these theories are not so clear-cut and they do overlap to some extent. Thus, the typologies used here do not necessarily fit 'real life' and may depend on the particular situation.

to as 'disengagement' and 'mainstreaming' (Ferguson 1984; Briskin 1991). Each of these perspectives will be considered in turn.

Disengagement

The first school of thought, occasionally referred to as 'disengagement,' operates from a critique of the state and a standpoint outside of it, as well as a desire to create alternative societal structures and ideologies (Briskin 1991, 30). Caroline Andrew (1995, 249) notes that the politic of disengagement is "a politic of vision, based on a radical criticism of the existing system." It is organized around thinking about how society ought to be, and about how an egalitarian, non-sexist world should function (Andrew 1995).

The politic of disengagement is sceptical of the ability of state, and institutions and bureaucracies more broadly, to promote women's concerns and to act as a progressive change force for women. From this perspective, once women's concerns are taken up by the state, they become so diluted that real change becomes highly unlikely.

The politic of disengagement has been articulated in different ways. Some feminist theorists, for instance, perceive the state as irretrievably an institution of patriarchal power, eliminating any possibility of issues in which there could be a convergence of state and women's interests (MacKinnon 1983, 1987, 1989; Barnsley 1985). This line of theorizing flows from an analysis whose primary focus is on the character of the state. State structures are viewed as being patriarchal in form; the state functions to sustain patriarchal relations, precluding the possibility of advancing feminist issues. No matter how many equal rights laws are passed or policies pursued, the state reflects, promotes, sustains, and responds to a hierarchy of male prerogative and

perpetuates women's subordination (Elshtain 1990; Ferguson 1984; MacKinnon 1989). From this perspective, the state itself is the oppressor. The ultimate expression of this point of view is reflected in Mies' (1986, 26) characterization of the modern state as 'the patriarch general.'

This line of theorizing also flows from an analysis of the consistency of patriarchy over time. While this approach does not deny historical specificity, it directs its attention to the consistency of patriarchy's effect. As stated by Catherine MacKinnon (1983, 523), "[we] do not argue that it means the same to women to be on the bottom of a feudal regime, a capitalist regime, and a socialist regime; the commonality argued is that despite real changes, bottom is bottom." The resulting conclusion is that, whatever variations may exist in the operations, interest, or processes of patriarchy, the effect will always be negative: The state is inherently patriarchal, reflects the male-dominated nature of society, and therefore will act to uphold and defend male interests at the expense of women (MacKinnon 1989).

Other feminists have emphasized the importance not only of patriarchy but also capitalism. Some feminists operating within this framework argue that the state plays the role of mediator between the two and acts in the interests of both. From this perspective, gender oppression becomes functional for capital. Women's subordination plays a role in sustaining capitalism through the reproduction of the labour force within the family, and the state helps to reproduce and maintain this primarily through the welfare state (Wilson 1977; McIntosh 1978).

Given an interpretation of western states as inherently, monolithically, and irretrievably patriarchal and capitalist, feminists articulating a politic of disengagement

would view western states' involvement in feminist issues as corrupting, co-opting, and depoliticizing. The policy implications are clear: Whatever the state touches reinforces patriarchy and capitalism, even in cases where the state wears a benevolent face. As summed up by Geraldine Lievesley (1996, 47), "This [perspective], taken to its zero sum conclusion, would mean that women can expect to obtain nothing from the state and should rather work for its overthrow" and toward creation of alternative structures.

Mainstreaming

The second school of thought on the state and its relation to women, sometimes referred to as 'mainstreaming,' offers a different framework. Mainstreaming operates from a desire to reach out to the majority of the population with popular and practical feminist solutions to particular issues by engaging with mainstream institutions such as the family, the workplace, the educational system, and the state (Briskin 1991, 30). A politic of mainstreaming emphasizes the necessity to be inside the system; the existing system must be persuaded to change from within, and influential members of society must be moved to change their priorities and the ways they act (Andrew 1995). This strategy "focuses not only on what should be but [also] on society as it is and the daily reality of women's lives" (Andrew 1995, 249).

The mainstreaming approach views the state as less monolithic than suggested by the disengagement approach. The politic of mainstreaming is adhered to by those who perceive a contradiction in the operation of patriarchy within the state – a contradiction that creates a contested terrain and the possibility of convergence of state and women's interests on some issues (Eisenstein 1981; Ursel 1988). From this perspective, the state is understood as an arena within which interest groups can compete, and women are

understood to constitute a group whose interests can be extended by working within and through the state.

As with the politic of disengagement, feminists articulating a politic of mainstreaming analyze not only patriarchy but also capitalism. Zillah Eisenstein (1984) takes this position, adopting a 'dual systems' conceptualization of women's oppression in a capitalist society. Eisenstein sees capitalism and patriarchy as separate though interdependent systems. She identifies contradictions between the organization and interests of capitalism and patriarchy, and within these contradictions envisions opportunities for feminist political action.

A politic of mainstreaming advocates that the existing system be moved to change its priorities and the ways it acts. It recognizes that the various components of the state apparatus are very significant. Thus, for feminist practice to ignore these institutions or remain outside them would be impractical because such an approach would simply cut us off from much that concerns women. In short, the state is "inescapable for feminism" (Franzway et al. 1989, 157) and cannot be avoided or circumvented when engaging in feminist projects to end the oppression of women.

Pursuing this second side of the debate does not necessitate ignoring the fact that when the state becomes involved, patriarchal relations may operate. However, this perspective does take issue with the conclusion that the costs of state involvement outweigh the benefits, and the implication within that conclusion that the overall effect of reform is co-optation.

III. STATE FEMINISM

The theoretical debate described above addresses itself not only to questions of whether feminist issues can be adequately served by the state, but also to exploring whether or not women's policy machinery within the state is capable of effecting positive change, and whether or not bureaucrats can advance feminist issues from within the state. These types of questions are considered in this section.

What is 'State Feminism'?

The meaning of the term 'state feminism' has been "contested and variously interpreted" (Howell 1998, 167). It has evolved over its brief public life. Originally, Scandinavian feminists developed the term state feminism to refer to "both feminists employed as administrators and bureaucrats in positions of power and...[female] politicians advocating gender equality policies" (Siim 1991, 189). Thus, the term referred to women employed within state bureaucratic positions generally, as well as feminists employed within the state specifically to promote women's policy and further women's interests by working, for example, to develop various equal opportunity and anti-discrimination strategies.

Vicky Randall (1998, 201) clarifies that state feminism has been used to mean at least two different things: It can be used to refer to the tendency for feminists to achieve positions of influence within government – whether in elected positions, in the bureaucracy, or both – or it can be intended to indicate state structures, policies, and procedures which are in some way designed to improve women's status and opportunities. Dorothy Stetson and Amy Mazur (1995, 1-2) adopt the latter perspective by defining state feminism as the "activities of government structures that are formally

charged with furthering women's status and rights." Jude Howell offers a definition of state feminism almost identical to that of Stetson and Mazur. In this study, state feminism will refer, as stated by Howell (1998, 167), to "the activities and policies of structures within the state which are set up officially for the purpose of promoting women's interests and rights."

In a similar vein, the term 'femocrat' emerged as an Australian neologism invented to refer to a feminist bureaucrat (Sawer 1990; Yeatman 1990). The term is also used in New Zealand, and appears to be gaining popularity in North America (Yeatman 1990). Originally, the term femocrat, as applied to the Australian context, referred to the female bureaucrats who staffed specific agencies identified with the promotion of women's interests, such as the Commonwealth Government Office of the Status of Women, and to women who worked within various equal opportunity or anti-discrimination commissions (Yeatman 1990). However, the term later expanded from designating only those women appointed to work in 'women's affairs' units in government to include feminist bureaucrats who seek to work on behalf of women whatever their position (Franzway et al. 1989, 133).

The creation of the notion of a state feminist or femocrat has allowed feminist scholars to focus on feminism within public agencies promoting a women's policy agenda, and to interrogate the potential of women's policy machinery within state structures to effect social change. While the growth of women's state structures marks an important step in the development of more gender-conscious policies, feminist scholars and activists have queried the potential of these agencies and their workers to pursue feminist goals.

Policy Machinery for the Advancement of Women

The idea that governments need specialized policy machinery for the advancement of women is relatively new (Sawer 1996). The United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women began calling upon governments in the early 1960s to set up specialized institutions to advance the economic, social, and political position of women, in the context of preparing the *Unified Long-term UN Programme for the Advancement of Women*⁷ (Howell 1998; Heitlinger 1993). However, this idea only truly received widespread acceptance as a result of the priority given to it in the World Plan of Action adopted at the First UN World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975, within the context of the UN International Women's Year (Sawer 1996).

Delegates at the 1975 conference decided that all governments should establish agencies dedicated to promoting gender equality and improving the status and conditions of women. This initiative provided the first major impetus for the establishment of national machineries (True & Mintrom 2001). In subsequent years, the UN Commission convened a number of expert meetings on the topic in various parts of the world. By the time of the Second UN World Conference on Women in 1980 in Copenhagen, there had been a general shift among UN member states from a pattern of non-governmental and advisory machinery on the status of women towards government machinery (Heitlinger 1993).

The result was that over two-thirds of the member states of the UN adopted some form of governmental machinery to advance the status of women during UN Decade for Women (1976-85) (Sawer 1996, 1). At that time, "pressure was put on governments to

⁷ The forerunner of the 1985 Nairobi *Forward-Looking Strategies*.

give institutional sustenance to their rhetorical pronouncements of concern for gender inequities” (Howell 1998, 166). As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV, the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 sharply intensified the focus on the role of national machineries by identifying the ‘mainstreaming’ of gender issues as the new mandate for national gender equality machineries. Today, gender equality machineries have been adopted by an overwhelming majority of nation-states worldwide (True & Mintrom 2001, 30).

Sawer (1996, ii) observes that the establishment of women’s policy machinery “derived from the feminist insight that, given the different locations of women and men in the workforce and in the family, no government activity was likely to be gender neutral in its effects.” It therefore became important to go beyond developing specific ‘women’s programs’ to ensuring that all government policies and activities were monitored for gender-specific effects (Sawer 1996).

There have been wide variations in state-based women’s policy machineries. Different institutional forms have been attempted, such as equal opportunity commissions and councils; women’s units, bureaus, and departments; ministries of women’s affairs; and advisory offices (Mazur 2001; Staudt 1998). As well, gender equality bureaucracies are variously located within state apparatus. Although the specific form, location, rationale for establishment, mission, institutional capacity, resources, power, and ideological parameters of women’s policy structures are by no means uniform, “they all share a formal charge of improving some aspect of women’s status, rights, and/or social conditions” (Mazur 2001, 3). Governments have given these institutions responsibility to achieve what Hernes (1987, 11) calls ‘feminism from above,’ or ‘state feminism.’ The

various Government of Canada policy machineries for the advancement of women, both past and present, will be explored in detail in Chapter IV.

Femocrats: Caught in the Cross-Fire

The disengagement versus mainstreaming debate has particular relevance for femocrats. Those who adopt a politic of mainstreaming believe that the state is an arena in which feminists can work to make meaningful change. From this perspective, state feminists, or femocrats, can play an active role from within the state to change the structure of the state and the ways in which it operates, and to influence its policies at a number of different levels.

On the other side of the debate, those who adopt a politic of disengagement believe that women's ideological commitment to feminism would be compromised by working for, and therefore having loyalties to, a state which is still under the control of men. For example, Sue Findlay (1985, 1988a) has used her experiences as a former head of a Canadian state bureau charged with addressing women's issues to argue that such structures provided only the appearance of responding to women's concerns. These bureaus, she maintains, failed to produce substantive changes for women precisely because the state is not neutral, because "the resistance of a male-dominated state to women's equality, together with its reluctance to intervene in the private sector to enforce proportional representation, has severely limited progress" (Findlay 1985, 33). According to Findlay (1988a, 6), progress was also limited by the women's movement's failure "to offer many concrete proposals to the state." Feminists in the bureaucracy, Findlay (1988a) concludes, were torn between their responsibilities to their employers and their commitment to feminist principles.

Femocrats come from a diverse set of backgrounds. They can be former women's movement activists, former politicians, or career bureaucrats. They are typically female, though some men have been identified as femocrats. Amy Mazur (2001, 4) suggests that "[w]hat unites femocrats is their administrative position in government and a commitment to advancing a feminist agenda."

Anne Summers identifies two contrasting models of femocracy: 'the Missionary approach' and 'the Mandarin approach' (Summers 1986, 62). Missionaries engage in public advocacy and private proselytizing, while mandarins use and adapt bureaucratic techniques and structures to feminist philosophy. Alena Heitlinger (1993, 79) argues that most femocrats are both missionaries and mandarins: "Politicians and traditional career bureaucrats generally regard them as missionaries, while feminists outside the government tend to view them as mandarins." Such divisions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' will be important to bear in mind when I later address the conflictual relationship between women's policy machinery and the women's movement.

Findlay (1991, 106) suggests that the term femocrat has a merely analytic function, and "does not imply any judgment about those who have chosen the state as a terrain of struggle." However, Hester Eisenstein (1990, 89-90) describes how when she was first introduced to the concept in Australia in 1981, the term 'femocrat'

connoted 'sell-out' or 'co-option'; the 'femocrats' were contrasted with the true believers in boiler suits who inhabited the lesbian separatist communities ...where the true heart of feminist revolution lay. The opposition, then, was between revolutionary feminism on the streets, outside the corrupt system of power and prestige, and the official feminism of the state, which created bureaucrats in its own image, painted birds whose role it was to generally contain and dissipate the energy of feminism.

Reflecting on the Australian context, Sawyer (1990) explains that, from the outset, problems of perception exacerbated the relationship between femocrats and their constituency in the women's movement and weakened femocrats' political base. Femocrats felt aggrieved by the lack of support from those outside, particularly as they themselves were constantly under suspicion from the rest of the bureaucracy because of their assumed closeness to the women's movement. Those working on the outside felt that the femocrats had become careerists and had joined the patriarchy rather than challenging its structures. There was often little understanding of the battles waged within the bureaucracy or the pressure under which femocrats operated.

Summers (1986, 60) explains that, "[w]hat evokes suspicion about the women (and some men) who work in women's units is the lack of accountability to the women's movement that a bureaucratic appointment entails." Sawyer (1996, ii) elaborates on the issue of accountability by discussing the in-built tension between the women's movement and women's policy machinery. While women's policy machinery is "the daughter of the women's movement" in terms of its origins, women's policy units are ultimately accountable to government and not just (or even in any substantive way) to the women's movement (Sawyer 1996, ii). This situation gives rise to conflicts of interest and perspective. As Sawyer (1996, ii) describes, "[f]emocrats must demonstrate loyalty to government in order to be credible in their policy advice; [yet] policy brokering involves compromises..."

State Feminism: Liberation or Co-optation?

Franzway et al. (1989, 134) articulate that the central concern the women's movement has expressed with regard to state feminism is whether or not the appointment

of feminists to public policy positions in state bureaucracies “represents the ‘bureaucratization’ of feminism, its co-option and depoliticization,” or, alternatively, “the creation of a feminist bureaucracy capable of effecting social change.” Franzway et al. (1989, 143) explain that the concept of ‘bureaucratization of feminism’ has different, though interconnected, meanings:

First, it implies notions of bureaucracy as an organizational form and assumes that feminism’s entry into bureaucracy involve[s] feminism’s adaptation to that form. Second, bureaucratization can be regarded as a mechanism of state power with implications for the object of the exercise of that power.

Franzway et al. (1989, 143) suggest that, as an organizational form, “bureaucratization suggests adaptation to Weberian principles of hierarchical authority, functional rationality, objective expertise and regulated impersonal structures.” These principles, they argue, “appear contradictory to feminism’s own organizational ideals” which are rooted in opposition to hierarchy, rules, and authority (Franzway et al. 1989, 143). Bureaucratic principles, with their emphasis on personal detachment and ‘objectivity,’ are also, Franzway et al. (1989, 143) contend, “problematic for the multifaceted and subjective nature of feminist issues.”

From this view, women working within the state must conform to the norms and discourses of the bureaucracy, which are grounded in hierarchy and inequality, and, consequently, are antithetical to feminism. As Elshtain (1983, 303) states,

[T]he individuals located in highly centralized and hierarchical bureaucracies operate in conformity to certain impersonal, abstract, and rational standards today; this is the “price of entry” into the *predominant* public identity available to anyone, male or female.

The forms of organization inside patriarchal capitalist institutions such as the state tend to be inflexible, reinforce patterns of uniformity, regulate and neutralize dissent and

difference, and limit any substantive challenge to their goals and practices (Briskin 1991). It is difficult for feminists to confront these goals and practices from inside these institutions because of the power of these practices to subvert the challenge.

A concept that is related to the bureaucratization of feminism is the 'institutionalization of feminism.' This term refers to "the way feminist demands for change are reconstructed and couched in terms of the existing institutions and ideologies" (Adamson et al. 1988, 181). Nancy Adamson et al. (1988, 181) note that, unlike the term 'absorption'⁸ used by Dorothy Smith, which can imply a disappearance of feminist concerns, institutionalization "...suggests that there can be some acknowledgement of women's oppression, but that any challenge to it is transformed into something consistent with the existing social and political parameters." In this way, the challenge can be met and defused. Institutionalization does not render an issue invisible; rather, it reshapes and reconstitutes the issue.

A major reason underlying the institutionalization of feminist challenges relates to the process of bureaucratization, as described above; that is, the necessity to conform to some degree to the frame of reference or organizational culture of a particular institution in order to gain access to it. This process of conforming is often referred to as 'co-optation,' and is frequently raised as a reason for rejecting work within the state by those advocating a politic of disengagement. Co-optation can mean that we lose sight of the larger goals of social transformation. As described by Dorothy Smith (1979, 13),

⁸ Dorothy Smith (1979, 13-14) describes institutional absorption as follows: "I imagine it to be like a starfish eating a clam, sucking the living tissues from the shell. Institutional structures are set up to organize and control and they do it well. When critical positions and action emerge related to an institutional focus, processes are set in motion which bring things back in line, which absorb the anomaly, and keep things stabilized... Each new way of absorbing women's movement initiatives into the institutional structure isolates them from the movement and depoliticizes them ... As the work is absorbed by the ruling apparatus it is withdrawn from the general struggle."

Each [women's movement initiative] is reassembled as a technical or otherwise limited problem. It is relocated into its professional or other institutional setting. It is given a new terminology tying it into the controlled institutional communication and action system. How it becomes visible, can be thought and acted upon, gets restricted to that frame. The problem becomes specific, contained, cut off from its general relation to the whole question of women's oppression in contemporary capitalist society.

Thus, a major risk of co-optation is that it can engender a redefinition of the terms of feminist challenge.

A number of authors have raised the issue of how the state takes up an issue and, in so doing, transforms it. Nickie Charles (2000, 208) argues that there are many ways by which "feminist goals are transformed in the process of engagement with the state." First, issues can be redefined such that feminist definitions are not the ones that become policy. Second, alliances can affect the way in which issues reach the political agenda, and subsequent policy formation. In this regard, Charles (2000, 208) suggests that, "[e]specially where feminist social movements are only one interest among many, feminist demands are not likely to emerge unscathed from the policy-making process."

Robin Morgan (1981, 18) contends that the processes of 'bureaucratization,' 'professionalization,' and 'individualization' are used by the state to impede non-capitalist forms of organizing. By labelling problems "social" when in fact they are political and economic, the capitalist state manages or contains the problem and maintains the domination of capitalist interests. Reframing political issues as social problems minimizes structural challenges. This redefining of issues serves to protect the status quo.

Charles (2000, 209) argues that what often occurs is a process of compromise whereby "the [state's] priorities and mode of functioning transforms feminist demands

into something which is reconcilable with the requirement of capitalist production.”

Thus, in order to make gender equality policies acceptable, they are redefined in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, or in other terms which render them otherwise more palatable. For example, while child care is defined by the women's movement as a right, it has been incorporated into policy as an employment issue (Charles 2000). This redefinition of child care has certain implications. As stated by Charles (2000, 204),

Defining it in this way has the effect of reproducing women's responsibility for child care and encouraging individual solutions which challenge neither gender divisions of labour nor familial ideology.

Another key illustration is the case of violence against women. On one side of the debate are women who view the involvement of the state as leading to the positive outcomes of increased services for battered women and their children and increased penalties for battering. This side of the debate emphasizes the significant changes which have been made with respect to violence against women as a result of state involvement.⁹ Police departments are now enjoined to take domestic disputes more seriously; social workers in mainstream agencies refer women who have been battered to shelters rather than sending them home with the promise of marital counselling; and governments have funded shelters. No feminist could fail to appreciate these changes.

On the other side of the debate are women who argue that involvement of mainstream institutions results in co-optation and distortion of the issue of violence against women (Barnsley 1985; Gotell 1997; Levan 1996; Walker 1990). These theorists have traced the events and processes whereby the state has taken up the issue of violence against women, and subsequently reshaped and de-politicized it. Within the Canadian

⁹ The latter position is less likely to be found in the academic literature, but is frequently articulated by workers and lobbyists in the wife abuse field (Ursel 1998).

context, the Canadian federal government, in the late 1970s, began developing responses to particular forms of violence against women such as wife abuse and rape. However, these became “re-cast in gender-neutral policy discourse” (Gotell 1997, 43). For instance, wife abuse was increasingly subsumed within the problem of “family violence” and rape was redefined as “sexual assault” (Gotell 1997, 43-44). This breaking apart of the feminist category “violence against women” resulted in what Levan (1996, 319) refers to as a “piecemeal policy strategy” – one that tended to exclude solutions posing fundamental social changes. “In particular,” Lise Gotell (1997, 43) comments, “the feminist insistence that men’s violence towards women is rooted in gender domination was denied through this disarticulated approach.”

Dorothy Smith (1979, 13) describes the reconstruction of the feminist challenge to men’s violence against women as follows:

The issue of men’s violence against women in the family setting is being transformed into a professional psychiatric or counselling problem. The ‘battered wife’ concept is substituted for the political analysis of violence by men against women. There are conferences, a literature, the elaboration of professional practice... The issue of women’s passivity and silence, our socially enforced inability to speak out and to express our anger, these become transposed from a political issue into a technique. We can take courses in assertiveness. We can practice screaming.

As Gillian Walker (1990) has demonstrated, when wife abuse became one of a list of social problems, it was lifted from the feminist analysis of male domination and women’s subordination, as well as from the analysis of the family as a site for creating and sustaining women’s oppression. Instead, the problem is now widely perceived within a revamped functionalist perspective: the ‘dysfunctional family,’ the ‘violent male,’ and the female as ‘victim.’

With respect to the recasting of feminist demands by the state, Monkman (1988, 56) explains that:

In the federal bureaucracy...the words 'woman,' 'women's groups,' 'women's issues,' and 'feminism' are avoided. Neutral words...such as 'female and male persons'... 'family,' 'mother,' and 'family violence'...are substituted. The preferred verb is passive.

Jan Barnsley (1988, 19) argues that these degendered constructions have the effect of "subsuming women's experience into a more general frame, worthy of the 'public interest'." Degendering, Barnsley (1988, 19) warns,

...obscures who is doing what to whom; reframes political issues as [individual] problems, thus minimizing inherent structural challenges; [this] fits more closely with the institution's and the state's existing problem solving apparatus and ultimately makes women's situations invisible.

In matters of the state and state feminism, it is clear that a central catch-22 is in place. In our struggles as feminists, we inevitably come up against the state. It is unclear how the state will be changed without challenge, and significant gains have been achieved only through struggle at the state level. However, in these struggles and victories we often see feminist demands shaped and distorted by state policy, legislation, and funding programs. Dorothy Smith once summarized this catch-22 by commenting: "In winning, we lose control; there is no enhancement of our power" (cited in Weir 1987, 98-99). This statement conveys how winning can mean in some ways losing as feminist demands are taken up and entered into the work processes of the state, and as they become displaced from feminist control to the control of the state apparatus.

IV. RECONCILING THE DEBATE

Until recently, few feminist analyses went beyond seeing the state as either potentially good or bad for women as a group (Waylen 1998). However, by the late

1980s, a number of more sophisticated ways of conceptualizing the state emerged from feminist analyses (Waylen 1998). At that time, a number of feminist writers began to criticize the various approaches to theorizing women and the state, feminism, and state feminism outlined above. They took exception to the way in which the form of the debate around disengagement and mainstreaming adopted such diametrically opposed terms: engage or refuse to engage with the state, work within the state or against the state. They identified the risks involved in overemphasizing or associating too much with one or the other strategy. Disengagement increases the likelihood of marginalization, thereby increasing the invisibility and inaccessibility of issues, and mainstreaming can lead to co-optation (Briskin 1991). Franzway et al. (1989, 148) remark that, faced with two opposing poles, each with its own particular risks,

The consequence is a highly weighted choice: either engage with the state, becoming assimilated, with political goals corrupted; or reject the state entirely. Set in these terms, who would choose corruption? But can the state be ignored? Is such political purity possible?

Feminist scholars are offering a fresh look at the state and its capacity to achieve feminist goals in a way that has recast the debate between disengagement and mainstreaming. They conclude, as stated by Barbara Marshall (2000, 40), that the state, as an arena of political practice, “is not something feminists can choose or refuse to enter.” Rather, the challenge for feminists is “to maintain a complex strategic interplay between disengagement and mainstreaming” (Briskin 1991, 34). Making change, then, is not a question of choosing between the two approaches, but of reconciling and maintaining a healthy tension between a politic of disengagement and one of mainstreaming (Adamson et al. 1988). In this regard, Charles (2000, 28) states,

... feminist[s] engage with the state by confronting it *and* by working within it; it is experienced as both enabling and constraining, as oppressive and responsive to pressure for change. Engaging with the state courts the danger that feminist interests will be lost sight of and issues redefined in non-feminist terms, but it also holds out the promise that feminist demands will be met and feminist interests represented within and by the state. This means that the state has to be engaged with both internally and externally in order to change its policies and to challenge the gender order.

Upon this view, feminists must stand both inside and outside the state, combining

“abstract vision and concrete reality” (Adamson et al. 1988, 186).

These writings on state feminism also differ from previous feminist research in that they question the notion held by many critics that the state is a single, unified entity acting in society to defend its own interests (Watson 1990). As stated by Stetson and Mazur (1995, 11),

Whether influenced by postmodernism’s obliteration of grand design or sobered by their encounters with the world around them...[recent] writers of state feminist literature avoid such global definitions of the state.

Taking this line of theorizing to its fullest extent, some feminists have even questioned whether a feminist theory of the state is necessary. Judith Allen (1990, 22), for instance, argues that feminists do not need a theory of a state, and, moreover, that the retention of the concept actually obscures many of the connections feminists want to make:

...‘the state’ is a category of abstraction that is too aggregative, too unitary, and too unspecific to be of much use in addressing the disaggregated, diverse and specific (or local) sites that must be of most pressing concern to feminists. ‘The state’ is too blunt an instrument to be of much assistance (beyond generalizations) in explanations, analyses or the design of workable strategies.

Despite the scepticism of feminists like Allen, others have taken the perspective, as summed up by Waylen (1998, 4), that “the conclusion that the analysis of the state up until now has been aggregative does not necessarily imply that trying to theori[z]e the

state is a worthless enterprise, but can imply instead that more sophisticated analyses are necessary.” These theorists believe that a more useful approach, rather than abandoning the project of theorizing the state outright, is to conceive of the state as the site or location of a variety of internally differentiated structures and processes (Franzway et al. 1989). The focus has shifted to viewing the state as a process, rather than as a ‘thing.’

From this perspective, the state is not an actor or object so much as a series of arenas or, in Anna Yeatman’s (1990, 170) words, a “plurality of discursive forums.” This entails understanding that the current collection of practices and discourses which construct the state are an historical product, and that, historically, there have been many different varieties of state. Each of these had its own combination of institutions, apparatuses, and arenas; histories; contradictions; political conjunctures; relations; and connections, both internally and externally (Watson 1990). What emerges from this new type of analysis is the view that “‘the state’ as a category should not be abandoned, but it must be recognized that, far from being a unified structure, it is a by-product of political struggles” (Pringle & Watson 1992, 67).

Stetson and Mazur (1995, 11) observe that, “Deconstructing the monolithic state has reconstructed the question of its impact on women.” The deconstruction has enabled theorists to move away from the notion that the state can act on behalf of particular groups in any simple way, as suggested by some feminists. The state may instead be viewed as an arena where interests are actively constructed rather than structurally given (Watson 1990). Far beyond being a homogeneous entity that lies almost outside of society and exerts power from on-high, the state may instead be understood as a process that is influenced in part as a result of interaction with different groups (Watson 1990),

including advocacy groups. The state not only shapes society, but is shaped by society. By undertaking this theoretical shift, it becomes possible to envision women not merely as 'passive victims' but as agents of change who exert power and resistance when the opportunities to do so arise.

This theoretical shift also enables us to conclude that the state "has no necessary relationship to gender relations," but instead has a relationship to gender relations that is "evolving, dialectic and dynamic" (Waylen 1998, 7). As summarized by Barbara Marshall (2000, 40),

It is clear that feminists have developed a more complex and nuanced approach to the state, understanding it as non-unitary, and not necessarily rational, not just as a set of institutions, but as a social force, as the site of struggle between different interests, and as both enabling and constraining.

This new line of feminist theorizing on the state forms one way around the conceptual and strategic cul-de-sac of 'in or against the state' by leaving open the potential not just for approaching and working through the state, but also working within the state (Waylen 1998). If the nature of the state or the relationship between the state and gender is not fixed and immutable, it follows that battles can be fought in the arena of the state. Defined in these terms, the state may be seen as open to contestation, challenge, and negotiation. The state thus becomes "an uneven and fractured terrain with dangers as well as resources for women's movements" (Rai & Lievesley 1996, 1). While the state has acted to reinforce female subordination in many ways, space can exist within the state to act to change gender relations. We do not have to choose between ignoring or challenging the state, remaining outside or working within the state. Rather, this new perspective allows us to understand the state as a complex set of institutions with conflicting interests, offering differing prospects for feminist incursions (Connell 1990).

V. WORKING WITHIN A STATE OF CONTRADICTION

The more recent approaches to the state identified above help us to understand that we do not have to conclude in advance that the state will act uniformly to maintain capitalist or patriarchal relations, or that state gender equality initiatives will necessarily be ineffective. Instead, as noted by Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson (1992, 63), “[t]he outcomes of particular policies will depend not purely on the limits placed by ‘structures’ but on the range of discursive struggles which define and constitute the state and specific interests, from one moment to the next.” At different times and within different political conjunctures, “opportunity structures can be used to alter the existing pattern of gender relations” (Waylen 1998, 8). Within this framework, state feminism becomes a potentially effective tool, depending on the context and the opportunity structures of the day.

Feminist political economy has emerged as a particularly useful theoretical base for exploring the importance of context in shaping both the possibilities and the constraints of any particular policy or strategy, including gender equality initiatives. Feminist political economy takes as its starting point ‘the setting of the setting’ (Armstrong 2001, 123). From this perspective, contexts matter. In order to understand a given policy or initiative, such as GBA, it must be situated within the broader political and economic setting in which it is occurring. Policies are understood as contingent, reflecting the context and power relations of the location in which they are produced. And, as Pat Armstrong (2001, 124) observes, “few women are involved in the most powerful forces that establish this context.”

The 'Setting of the Setting': Situating GBA within the Current Ideological and Institutional Context

Feminist political economists would instruct us to explore the setting of the setting of GBA. That context is a profoundly gendered one, divided and stratified along lines of gender, as well as of class, race, ethnicity, age, region, sexual orientation, and ability.

With regard to the observation that the current context is gendered, Armstrong (2001, 125) suggests that,

States play a critical role in this gendering. They help structure what is done in the formal economy and the private household, what is done by the for-profit sector and the public one, and how much the search for profit and households are regulated.

Janine Brodie (1994, 24) similarly argues that “states...do not simply reflect gender identities and inequalities, but instead, play an important role in constituting them.” The state plays a key role in constructing gender and regulating gender relations.

In addition to being profoundly gendered, the current context is also a global one, reflecting and interacting with forces of globalization and capitalism. In response to these forces, Canada, like other Western democracies, is currently undergoing a profound shift in state form and governing practices. Brodie (1996, v) observes that our daily newspapers are filled with dire warnings about how, among other things: Canada must adjust in order to trade competitively in the new international market; federal and provincial governments must become more efficient by cutting back their activities and spending; and social programs must be reduced and transformed to help those displaced by the new economic realities to enter the work force and become self-sufficient.

All of these messages mark a distinct departure from the Keynesian welfare state following the Second World War; a state form which asserted the primacy of the public good over the 'invisible hand' of the market and generated expectations that the state was responsible for meeting the basic social needs of its citizens (Brodie 1996). The Keynesian welfare state rested on three fundamental pillars: the development of a comprehensive social-welfare system; the use of macro-economic levers to control inflation or stimulate growth and protect the national economy from international disturbances; and adherence to a more liberalized international trading regime (Brodie 1990, 149). Brodie (1996, v) explains that the pillars of the Keynesian welfare state have eroded:

The broad consensus that formed the foundation of the postwar welfare state has given way to a very different set of assumptions about the role of governments and the rights of citizens. It is now widely believed that the only means left to correct this mounting problem of slow economic growth, rising government debts, and widespread unemployment is restructuring.

Within this context, Canada has experienced a progressive "hollowing out" of the Keynesian welfare state and, in particular, universal social welfare programs (Brodie 1994). Critics now refer to this process of dismantling the welfare state through budget cuts as 'social policy by stealth' or 'the politics of stealth' (Cohen 1993, 267). Brodie (1994, 15) explains that the politics of stealth, which were perfected by the Mulroney government and subsequently adopted by the federal Liberals and most provincial governments, "[enable] governments to enact significant changes in social policy incrementally and largely without much public awareness or participation by means of complex changes in regulations and repeated funding cuts."

In Canada, restructuring entails a commitment to decentralization, privatization, reduced social spending, global liberalization of trade, and a more limited role for governments in the economy and society. The theoretical basis underlying this new philosophy of governance and subsequent restructuring process in Canada is 'neo-liberalism.' Neo-liberalism is guided by three major principles: (i) institutions such as the state and the market should reflect the motivation of self-interest, (ii) states should provide a minimum of public goods, and (iii) the most efficient allocation of resources and maximization of utility is believed to occur through markets (Bakker 1996, 4). This philosophy has been operationalized in Canadian politics through the new vision of governance espoused by the Liberal government, drafted in terms of "getting government right" through increasing the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of government actions and by creating a more results-oriented public service working in partnership with its key 'stakeholders,' including citizens, business, provinces/territories, and local communities.

It is important to note that restructuring and reform of the Canadian state are generally cast as 'gender neutral' initiatives. Isabella Bakker (1994, 1) observes that "there is little recognition of the gendered nature of the current process of structural and institutional transformation." Yet, as Janine Brodie (1996, v) underscores, "restructuring is affecting every facet of women's lives."

Women experience disproportionately the adverse consequences of social service cutbacks and other policy reforms (Rice & Prince 2000). This finding is not altogether surprising when one considers, as noted above, that the organization of Canadian society is profoundly gendered. Women and men have different roles and life experiences. For

women, these life experiences include having the greatest responsibility for the family, child care, and elder care; being victims of male violence; and generally being poorer than men (Rice & Prince 2000). With respect to family formations, women head over 80 per cent of all single parent families in Canada (Rice & Prince 2000, 182). Differences in work experiences include continued occupational segregation for many women in many sectors of the labour force and lower rates of earnings, benefits, and pensions (Rice & Prince 2000).

Because women and men have different relationships with the social world and the welfare state, the impacts of policy changes affect women and men in different ways (Rice & Prince 2000). For instance, feminist academics and women's groups have pointed out that women are disproportionately affected by cuts in social welfare spending and the reduction of public services given their high representation both as welfare clients and state workers (see e.g., Armstrong 1999; Bakker 1996).

As state workers, women have been affected through the loss of public sector jobs, where women were most likely to find secure, well-paid, and unionized jobs. Cut-backs in staff have resulted in intensified workload and work pressures for those women remaining employed in the public sector to make up for the loss of other workers (Maroney & Luxton 1997).

As clients, women – particularly low-income women – are affected by the reduction in social programs and services. For many social programs and services, women are the primary clients and are therefore heaviest hit by cuts. Prominent examples include social assistance, old age pensions, daycare subsidies, and social

housing (Rice & Prince 2000). The rolling back of the welfare state also means that vital social services are shifted from the paid to the unpaid work of women.

Finally, along with other so-called 'interest groups' in Canada, women have faced an attack under this new regime through the loss of public funds to non-governmental and voluntary organizations working to advance women's equality, as well as through an attack on their legitimacy as actors in policy-making and their role in the democratic process within the Canadian state. The power of the women's movement may well have been damaged as public sector and some private sector unions, which provide a powerful base for advancing women's demands, now risk running out of money and members under the impact of restructuring (Maroney & Luxton 1997, 96).

Such observations have led Brodie (1994, 19) to conclude that, "Indeed, evidence everywhere indicates that restructuring has been enacted precisely on the field of gender." The gendered impacts of restructuring are highly uneven among women, exacting the heaviest toll on young women, women of colour, and working-class women.

State Contradictions and Difference

The observation that the impacts of restructuring are highly uneven among women speaks to the important issue of difference. While it is possible to conclude that the state does not treat women in any monolithic way, it is also clear that welfare states engage with women in different ways according to other intersecting aspects of identity, such as 'race,' class, ability, and sexual orientation. Likewise, women do not relate to the state in any simplistic way, and have different priorities, needs, concerns, and expectations of the state based on the different positions they occupy. Consider, for

example, that in Canada, Aboriginal women have had to fight with the state in order to keep their Aboriginal status after marrying a non-Aboriginal man.

While feminist theorists increasingly attend to the issue of differences between women in general, there is a dearth of writing on the implications of difference as it relates to the welfare state and state feminism specifically. For instance, although feminist theorists have analyzed and debated the problem of feminist co-optation by patriarchal and capitalist states, these debates have mostly ignored the problem of co-optation by, and participation in, a racist state. Tikka Wilson (1996, 3) argues that feminist theorists focus on the “problem of masculinization” within state bureaucracies, “but ignore racial privileging.”

The issue of difference is important to keep in mind in the context of this study, and will be revisited in Chapter V. The implications of constructing ‘women’ as a unitary political category in relation to the state are far-reaching, and have an impact on gender equality initiatives such as GBA.

Contradictory Priorities within the State

Reflecting on the current context raises important questions about whether this new regime precludes the advancement of women’s equality within state structures. Bakker (1998, 5) observes that “it is clear that a new set of values is emerging within the federal government which emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness...while other values such as equality and diversity have received much less emphasis.”

Within the context described above, why would the federal government commit to GBA? In a period when there is a shift towards cutting back social programs, this initiative seems to be in contradiction with the government’s current agenda. Consider

the irony that the same year the government issued *Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality* which mandated the introduction of GBA, federal Finance minister Paul Martin introduced massive expenditure reductions in the 1995 Federal Budget – “a move whose gender implications were largely ignored” (Rankin & Wilcox 2001, 2).

Returning to the notion of the setting of the setting, feminist political economy enables us to understand that policy-making in the current Canadian political context is built upon a set of complicated and conflicting interests and processes. The state reflects and responds to a variety of interests and agendas; while the state is not ‘all-evil,’ as suggested by some feminists advocating a disengagement strategy, nor is the state neutral. On one hand, the state participates in processes to increase accumulation and profit. These interests often conflict with and hinder achievement of women’s equality. On the other hand, there are priorities for legitimation; the state gains legitimacy from showing itself willing to remove barriers to women’s equality.

At the heart of this matter is the fact that the Canadian state – like other welfare states – has a contradictory nature. It is a site of patriarchal-capitalist relations and is therefore resistant to changes that would further the goal of women’s liberation. However, Canada also has a liberal-democratic government situated within a tradition of western-style democracy and equality. Thus, while the current context is patriarchal and capitalist, there is also within that context a long-standing liberal-democratic commitment still operating today (Findlay 1988a). In the words of Adamson et al. (1988, 151), the state may therefore be seen as “a contradictory set of processes that hang in balance

(teeter, perhaps) between the demands of patriarchal capitalism and those of liberal democracy, which sometimes support, but most often conflict with, one another.”

Adamson et al. (1988) argue that central to the contradiction is the fact that patriarchal capitalism is by definition committed to the perpetuation of unequal gender, class, and race relations, while liberal democracy entails a concern for and philosophical commitment to the rights of the individual, liberty, justice, and equality of opportunity. Conflicting priorities lead to a contradictory setting wherein, for example, demands for an equitable and democratic state, with increased emphasis on the rights of citizens to participate in public decisions, co-exist with demands for an effective and efficient managerialist administration, with tight controls on human and material resources.

The contradictory nature of the state can be discerned by analyzing contradictory state actions and policy. Often, positive action in one sphere of the state is accompanied by a contradictory regressive action in another. As explained by Varda Burstyn (1983, 46),

...one part of the state may attempt on a legal level to set up child care facilities, rape crisis centres, community enterprises and local decision-making bodies ... while another level of the state, inevitably a ‘higher,’ more centrali[z]ed level, will cut off the funds for these projects, or declare them illegal, or otherwise swamp, contain or dismantle them.

Melanie Randall (1988, 14) observes that “there is often conflict and contradiction between the actions and policies of the various levels, branches and agencies of the state.” The contradictory nature of the state is also exemplified in terms of actions which “support the dominant groups in society in the long run, yet which may grant short term gains to disadvantaged groups as a result of negotiations among conflicting interests” (Randall 1988, 14). Randall states that “[e]xamples of these kinds of contradictions in

state policy and action abound, and must be analyzed for the kinds of tensions and openings for political struggle that they reveal.”

Feminist political economy is instructive in helping us understand that state approaches to gender equality are often contradictory. States can simultaneously benefit and undermine efforts to end women’s subordination and inequality. Important gains have been achieved, and these gains are not trivial. Yet, at the same time, feminist reforms often have negative consequences. For example, the introduction of maternity and parental benefits has allowed many women to keep their paid jobs while having children. Such gains are valued by the women’s movement. However, as underscored by Pat Armstrong and Patricia Connelly (1999, 4),

Such regulations are often double-edged...simultaneously providing protection while separating women from men and ensuring subordination...victories can be turned into losses.

From this perspective, companies may resist hiring women precisely because they have to allow for maternity leave (Armstrong & Connelly 1999). Jane Ursel (1992) similarly points out that, while supports such as family allowance and mother’s benefits provide women with much needed income, they also reinforce women’s unequal position as wife and mother, and perpetuate a patriarchal ideology.

Writing from her experience as the former director of the Women’s Program at the Department of Secretary of State during the 1970s, Findlay (1987, 48) concludes that “when the state is more vulnerable to women’s demands, feminists [within the state] can play a more active role in the development of state proposals to promote women’s equality...by taking advantage of the state’s need for legitimation.” It is clear, however,

that in Canada the process of reform is neither linear nor even. As well, “the reforms that emerge from these periods are not necessarily permanent” (Findlay 1987, 48).

Exploring the Contradictions

Given the ‘fractured terrain’ described in the preceding section – a state that is profoundly contradictory in its treatment of women and in its priorities – any new and emerging gender equality initiative, such as GBA, must be understood as emerging from battles which take place in the arena of the state. As well, at a time when “the contradictions between commitments to equality and social justice and the interests of the capitalist classes that have traditionally shaped the policies of the liberal democratic state are heightening” (Findlay 1997, 303), any new and emerging gender equality policy must be assessed for the strengths and limitations which it presents, and for its overall ability to meaningfully impact the lives of women. As underscored by Randall (1988, 15),

We especially need to examine the experiences of the women who have chosen to work inside the various agencies of the state, their accountability to the women’s movement, the constraints and contradictions which inevitably shape these experiences, and the openings and possibilities for shaping policy and making decisions about the use of state power and resources which may, or may not emerge. We need also to understand better the processes and internal workings of the state, including the processes of policy and decision making.

A first set of key questions thus becomes: What are the struggles associated with attempting to implement GBA in the face of myriad contradictions within the state in relation to women, and associated with state feminism more broadly? In what ways do the political climate and bureaucratic context in which Canadian federal GBA initiatives are implemented define and constrain the possibilities and limitations, and strengths and weaknesses of GBA?

A second set of questions pertains to the workers who are faced with the task of implementing gender equality policies, such as GBA, within the fractured terrain of the state: What are their experiences? What struggles do they face? The preceding discussion makes clear that employment in the state bureaucracy is loaded with contradictions for its workers, especially for women working on what are defined as women's issues. As pointed out by Franzway et al. (1989, 151-152),

If the state is riven with contradiction, then the workers are faced with that contradiction. If we see the process of the conversion of 'demands' into 'policies' refracted and mediated through the internal structures of the state's contradictory tasks, a different light is cast on the actors within the state apparatus. Those who are responsible for social policy responses constantly confront the predicament that demands cannot be reconciled neatly within the state's own needs...The contradictory nature of the state constructs their interests and constrains their options for manoeuvre.

Franzway et al. (1989, 153) conclude that "femocrats do have a choice, but one limited by the peculiarities of the state."

VI. CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to address some of the major themes involved in the literature on women and the state, and state feminism. First, it outlined the nature of feminist writings on the state and attempted to summarize the scope of feminist debates in these writings up until now. Having examined some of the various theoretical approaches, the chapter went on to discuss a number of ways to reconcile some of the variations in these approaches. These ways of understanding the state emphasize that the state is neither a homogeneous category nor a unitary structure, but rather a set of institutions, agencies, discourses, relations, and practices. The nature of the state is not

fixed. Thus, the state has no necessary relationship to gender relations. Instead, this relationship is dynamic and evolving.

Women's experiences with the state have been plagued by contradictions. We have witnessed the institutionalization of feminist issues which have been taken up by the vast machinery of the state and reformulated in ways that are sometimes unrecognizable, severed from any radical analysis or critique of gender relations specifically, or social relations generally. Many feminist demands have been transformed into 'legitimate' items on the state's agenda.

At the same time, while the state has acted to reinforce women's subordination, we have seen that space can also exist within the state to change gender relations. The state, therefore, is not to be avoided, but must be understood as a site of struggle, fraught with contradictions. As summed up by Patricia Evans and Gerda Wekerle (1997, 5),

Women's relationship to the...state is imbued with important tensions and contradictions. These can operate in favour of, as well as in opposition to, women's interests.

Rai's (1996) conceptualization of the state as a complex and contradictory terrain, fractured, oppressive, threatening, while at the same time providing spaces and resources for struggle and negotiation, will serve as a major theme to be taken up in various ways in subsequent chapters. It is with this theme in mind that GBA will be explored in terms of the possibilities and limitations it presents within the context of such a state.

My focus on GBA in federal government offers an opportunity to revisit important debates about women, feminism, and the state. This thesis explores the viability of one state feminist initiative through an analysis of GBA. How much space and manoeuvrability can exist for gender equality initiatives such as GBA? Critical

attention to initiatives such as GBA can help to illuminate the struggles associated with attempting to achieve positive change for women through the arena of state structures.

The next chapter will explore the methodology and methods used in this study. Theoretical positions and arguments explored in this chapter will be revisited in Chapters IV-VI.

CHAPTER III: METHODS & METHODOLOGY

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodological approach and methods used in this study. It concludes with a discussion of key issues I encountered in conducting qualitative research from a feminist perspective, and limitations of this research.

As a preface to this chapter, I would be remiss not to mention that, throughout the writing of this thesis, I was surprised to find that not a single person asked me *why* I chose to carry out my research on GBA – what drew me to the topic in the first place. Thus, one purpose of this chapter is to attempt to locate myself in the research process. I take up the perspective of Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989, 42) that it is not only important to document *how* research is being conducted, but also *why* the research is being done.

II. DEFINING A METHODOLOGY

The nature of the phenomenon under study in this research project helped me to narrow down my selection of a methodological approach. First, GBA is a policy-related research area. Policy-related research may be defined as research that identifies trends, policy gaps, and emerging issues; examines the consequences of existing policies and practices; and/or focuses on concrete recommendations for policies and practices that would have a positive impact on society.

Policy-related research, like any research, can be approached using a number of different methodological approaches. However, in the present study, feminist research methodologies and techniques were selected as they seemed particularly appropriate to

the topic of the research, with its focus on gender, and compatible with the policy-oriented nature of the research.

Feminists are not in total agreement about the way feminist research should be undertaken. As Sandra Harding (1987, 1) observes, it would be wrong to argue that there is a 'definitive' feminist method or approach to research. Sally Mason (1997, 10-11) points out that "no single method is used in feminist social work research" and that "feminist principles guide research but do not dictate the use of specific methods." Pamela Abbott and Claire Wallace (1990, 205) support this view, arguing that no research method is explicitly feminist or anti-feminist; rather, it is the ways in which research is carried out and the framework within which the results are interpreted that determine if research is feminist or not." Thus, the methods used "are as diverse as the researchers and their questions" (Mason 1997, 11).

Kelly (1988, 6) explains that many of the methods used by feminist researchers are not new: "What is new are the questions we have asked, the way we locate ourselves within our questions, and the purpose of our work." Feminist research originally emerged out of an oppositional stance to some of the perceived pitfalls of mainstream research, including a lack of research on women's lives; sexist research designs; an overgeneralization of findings, especially the use of findings from all-male samples to explain or describe women; exploitive relationships between the researchers and those being studied; and objections to the use of methods that emphasize objectivity or 'value-free' science (Jayaratne & Stewart 1991; Eichler 1997).

Feminists attempt to correct these faults by doing research 'for' women as opposed to research 'on' women (Duelli-Klein 1983; Harding 1987). Research for

women “tries to take women’s needs, interests and experiences into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women’s lives in one way or another” (Duelli-Klein 1983, 90). In this regard, as expressed by David and Irene Hall (1996, 52), “feminism goes far beyond being a methodological perspective about how you should carry out research – it is also an *ontology* (way of being).” According to Liz Stanley (1990, 14), “It is the experience of, and acting against, perceived oppression that gives rise to a distinctive feminist ontology.” From this point of view, feminism places research in a political context; research must be useful to effect social change and to help build a more empowering society.

Feminist scholars began to realize the need for alternate approaches to research when they found themselves in a contradictory position as women researching women. In their scholarly lives, they were taught to be objective and dispassionate in their approach to the research problem, and to distance themselves from the ‘subjects’ of their research. However, these researchers often had much in common with their female subjects in the lives that they led both inside and outside of academia.

Feminist scholars found that they could not suppress their “double consciousness” (Mies 1983, 120), whereby their own experiences as women living under patriarchal systems gave them a certain “experiential knowledge” that was crucial to understanding the position of their female research participants. Feminist researchers recognized that this double consciousness could be a methodological and political advantage, and not a hindrance to ‘valid’ research as positivist social scientists claimed (Mies 1983). Maria Mies argues that,

The postulate of **value free research**, of neutrality and indifference towards the research objects, has to be replaced by **conscious partiality**, which is achieved

through partial identification with the research objects...Conscious partiality is different from mere subjectivism or simple empathy...It enables the correction of distortions of perception on both sides and widens the consciousness of both, the researcher and the 'researched.' (Mies 1983, 123)

A level of 'intersubjectivity' (Duelli-Klein 1983, 94) allows the researcher to compare findings with his/her own experiences and to share this knowledge with the research participants. This not only assists in reducing the knowledge/power hierarchy between researchers and participants, but also helps to "conscientize" the participants into viewing their own unique and individual struggles as part of a larger whole (Mies 1983, 126-27).

Feminist scholars provide alternatives to conventional research approaches that homogenize the complex contextual realities of women's daily lives. This does not mean that feminist scholars have abandoned the 'traditional' toolbox of conventional research methods (i.e., interviews, observation, analysis of records, etc.). It simply means that they have had to alter, adapt, and re-conceptualize these methods to capture problems in their holistic, contextual, and often complex settings (Harding 1987; Du Bois 1983). As Barbara Du Bois (1983, 110-11) states,

Our work needs to generate words, concepts, that refer to, that spring from, that are firmly grounded in the actual experiencing of women. And this demands **methods** of inquiry that open up our seeing and our thinking, our conceptual frameworks, to new perceptions that actually derive from women's experiences...Dichotomy, duality, linearity, fixity: these are not the properties of nature nor of human life and experiencing. They are not the properties of a learned mode of thought, a way of seeing and knowing that casts reality into rigid, oppositional and hierarchical categories. This model of reality has shaped our conceptions of the world and of science.

Shulamit Reinharz (1983) highlights several ways in which feminists have adapted conventional social science methods and models. She looks at the differences in how scholars define their topics of study and notes that conventional methods often focus

on 'manageable' issues derived from scholarly literature, while feminist studies more often highlight socially significant problems. Reinharz also discusses the fact that the method of research in feminist studies often is determined by and evolves with the unique characteristics of the field setting, as opposed to being designed a priori as is often the case with conventional studies. Furthermore, feminist methodologies incorporate analysis as an ongoing feature of a study and base it on inductive logic, as opposed to conducting analysis when all the data is 'in' using deductive reasoning. Often the objectives of feminist research are not to 'test hypotheses' but to develop a better understanding of a problem through grounded concepts and descriptions. In many cases, as highlighted by Reinharz (1983), the method evolves dynamically in relation to the field setting and the objectives and needs of the study.

Feminist research emphasizes the importance of accounting for the role of the researcher in what is being researched, not just in interpreting data but also in the whole process of creating data. Thus, reflexivity – which entails the ongoing assessment of the biases, assumptions, and perceptions that researchers bring to their work – is considered a central part of the research process.

Of equal importance is the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Feminist methodologists have criticized traditional approaches to data collection in which the primary goal is just to get questions answered (Oakley 1988). Traditionally, a hierarchy has existed between the researcher and the researched: the researcher is the 'expert,' whereas the researched are clearly not (Reinharz 1992; Oakley 1988). For example, Oakley (1988) has argued that interviewing is often based on a masculine paradigm. A hierarchy exists between the interviewer and the interviewee: a pre-set list

of questions is used to interrogate the interviewee, the interviewer reveals nothing about his/her own experiences, and the interviewer gives no advice, feedback, or practical assistance. The interviewer may work on gaining rapport, but the end goal is clear and obvious: to get the questions answered. Oakley and others (e.g., Stanley & Wise 1979) have suggested that interviewing, or any method of data collection, is best achieved when there is a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewees, and when both parties invest their personal identities during the research process.

Finally, as stated by Margrit Eichler (1997, 9), “Although feminist researchers have no monopoly on being concerned about ethical issues in research, there tends to be a greater than usual concern with a range of ethical issues.” Two ethical issues that are of particular concern to feminist researchers are: (i) ensuring the empowerment (versus the exploitation) of research participants, and (ii) overcoming the potential for objectifying participants, i.e., working to avoid viewing or treating participants as objects of study, thus robbing them of “their subjectivity, authority, and individuality” (Thompson 1992, 15).

In sum, feminists raise a number of issues relevant to applied social research – the importance of researchers’ reflexivity; attention to the relationship between researcher and participants; concern with the informant as a subject rather than object of the research; and an awareness of the power relationship in conventional scientific research where informants are vulnerable to exploitation by those who have personal interests at stake. These issues will be taken up again later in this chapter.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION

As described in Chapter I, the central question explored in this study is: What are the struggles associated with attempting to implement GBA in the face of myriad contradictions within the state in relation to women, and associated with state feminism more broadly?

Flowing from this overarching question are a number of sub-questions: In what ways do the political climate and bureaucratic context in which Canadian federal GBA initiatives are implemented define and constrain the possibilities and limitations, and strengths and weaknesses of GBA? How much space and manoeuvrability can exist within the state to work on gender equality policies such as GBA? What does this mean for the capacity and effectiveness of GBA overall? What contradictions are GBA specialists facing in relation to their work? Is there any evidence that GBA is making a difference? What could be done to enhance GBA?

IV. GATHERING INFORMATION

Research Design

This study used qualitative research methods. More specifically, primary and secondary documents pertaining to GBA and to theories of state, women, and feminism were used as a framework for analyzing GBA. As well, semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior-level Government of Canada officials with specific expertise in GBA.

A qualitative design was selected over quantitative methods because it enabled me to pay attention to the social and political context in which GBA appears and to note what surrounds this policy tool. Interviews were invaluable in helping me to learn about

GBA and about the struggles associated with state feminism from the perspective of those who are directly involved in and working with GBA from inside the state's women's policy machinery. Those interviewed opened up an important 'window,' and provided information above and beyond what is currently available in published materials.

Selection Procedure

Primary materials included government documents, such as policy papers, booklets, pamphlets, and evaluations; formal reports and studies; GBA literature and guidelines from numerous departments; written summaries of GBA-related conference proceedings; and speeches. Secondary sources included scholarly books and articles pertaining to GBA, as well as to feminist theories of women and the state. All of these materials were useful in developing a theoretical framework in which to understand GBA; in tracing the development of GBA and the context in which GBA is situated; and in gaining information on lessons learned and challenges surrounding GBA.

Use of textual data was complemented by individual interviews with ten senior-level¹⁰ Government of Canada officials employed in the unit responsible for coordinating implementation of GBA within six selected federal government departments/agencies¹¹. Participants were selected on the basis of their expertise in GBA. The size of the pool of participants was determined by the need to tap into a sufficient number of situations and

¹⁰ All participants were either Directors or senior policy analysts.

¹¹ Either one or two officials were interviewed for each of the six departments, depending on availability of participants or other considerations. In all of the cases where two officials were interviewed, one was a Director and one was a senior analyst. In cases where one official was interviewed, the participant was a Director. Officials from a seventh department were approached but declined participation.

experiences related to state feminism and to GBA in order to increase knowledge of these issues.

Potential participants were primarily located by searching through the Internet-based Government Electronic Directory Service (GEDS), which provides the title, role, organization, and contact information for Government of Canada employees in each department/agency. Alternatively, where information on GEDS was unclear or outdated, I phoned the administrative personnel of the division or branch in question, and requested the contact information for the two most senior-level persons working on GBA in that unit. Those persons were in turn contacted by telephone.

During the initial phone call, potential informants were apprised of the nature and purpose of the research, and the nature of research participation (i.e., duration, frequency, types of questions to be answered). Any preliminary questions that participants had with respect to the research were answered at that time. A letter of introduction (Appendix I) and informed consent form (Appendix II) were distributed to each informant by electronic mail after the initial telephone call. I then followed up a week later with a second phone call to confirm whether the individual was interested in participating. Additional questions were answered at that time. If the individual agreed to proceed, a date and time for the interview were set during the call.

I asked each informant whether she¹² had any questions about the informed consent form or about the study in general prior to commencing the interview. At that time, the participant was invited to sign the form if she was still prepared to proceed with the session.

¹² All participants in this study were female.

Data Collection: Sources and Methods

The interviews were conducted over a period of one month, from September 30, 2002 to October 29, 2002. One interview was conducted per participant. Interviews ranged from 55 minutes to an hour and 45 minutes in duration. All interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location designated by the participant – in all cases, either the person's office or a boardroom on the premises of her department, behind a closed door to ensure privacy. Participation in the study was voluntary.

A micro-cassette recorder was used to record the interviews. The taped sessions were transcribed at a later date. I was asked not to use a tape-recorder by one individual, and instead made handwritten notes consisting of key phrases and major points as she spoke. Master notes were typed up from handwritten notes at the conclusion of the latter session.

The interviews proceeded by using an interview guide (see Appendix III) listing key topics and corresponding questions to be asked. I opted to use an interview guide rather than a more structured questionnaire to allow for greater flexibility. The objective was to understand how the participant perceived GBA and state feminism in the context of her position within her department/agency. Given that each department/agency takes a different approach to GBA and operates within a different mandate, interviews needed to be tailored to the specific locale in which the respondent worked.

The same general questions were asked of each participant in the same order. However, the interview guide was often adapted as an interview proceeded. This flexibility offered scope for making the interview process sensitive to the meanings and issues raised by the participant, and opened up space for individual perspectives and

experiences to emerge. In some cases, I found that a particular question did not seem to fully correspond to a participant's frame of reference, and I would adapt the question accordingly. For instance, some participants preferred the term "accountability mechanisms" in place of the term "enforcement mechanisms" embedded in one of the questions. As another example, I modified the question, "In your opinion, are there any struggles associated with being a feminist working in government on strategies such as GBA? What are they?" to omit the words "being a feminist" in cases where a participant had already stated in response to a previous question about feminism that she did not identify as a feminist.

Occasionally, participants had already substantively covered ground raised in later questions. In those cases, I read the question, noted that they had already offered some detail in that regard, and asked if they would like to add anything else.

In other cases, the response given by a participant would open up another question, generally to ask for further clarification or depth. This allowed me to modify the interview process to explore in more detail aspects deemed important by the individual – aspects which sometimes did not correspond to my initial "hunches," assumptions, or to what I had deemed "important" to ask about at the outset. In this regard, the methods I used allowed participants to be experts about their own experiences and to correct me when my questions were on the wrong track.

V. APPLICATION OF FEMINIST PRINCIPLES

I describe in this section how some of the issues central to feminist research arose in the course of this study, how I attempted to address some of these issues, and how some issues remained unresolved. It is important to note that the three core issues

explored in this section are integrally related and that no one element exists independently of the others.

Reflexivity

Kirby and McKenna (1989, 44) suggest that research can begin “with a concern that is rooted in experience.” They advocate becoming an “active seeker of information about something that concerns you, an issue that has occupied your thoughts or a need that you have been aware of for some time” (Kirby & McKenna 1989, 7). They also contend that “as a producer of new information you will learn as much about yourself as you do the experience of others” (Kirby & McKenna 1989, 7).

As a woman, as a feminist, as a scholar with background in gender issues, and as a federal government policy analyst working in disability policy, my interest in GBA developed on a number of different levels, and for a variety of reasons. I wanted to work on a project that would nurture and honour my feminist standpoint, as well as my experience – a project that I could be passionate and excited about.

This study grew out of my interest in the fact that the state and its bureaucracy have become the critical terrain on which women’s rights are contested. The variable outcomes of these struggles suggest a complex, often times contradictory, relationship between women and the state. My motivation in undertaking this study was partly political. I wanted to understand the nature of state feminism in order to develop strategies that will maximize women’s gains and minimize women’s losses in their struggles with the state.

This study also grew out of my frustration with the perspective expressed by some members of the feminist community that the state is not worthy of research, based on a

perception that it can be simply dismissed as an agent of domination working to reproduce the hegemony of a single interest, be it capitalism or patriarchy, and/or as a monolithic agent of social control. In contrast to this perspective, based on my experiences working in federal government, I have come to see the state as having both regulatory and emancipatory potential for marginalized groups. Thus, rather than ignoring the state and its policies, I sought to take up the position of Anna Yeatman (1993, 231) who persuasively argues:

When we stand on the outside looking in, don't we simply confirm the identities that the state imposes on us, including invisibility, rather than challenge them? Rather than turning away from the state, then, feminists might be better advised to ...undertake studies of government policies and their consequences for women.

In taking up the issue of reflexivity, Harding (1987, 9) believes that the strength of feminist analysis is the insistence "that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter." In so doing, any significant details regarding the biases of the researcher can be brought to light and incorporated into the analysis. As Harding (1987, 9) explains,

The beliefs and behaviours of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of the research. **This** evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence. Introducing this 'subjective' element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the 'objectivism' which hides this kind of evidence from the public.

When I began the research for this study, I was limited in my knowledge and understanding of GBA, in terms of: how GBA is conceptualized and operationalized; how various federal government departments/agencies conduct their work with respect to GBA; what its strengths and limitations are; and how it fits within the larger picture of Government of Canada gender equality initiatives. By virtue of the fact that I was an

outsider to GBA, my knowledge of GBA as a policy was limited to what was revealed in primary and secondary sources.

In December 2001, I became the Gender Advisor for my group at work through the Network of Gender Advisors at Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). I continue to hold this position today. This experience gave me much needed insight for my study. My new role offered me a different perspective from which to go about collecting and interpreting information.

Once I began working as a Gender Advisor, it became clearer as to how I should proceed with my research. My experience at HRDC exposed me to new information and resulted in my meeting individuals with valuable GBA knowledge whom I may not have encountered otherwise. While this often sent me thinking and researching in several different directions, these discussions were invaluable in formulating the questions and ideas which have shaped the focus of this study.

My 'subjective' experience at HRDC also enabled me to use 'conscious partiality' in my interpretation of the data. It allowed my research and analysis to evolve with my own experiences in attempting to promote and apply GBA within the federal government. I could then draw from those experiences in relation to the experiences of the ten women who were interviewed for this study.

A final key component of reflexivity in the context of this study pertained to my use of a journal. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that researchers should keep field journals in which they record their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and hypotheses, generated by contact with participants. Such journals can also contain questions about, and problems and frustrations with, the overall research process. The use of journals allows researchers

to become aware of biases so that they can alter their data collection and analysis processes and acknowledge how their subjectivity influenced those processes. I kept such a journal in which I tracked the progress of this study and my personal reactions to the participants and their perspectives, as well as to the emerging findings. Writing in my journal also helped me to sort out my feelings and my role as a researcher, which is the next methodological issue to be explored.

Participant-researcher relationship

The issue of the relationship between the interview participants and myself as the researcher will be explored in this section in relation to key themes that arose in the context of interviews for this study.

Insider/outsider status in feminist interviewing

Kirby and McKenna (1989, 70) state that potential research participants “may accept or reject an invitation to participate in the research process on the basis of the researcher’s identity.” A number of participants in this study told me that they would not have agreed to talk to me had I not been a federal government policy analyst. It became clear to me from the outset that were I simply a graduate student, and not a graduate student who also worked for the federal government, I would not have been able to conduct my research in the same way.

Early feminist discussions vaunted the merits of ‘insider’ interviewing. They argued that in studying a group to which one belongs, one can use one’s knowledge of that group to gain deeper insights into people’s opinions and experiences (Rose 2001). Moreover, the researcher and the researched are on a relatively equal footing, reducing

the likelihood of exploitative power relationships. This may be contrasted to ‘outsider’ research – studying a group to which one does not belong.

In this study, being an insider in the sense of being a public servant increased my credibility and trustworthiness with participants. A number of participants expressed to me that they felt more comfortable about my agenda – they felt that I was not out to “trash,” as one participant in this study put it, the government out-of-hand. Participants also expressed that my status as a policy analyst meant that I would have an increased ability to understand where they were coming from, particularly in relation to the context they operate in, and the processes involved in policy-making.

I found that my status as an insider facilitated the interview process in that it gave me a starting point for understanding the shape that constraints and successes take within a bureaucratic system. My work with the government made me less naïve about government operations and more informed about the nature of the structural constraints that government bureaucracies, and their staff, face.

My work with the government also gave me knowledge of certain aspects of government culture, particularly language and processes. For instance, when participants made reference to products such as “MCs” (i.e., Memorandum to Cabinet), “briefing notes,” and “decks”; to colleagues such as “ADMs” (Assistant Deputy Ministers) or “DMs” (Deputy Ministers); or to committees such as “Interdepartmental Committees” or “CCSU” (Cabinet Committee on the Social Union), I not only knew what they were talking about but had direct experience with these.

Researchers are increasingly discovering that insider/outsider identities and statuses can be fluid, even within a single research project (Rose 2001). Attempts have

been made to move from a dualistic perspective to a more nuanced one in which intermediate categories are interposed between outsider and insider in order to cover situations where the researcher's position is more fluid and ambiguous, such as the 'outsider within' (Acker 2000; Collins 1991) who comes from the group being studied but has had experiences which set her apart from it in certain ways. As Sandra Acker (2000, 201) comments, "[t]his border might be a good vantage point for a critical perspective," but the interviewer may not be privileged to certain confidences and could be treated with suspicion.

In this study, I found that gaining the confidence of the participants required demonstrating on the one hand that I was an insider with respect to being a public servant working in policy, while on the other hand being an outsider by virtue of not being employed in one of the gender focal units of government from which I was drawing participants. I consistently found that participants seemed insulated from their counterparts in other departments. Some participants seemed keenly interested yet unsure about what might be happening in the gender focal units of other departments/agencies, and speculated about this openly during the interview process. At the same time, there seemed to be at least some degree of competition or protectiveness in what participants were prepared to share with one another about their own department/agency in the context of, for example, the Interdepartmental Committee on GBA, which is the forum that brings the departments/agencies together around GBA. Based on this, I perceived that if I were working in one of the gender focal units, I may not have been able to carry out my research in the same way.

Intersubjectivity

A second theme arising in the interviews was the theme of intersubjectivity. I found that spontaneous informal discussions – prior to, during, and following the interviews – were valuable sources of information and often revealed much about how GBA was perceived by participants. On several occasions, I was asked for my own perceptions of GBA based on my evolving research. I found that when I began to contribute my own ideas, the discussion would become more candid and interactive. This revealed much about the value of intersubjectivity. In all respects, I found that an interactive and open approach enhanced the quality of the discussions and contributed to a better understanding of the issues on my part.

Ethics

A third methodological issue of concern to feminist researchers to be explored is ethics, specifically in relation to potential risks or harm, and objectification of participants.

With respect to potential risks, issues of anonymity and confidentiality were particularly salient in this study given the fact that I was asking public service professionals to comment on federal government policy. Many of the participants stressed that they did not want their names associated with a critical opinion of their department, or of the Government of Canada more broadly. I assured participants that, in meeting the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee at Carleton University, every effort would be made to protect participants' anonymity. This meant that neither the names of participants nor any identifying features of departments would be revealed in my analysis. If names of individuals were mentioned, it would only be as a result of

information taken from published documents. However, I was clear from the outset that given the small number of participants in the research, it was not possible to guarantee anonymity because participants might be distinguished by the details of their responses. With respect to confidentiality, I ensured that all records of participation remained confidential. Only myself and my supervisor had access to the information. All records were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Conveying a sense of responsibility to participants became an important part of the research process. As Mueller (1987, 70) found,

Interviewing professionals, I was reminded of the myth that 'primitive' people were afraid that the camera would capture their soul and contain it in the photograph. Many times it seemed that the professionals were well aware from their own use of the methodology that the interview is a procedure for capturing knowledge about the research subject to be used by the researcher for her own purposes, and some of them were reluctant to have it done to them.

Hall and Hall (1996, 267) discuss the fact that informants may wish to conceal criticisms of their organization. I drew on the work of Lawrence (1988, 101), who similarly comments that informants may be hesitant to admit "discrediting things that the interviewer suspects." Lawrence suggests that "using comparisons to lower the threshold" is one useful technique for handling the challenge of informants' unwillingness to reveal unpalatable information to a researcher. For example, the interviewer might phrase a question as follows: "We know that such a problem has been reported in other studies. Is this a problem that you experience here?" I determined that I could use the technique suggested by Lawrence to ask potentially sensitive questions about the pitfalls, or barriers, experienced by participants in attempting to implement and conduct GBA within their organization.

One way in which researchers can avoid objectifying participants is to see and treat them as experts on their own experiences, as well as on the phenomenon being studied. This is a principle of both qualitative and feminist methodologies that requires the researcher to adopt an attitude of not-knowing curiosity. Many of the questions I asked during the interviews reflected my belief that the participants were experts. For instance, my letter of introduction stated to participants that, "The sharing of your knowledge and expertise will be invaluable in illuminating the factors which inhibit and the factors which enhance GBA." Likewise, during the interview, I asked questions such as "If you had to identify three major lessons learned about GBA, what would they be?" These types of questions seemed to help the participants summarize their thoughts about what we had discussed during the interviews and let them know that I believed their insights were valuable.

Throughout the interview process, I adopted the view that the participants were experts, without whom there would be no research. A passage from my journal, written immediately after one of my interviews, reflects the latter perspective:

When the interview was over, I was left with the feeling of being honoured that she chose to share such rich details of her work experience with me. I guess that's a predominant feeling I have right now, a sense of being honoured by these women's trust, as well as a sense that they really want to share their experiences.

VI. INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed Reinhartz's position that feminist research tends to be more 'inductive,' oriented toward discovering theory out of categories that emerge from research, than 'deductive,' or driven by prior theory which one seeks to confirm or disprove (i.e., hypothesis-testing). I found that my own approach occupied an

intermediate position between induction and deduction. The method I adopted approximates Glaser and Strauss's (1967) 'grounded theory' approach. In the latter, theory gives some initial orientation to the research and is later modified through discovery of new theoretical categories in the course of the research.

Analysis proceeded by discerning and coding major patterns or "thematic categories" derived from primary and secondary documents, as well as from the interviews. More specifically, after I transcribed the proceedings of the interviews, I reviewed the transcriptions for the most prevalent, recurring themes. These themes were then compared with major themes arising throughout the literature review, and overall qualitative analysis focused on the most salient points arising in both.

While I had developed an initial hypothesis going into the interviews about what thematic categories might arise, I used an inductive process which, in the end, led to the rejection of some of these categories and the creation of new ones. I took up the position of Mies (1983) that when the researcher predetermines categories, and individuals' experiences are translated into these, the end result can be distortion of women's experiences and silencing women's voices (e.g., Mies 1983).

The analysis of thematic categories proceeded by incorporating quotations taken from the interviews. I determined that the use of quotations to illustrate the thematic categories would allow me to represent the women's words and experiences in context and in their own terms, which is the hallmark of feminism (Cummerton 1986).

VII. LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH

Although this chapter has illustrated some of the ways in which I attempted to incorporate principles of sound qualitative research and feminism into my work, I could

have used additional strategies to manifest these principles even more thoroughly. For instance, I could have involved participants in the actual design of the study, and asked them to generate research questions. I could have also asked participants to review and give feedback on the data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions contained in this report.

This research may have been enhanced by use of triangulation (i.e., the use of two or more research techniques, usually a mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques, which is thought to mitigate the biases of each). For example, I may have asked some questions based on a Likert-type scale, in addition to asking open-ended questions. The responses to the open-ended questions would have been dealt with in the same way – as qualitative data reported as recurring themes. The responses from the Likert-scale questions could have been reported as quantitative data to supplement the latter.

There were also drawbacks associated with the small number of participants in this study. Given the small number of participants, it was necessary to omit from this report any details or comments that might identify a particular department or particular woman. For instance, factors such as participants' age or 'race' could not be discussed because this might violate anonymity.

Finally, the results of this study are assumed to apply empirically only to the sample and the time studied. Thus, this thesis is not intended to be definitive or all-inclusive. As Reinharz (1983, 183) states,

Since throughout the project meaning is assumed to be a constructive, ongoing process, there is no final interpretation valid 'for all times' but simply an adequate interpretation which is endorsed by participants, confirmed by readers and cognitively satisfying the researcher. An adequate interpretation, ironically, does not give definitive answers but keeps the dialogue going.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Kirby and McKenna (1989, 43) liken researching to “embarking on a voyage of discovery.” Hall and Hall (1996, 9) similarly compare research to a “journey of adventure.” It helped me to adopt this perspective of viewing research as a journey, not a destination. Kirby and McKenna (1989, 44) further suggest that it is helpful to understand research as a “continuous process,” a sequence of activities. Throughout the research process, I gave myself permission to develop flexibility and, as advocated by Hall and Hall (1996, 88), to be “prepared to regard [my] action plan as provisional and changeable.” In so doing, the end-point of the research (i.e., the final product itself) became less important, and the immediate activities and work became more tangible and interesting as both intellectual and practical barriers to researching seemed to lift.

Based on my experiences this past year in undertaking this research process, I have developed a new respect for and understanding of research at a level I did not have before. I have come to learn that research practice is complex and multifaceted: The same research project could be conducted in numerous and varied ways. The same research project may mean very different things to different parties, both researchers and participants.

Research is both personally and politically motivated. Research is affected by the socio-political context in which it occurs. One must have a passion for one’s research, and believe in the potential it has to inform and to be meaningful and relevant, no matter the state of the world.

Finally, research is messy. It does not always go the way one plans, and this should not be cause for pessimism; rather, “‘hygienic research’ in which no problems

occur, no emotions are involved, is research as it is described and not research as it is experienced” (Stanley & Wise 1993, 153).

Overall, the research experience was an enlightening and sometimes frustrating undertaking. The difficult times often were a result of the way in which knowledge is ordered and structured in such a way that excludes researchers from having access. The recurring difficulty I had in locating relevant documents indicated that knowledge is often not shared, recorded, accessible, or frequently sought and consulted. This point will be taken up in Chapter V when I discuss fostering greater knowledge exchange as a way of enhancing GBA.

The following chapter will provide an overview of GBA. It will describe the history of Government of Canada state feminism initiatives and women’s policy machinery, and situate GBA within that history.

CHAPTER IV: SITUATING GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts by taking a look backward, to see how GBA is situated within the federal government's broader history of state feminism initiatives. Although responsibility for GBA is meant to be spread throughout federal departments and agencies, that challenge has yet to be taken up fully. As will be discussed both in this chapter and in Chapter V, the responsibility for implementing GBA continues to be 'housed' largely within and coordinated by the 'gender focal units' (i.e., the new term used to refer to women's policy machinery) of various federal departments and agencies. Thus, this chapter discusses the genesis of Canadian federal women's policy machinery, and the various struggles experienced by these agencies, beginning with the emergence of the first agency of this type in 1954.

By situating GBA within this broader history of state feminism, it will become possible to later identify the ways in which those assuming responsibility for putting GBA into practice today encounter struggles which are both continuous and discontinuous within the context of the shifting terrain of the contradictory Canadian state. A key question regarding policy structures related to gender equality is whether or not they are sites with the potential to bring about meaningful change. Many observers both within and outside government consider such structures within the government to be largely symbolic. Indeed, movement activists often suggest that these structures' very survival under neo-liberal governments today shows that such bodies are ineffectual and pose no risk to existing interests and processes (Findlay 1987; Yeatman 1990). As well,

as discussed in Chapter II, a number of theorists have articulated a belief that the potential of state feminism initiatives is limited by effects of co-optation, bureaucratization, and depoliticization. These will be central themes to keep in mind in the context of both this chapter and the remainder of this paper.

Finally, following the description of state feminist structures within the Government of Canada, this chapter will provide an overview of GBA. The 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' of GBA will be described. The chapter will conclude with a description of the various Government of Canada GBA focal units.

II. STATE FEMINISM IN CANADA¹³

Much of the theorizing on state feminism has come from contexts other than Canada. To date, there has been a fairly short window in which to ponder the possibilities and limitations associated with institutionalized state feminism in Canada. That said, a variety of positive measures, such as the creation of programs, policies, and legislation specifically targeted at addressing women's systemic inequality, have been instituted by the Canadian federal government. The Government of Canada has also responded, as discussed in Chapter II, both to national and international demands to advance the status of women by creating 'women's policy machinery.'¹⁴ This section describes the Government of Canada's implementation of women's policy machinery, which began in the 1950s and ended with "a flurry of innovations in the early 1970s" (Geller-Schwartz 1995, 41).

¹³ While there have been a number of agencies at provincial/territorial government levels to address the status of women, this section focuses on the federal government.

¹⁴ 'Women's policy machinery' is synonymous with 'women's equality machinery,' which Stetson and Mazur (1995, 5) define as "the central policy structures in the federal government established by statute, administrative directive, or political resolution to advance the status and rights of women in the economy and society."

Canadian Federal Women's Policy Machinery

The Women's Bureau, 1954

Institutionalized state feminism began in 1954 in Canada. In 1953, Milton Gregg, the Liberal Minister of Labour, announced to the House of Commons during a routine debate on departmental budgets that a Women's Bureau would be established in Canada's Department of Labour "with a mandate to address, through research, study, and the dissemination of information, 'the special problems facing women workers'" (Geller-Schwartz 1995, 41). The Women's Bureau was formed in 1954, and became the first state agency in Canada to be concerned with the status of women (Geller-Schwartz 1995). It remained the only women's policy agency at the federal level for 15 years following its inception.

Based on a similar structure within the United States Department of Labor dating back to 1920, the Women's Bureau was charged exclusively with analyzing the status of Canadian women in the labour market (Burt & Hardman 2001; Rankin et al. 2001). The Bureau reflected the government's need to understand the increased participation by women in the paid labour force during and following World War II.

The Bureau was established partly in response to international efforts to focus attention on the position of women in the paid work force (Rankin et al. 2001). It also came, as acknowledged by the Minister of Labour, in response to the urging of women's groups in Canada and, in particular, their concern "that some women in employment are handicapped [sic] by some common prejudices of employers which are not founded on fact" (Debates, House of Commons 1953, 5420). This statement referred to women who came forward to claim that, following their massive war-time efforts, they were denied

adequate opportunities to participate in the postwar workforce. A coalition of women's groups, including organizations such as the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Business and Professional Women's Association, and the National Council of Women of Canada, lobbied government to address this and related problems (Vickers et al. 1993, 47). Women with movement/party connections in groups such as the Young Women's Christian Association and the Liberal Party were also instrumental in this regard (Dobrowolsky 2000, 20; Vickers 1992, 53).

Reflecting on the Women's Bureau, Sandra Burt (1990) argues that its weak administrative position was demonstrated early on in a number of ways. Marion Royce, the first Director of the Bureau and a well-respected activist on women's issues, complained in 1955 that, although she was a member of an interdepartmental committee to examine the problems of older workers, she was not invited regularly to meetings. In 1965, she was overruled in her effort to have the Bureau housed in the Research and Development Section of the Department. Instead, it was placed in the less supportive Labour Standards Section, where it remained until 1985.

From the outset, the Bureau had a small staff – never more than five people – and a starting budget of only \$24,000 (Burt 1990, 196). When Royce retired in 1966, she was replaced by Jessica Findlay, a woman with no involvement in women's groups or prior awareness of status of women concerns. During her brief directorship, the staff of the Bureau shrank to three full-time people, including Findlay, with a budget of \$45,000 (Burt 1990, 197). Findlay resigned after one year, and her resignation sparked a debate in the House of Commons focused on the Director's lack of authority and funds to carry out her responsibilities (Burt 1990).

The Bureau struggled to carry out its mandate with its small staff. Yet, despite its limited resources, the Bureau succeeded in carving out a niche for itself. It collected and analyzed some of the first survey data on women working for pay through its publication of an annual summary of women's paid work; published several studies on issues important to women; and played a vital role in informing governments, civil servants, and the public about the nature of women's work outside the home (Burt & Hardman 2001; Burt 1993; Geller-Schwartz 1995). It also contributed to the development of the first federal equal pay (1956) and maternity leave (1971) legislation (Burt & Hardman 2001). Monique Bégin (1992, 27) notes that "the [B]ureau, however small it was, at least anchored a pragmatic feminist viewpoint in the business of the state."

It was in the 1970s that the Bureau truly "flourished" (Burt & Hardman 2001, 203). It was tasked by the Liberals with monitoring federal programs on equal pay and affirmative action (Burt & Hardman 2001). It also began to play a key role in assessing the measures taken by employers to improve women's opportunities in the paid labour force, and to maintain Canada's profile internationally on issues related to women and employment. In 1976, the Women's Bureau was given some policy development responsibilities in addition to the information-gathering that was its primary responsibility in its earliest years.

In 1993, the Women's Bureau became part of the newly formed Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), a department created from the amalgamation of several former departments.¹⁵ It retained its mission to advance the full and equal

¹⁵ HRDC brought together (1) the former Department of Labour, (2) social and income security programs from the former Department of Health and Welfare, (3) social development and education programs from the former Department of the Secretary of State, and (4) unemployment insurance and labour market programs from Employment and Immigration Canada (HRDC 1995, 1).

participation of women in employment until 1994. However, it later began to assume a broader focus that reflected the wider range of policies and programs for which HRDC is responsible. It also became active in preparing Canada's input to the 1995 Beijing Conference. In July 1995, the Women's Bureau (now called the Gender Analysis and Policy Directorate) assumed a new mandate to develop and promote the use of GBA throughout HRDC.

Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women¹⁶, 1970

Geller-Schwartz (1995, 43) comments that “[b]y the mid-1960s it was evident that the discrimination facing Canadian women would not be corrected by the activities of a tiny bureau buried in the Department of Labour.” In 1966, inspired by President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women in the United States, a coalition of 32 women's organizations, headed by Laura Sabia of the Canadian Federation of University Women, and called the Committee for the Equality of Women in Canada, lobbied the Government of Canada for the appointment of a Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999; Sawyer 1996; Geller-Schwartz 1995). The Committee was joined in its efforts by a newly created francophone umbrella group, the Fédération des Femmes du Québec (Bégin 1992). Pressure from the Committee was reinforced by growing demands from the UN and the International Labour Organization to address the issue of women's rights, as well as by demands from some of the few women working inside the government, such as Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999).

¹⁶ While the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women is a report and not a women's policy structure, it is described here because its findings precipitated the creation of various machinery described later in this section.

On February 16, 1967, the Prime Minister of Canada appointed the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW). It was asked to inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society (Canada 1970).

Between 1967 and 1970, the seven commissioners – headed by a well-known female broadcaster, Florence Bird – traveled across Canada listening to the stories that women told them about the problems they faced in their communities (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999). The process of hearings and submissions involved thousands of Canadian women all over the country.

In December 1970, the Commission presented its report to Parliament. Alena Heitlinger (1993, 80) explains that the report was tabled at a time when “public policy was in flux” and “the progressive political climate at that time encouraged the promotion of equality, justice and ‘compensatory’ government services for the ‘disadvantaged.’” There was also much interest in citizen participation in public policy-making (Heitlinger 1993).

The RCSW Report was predicated upon six general principles: human rights; equality of opportunity; freedom to choose whether or not to work outside the home; shared responsibility for the care of children; special social responsibility for women on account of pregnancy and childbirth; and affirmative action. The report included 167 recommendations, 122 of which were defined exclusively in terms of federal responsibility. A key theme of the recommendations was that the federal government should improve the process for implementing policy changes to enhance the status of

women. Among the report's recommendations were several that recognized the need for all levels of government to set up coordinating bodies and advisory councils on issues involving the status of women.

Early in 1971, the Prime Minister announced the federal government's response to the Commission, promising that the 167 recommendations of the report would be given priority consideration. Three measures that were adopted straight away involved establishment of women's policy machinery: in 1971, the federal government appointed a federal Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, set up a new Office of the Coordinator on the Status of Women, and established the Office of Equal Opportunity. All three of these initiatives will be discussed in more detail below.

None of these initiatives impressed the feminist movement. Whereas the feminist movement was "anxious for the implementation of specific policies," these initiatives were perceived as "relating more to the bureaucracy's capacity to organize its response to demands than to developing policies or programs for substantive changes in women's lives" (Findlay 1987, 36). Seeming government inaction on the RCSW recommendations provoked the group that had lobbied for establishment of the Commission to again take the lead in lobbying for government action in 1971. They presented some of the recommendations to Cabinet Ministers, and persuaded the government to fund a "Strategy for Change Conference" in April 1972, which brought together for the first time over 700 women from all over Canada to discuss ways of pressing for the changes proposed in the RCSW report (Sawer 1996; Burt 1986). The conference led to the establishment of the National Action Committee (NAC) on the Status of Women – an umbrella group of feminist groups, women's centres, and women's organizations which

is still in existence today – to push to for implementation of the RCSW's recommendations, as well as to evaluate and advocate changes to benefit women (Heitlinger 1993; Burt 1986).

The latter events speak to the value of the RCSW as a major consciousness-raising exercise. Alexandra Dobrowolsky (2000, 20-21) explains that,

With the intensification of feminist activism in the 1970s came growing expectations vis-à-vis the state. Women did not merely respond to state-sponsored initiatives. Rather, they worked to shape state structures. For instance, feminist pressure went beyond setting up the RCSW to demanding action on its recommendations. This directly contributed to the growth of the femocratic...network.

Geller-Schwartz (1995, 43) observes that the Commission's recommendations also provided "years of grist for the policymaking mills":

The Commission's...specific recommendations on mechanisms for building women's concerns into the day-to-day business of the state created, in effect, a blueprint for future women's policy machinery.

It is important to note that, while the RCSW was a watershed in feminist-state interaction, there were nonetheless many factors that limited its usefulness as a strategy to represent women's issues or to influence government. First, the government's limited commitment to equality was reflected in the Commission's equal opportunity framework, a factor that inhibited the development of recommendations for positive action policies such as affirmative action (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999).

Second, the relatively conservative political perspectives of the government-appointed commissioners "limited their responsiveness to the radical and socialist feminists who were organizing in this period" (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999, 125). Only one of the seven commissioners, Elsie Gregory McGill, called herself a feminist

(Bergqvist & Findlay 1999). In this context, the “new feminists” of the day had little impact on the analysis of the RCSW (Bégin 1992).

Finally, although the federal Cabinet gave formal approval to the report of the RCSW in 1972 – two and a half years after its publication – approval was not accompanied by the usual list of specific resources, directives, and priorities (Burt 1986). In 1979, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women issued a publication entitled *Ten Years Later*, which reviewed the achievements of the federal government in implementing the RCSW Report and noted that only 43 of the 122 recommendations under federal jurisdiction had been implemented (CACSW 1979).

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, 1971 & the Office of the Coordinator on the Status of Women, 1971

Christina Bergqvist and Sue Findlay (1999, 129) report that, in the 1970s, the men working in the Canadian federal government “were faced with an unfamiliar challenge.” They had “neither the expertise inside the policy process nor the relations with women outside it who did” to mount an effective response to the recommendations of the RCSW or to respond to questions and scrutiny “from an increasingly enlightened and vigilant constituency of women” (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999, 130). New machinery and new appointments were determined to be a necessary first step.

The first appointment was made on May 7, 1971, when a senior Minister was delegated as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in order to represent women’s interests in Cabinet. That same year, the federal government also appointed a Coordinator on the Status of Women, who reported to the new Minister Responsible to the Status of Women, in accordance with the machinery recommendations of the RCSW

Report. Initially, the Coordinator was located in the government's chief policy coordinating body, the Privy Council Office. From this vantage point, the Coordinator chaired an Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women and associated working groups, which were intended to coordinate the federal government's response to the RCSW. The mandate of the Interdepartmental Committee was "to study the [RCSW] [R]eport and related questions and to recommend to the government a strategy for implementing the recommendations as well as other measures designed to improve the status of women in Canada" (Lalonde 1975, 1).

Office of Equal Opportunity for Women, 1971

Another response to the RCSW Report that came in 1971 was establishment of Office of Equal Opportunity for Women within the Public Service Commission. Complementary advisors on women's equal opportunity employment were appointed to the Treasury Board Secretariat. Between 1972 and 1975, equal opportunity policy advisors were appointed in departments that clearly had some responsibilities for policies related to women's equality, including those of Justice, Health and Welfare, Employment and Immigration, and the Secretary of State.¹⁷ However, most of the women hired as advisors in these departments complained of the difficulty in getting approval for their proposals, rarely having an opportunity to meet with Deputy Ministers, and not being included in senior management committees where decisions were made (Burt 1986, 154).

¹⁷ As noted previously, the Department of Labour had already established its own Women's Bureau in 1954.

Women's Program, 1973

One of the policy machineries with the greatest impact on women's lives was the Women's Program, initiated in 1973, and located in the Department of the Secretary of State (Burt & Hardman 2001). The Women's Program grew out of the federal government's involvement in International Women's Year (1972). Its establishment was also among the recommendations of the RCSW Report.

Of the various state feminist structures of that period, the Women's Program provided the most significant point of entry into the state by women's groups, as the Program was specifically tasked with providing financial and technical assistance to women's groups and other equality-seeking organizations at national, regional, and local levels. Support and funding were provided to grassroots women's groups in setting up, for example, shelters for abused women, or employment referral services for immigrant women.

According to Sue Findlay (1987), a former director of the Women's Program, the Program's staff members were self-defined feminists and were largely drawn from feminist groups. They attempted to model feminist process within government in terms of collaboration and empowerment by working very closely with the women's movement. The staff was committed to giving feminists access to the decision-making process of the Program, department, and other federal departments where possible.

Staff members were also committed to allocating grants in ways that would help women's groups across the country achieve their own self-defined purposes. It is interesting to note that by providing operating funds to feminist organizations, those organizations were then enabled to lobby the federal government for policy changes from

the outside. Sandra Burt and Sonya Lynn Hardman (2001, 204) observe that, relative to feminist bureaucrats (or femocrats), women's organizations experienced fewer constraints to advocating for change:

Because these community-based groups were not part of the government power structure, they could often propose and/or implement a much broader range of initiatives than was possible for bureaucrats.

The Women's Program staff members considered themselves accountable to the agenda of the women's movement, and believed that the resources of the state could be used to support the movement's development (Findlay 1987). However, Findlay (1988a, 6) reports that this was "an uphill battle":

Labelled as "crusaders" by some, and "a bunch of crazy lesbians" by others, the staff were constantly undermined by an almost exclusively male senior management and regional staff who constantly questioned the validity of a program to support feminist organizations and refused to allocate the time and resources necessary for its effective development and delivery. Although the feminist presence in the Program at this time served in part to legitimate government initiatives to improve the status of women's issues, the Program was in no position to influence the policy-making process. Barring situations such as International Women's Year when the government used the Women's Program to deliver its commitment to women's equality, the Program was largely invisible, or at best treated with bemusement by management, though program staff could collaborate with feminists outside the state on building the women's movement, and to some extent the Program could exert some pressure on policy advisors in other departments.

Eventually, bureaucratic hierarchy was imposed on the Women's Program by central agencies of government in the name of efficiency and accountability, through initiating performance evaluations stressing supervisory skills, issuing warnings against being client-driven, and implementing bureaucratic procedures for allocating grants so burdensome that the Women's Program staff felt that they no longer had time to work with the women's movement (Geller-Schwartz 1995; Schreader 1990). The feminist perspective in the Program thus lost its material base (Findlay 1987).

The Women's Program was made part of Status of Women Canada in 1995, after a brief time in Human Resources Development Canada. Its purpose today is to support action by women's organizations and other equality-seeking groups by providing financial assistance and technical support.

Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1973

Among the key conclusions of the RCSW Report was the finding that the Women's Bureau within the Department of Labour was insufficiently autonomous from political and administrative control and that its mandate was too narrowly focused on employment (Canada 1970, 391). The Report recommended the appointment of a permanent, arm's length, non-partisan Advisory Council that would report directly to Parliament. The Council would have the resources to undertake research, establish programs, and propose legislation.

In 1973, the federal government established the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW). This semi-autonomous body had a mandate to act as a conduit "to bring before the government and the public matters of interest and concern to women" (CACSW 1984, 2). The Council pursued its mandate through a combination of activities – funding research, facilitating networking among women's groups, making recommendations in a variety of policy areas affecting women's interests, lobbying government to act on these recommendations, and distributing a broad range of educational and research publications to members of the public (Teghtsoonian & Grace 2001).

The organizational practices chosen by the Trudeau government produced long-term weaknesses in this state feminist institution. For example, the CACSW was

established through an Order-in-Council and not by the passage of legislation. This meant that it would continue based only on the political will of the government of the day (Rankin et al. 2001).

Also, while the CACSW was in theory supposed to operate at 'arm's length' from government, members of the Council were appointed by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and its activities were funded by government (Burt 1997; Geller-Schwartz 1995; Sweet 1988). According to Kathy Teghtsoonian and Joan Grace (2001, 29),

Relationships between the government, the Council, its staff, and women's groups were sometimes difficult, reflecting the colliding imperatives of, on the one hand, lobbying government from a critical standpoint and, on the other, operating as a government-funded and appointed body.

Jill Vickers et al. (2000) explain that the Council's membership initially drew from the Presidents of major women's organizations, making it a structure that had the ability to legitimately convey women's views and concerns to Parliament. However, the Council later became patronage-based and reported to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women instead of reporting to Parliament directly. This left the Council open to criticisms that it appointed Council members based on political loyalty and pro-government leanings rather than based on expertise in women's issues. This was seen as compromising the independence of the Council.

Lois Sweet (1988), for example, publicly argued that pro-corporatist political interference from Council members distorted research findings of a major resource book on women's economic status because Council members considered it too anti-business and too much in favour of labour unions. These accusations were disputed by the Council's President.

A more direct case of political interference in the Council's work occurred in the course of patriation of Canada's *Constitution*. In 1980, the CACSW commissioned a series of papers on the implications for women of the proposed constitutional *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and planned a national conference on 'Women and the Constitution.' On January 5, 1981, the conference was cancelled at the request of Lloyd Axworthy, then Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. According to Heitlinger (1993, 88), "Axworthy used partisan manipulation to convince the predominantly Liberal appointed Council of the political necessity to cancel the conference and instead hold a series of regional conferences." As a result, CACSW President of the day, Doris Anderson, a well-known feminist and Liberal, resigned publicly, accusing the Minister of interference in the autonomy of the Council. Cancellation of the conference and Anderson's resignation provoked mobilization of women's groups across Canada, which led to an alternative conference on women and the Constitution, and the eventual entrenchment of women's equality in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Heitlinger 1993; Gotell 1990).

With a budget of \$3.4 million in 1993-1994 (CACSW 1994, 53), the CACSW received significant financial support from government for its work. However, over time, it lost credibility and legitimacy for the reasons noted above – namely, funding relationships and control of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women over appointments to Council. The Council came to be perceived by grassroots feminists as being too close to the government and as failing to accurately represent their views (Heitlinger 1993). Findlay (1988b, 90) concludes that, over the years, the Council "experienced incredible tensions and conflicts – displayed in ongoing problems with the

staff, dissention among members over Council recommendations, [and] difficulties in setting priorities...”

Eventually, the CACSW lost ground to NAC as the main structure mediating between the federal government and the organized women’s movement. In 1995, the CACSW was dissolved. The Council’s research program became one of the responsibilities of Status of Women Canada. This move was made as part of the Liberal government’s decision to consolidate the functions of a number of federal women’s policy agencies within Status of Women Canada as a cost-cutting measure (Burt 1997).

Integration Policy, 1976 & Status of Women Canada, 1976

In the fall of 1974, as a prelude to International Women’s Year, the UN sponsored an international seminar in Ottawa to discuss national machinery for the advancement of women. At that seminar, the Coordinator on the Status of Women declared that Canada was committed to the “full integration of women in all aspects of society, and an end to discrimination,” stating that, “when this is achieved, the national machinery...will become obsolete” (Canadian Department of Labour 1975, 11). Geller-Schwartz (1995, 47) notes that, “*Integration* appeared to be the watchword of the seminar”; the overarching perception was that, in order to effect change, women and their policy concerns had to be fully integrated throughout the policy-making process.

The 1975 UN International Women’s Year World Plan of Action further galvanized the Government of Canada into action on behalf of women (Geller-Schwartz 1995). In the context of International Women’s Year, Marc Lalonde¹⁸, then Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, undertook a review of the government’s record in

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that the position of Minister Responsible for the Status of Women was held by a series of six men until 1981, when Judith A. Erola was appointed the first woman in that portfolio.

advancing women's claims to work as equal partners with men in the economy. His report led to the adoption in 1976 of new Cabinet decision requiring all federal departments "to establish 'integration mechanisms' to ensure that all policy relating to the status of women was integrated into general departmental policy development" (Sawer 1996, 12). Under the terms of this policy, all sectoral departments were supposed to examine the impact on women of their proposals, and to include a specific analysis of status of women considerations in all relevant Cabinet documents. In implementing the policy, each federal department and agency was required to designate a senior-level implementation mechanism or focal point (either a person or a unit) to provide direct input into policy and program development. To this end, several departments established intra-departmental "integration" committees to service these activities.

The resemblance which GBA bears to this integration policy – developed nearly twenty years prior to the emergence of GBA in Canada – is striking. The integration policy recognized the need in the policy-making process for early, effective identification, and analysis of possible differential impacts of policies and programs on women and men. Geller-Schwartz (1995, 47) reports that its "...underlying ideological premise was that women's issues are not discrete items." The integration policy reflected an understanding that "[a]lmost all policies and programs of government have an impact on women," and that "it should be the responsibility of the Government to examine differential impacts and take them into account in the development and implementation of policy" (Geller-Schwartz 1995, 47).

The other major development in 1976 arose when the Office of the Coordinator on the Status of Women was removed from the Privy Council Office and elevated to the

status of a separate governmental body, called Status of Women Canada (SWC). There was much debate leading up to this decision. On one hand, the Office of the Coordinator was facing problems, including uncertainties over the lines of accountability between the Coordinator, the Clerk of the Privy Council Office and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women (Sawer 1996). It was believed that a separate agency might circumvent such conflicts. On the other hand, it was recognized that as a separate agency, SWC might be more visible but at greater risk of being marginalized or isolated. The 'paper trail' is not clear but these points were made in letters and memos by officials in the two-year period leading up to the Order-in-Council of April 1, 1976, which designated the Office of the Coordinator as a free-standing department (Sawer 1996).

SWC was given responsibilities that surpassed the traditional research, education, and coordination roles of women's policy machinery in Canada to that point (Geller-Schwartz 1995). It was mandated to analyze policies, programs, and legislation for their impact on women; to provide leadership, expertise, and strategic advice to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, as well as to federal government departments and agencies on issues affecting women; and to initiate policies to advance women's equality (SWC 1993, 4).

SWC was also mandated to assume overall monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the new integration mechanism policy discussed above. To this end, each departmental integration mechanism was required to maintain continuing contacts with SWC (Burt 1990). As well, SWC was made responsible for chairing an interdepartmental committee on integration mechanisms with representation from several federal departments. The purpose of the interdepartmental committee was to share and

coordinate information about new government policies and developments, and to facilitate the process of integrating women's concerns throughout the federal government.

From the outset, SWC had difficulties carrying out its mandate to oversee the 1976 integration policy. First, while departments were formally required by the directive to attach an 'impact on women' statement to all proposals, there was no compliance mechanism linked to this requirement (Burt & Hardman 2001). Second, the units overseeing the integration policy tended to be appointed at too junior a level and to be either sidelined in policy development or 'mainstreamed' out of existence.

According to Findlay (1987), there was too much resistance to the idea of internal advocacy within the Westminster model of a neutral bureaucracy for the integration policy to succeed in Canada. Geller-Schwartz (1995, 50) similarly observes that,

[T]he protectiveness of the bureaucrats over their small areas of authority; the antagonism toward internal lobbyists, as they saw us [femocrats]; and the general cynicism about women's issues meant that there was no support for such a policymaking model.

In 1987, the Nielsen Task Force found that, with the exception of Labour Canada, no federal department systematically reviewed its policies to determine their impact on women (Canada 1987).

SWC "enjoyed considerable influence between 1978 and 1984" during which time "it was able to comment on a broad range of policies" (Teghtsoonian & Grace 2001, 248). However, in 1984, a series of changes to the system of Cabinet committees and the mechanisms for carrying out Cabinet business significantly reduced SWC's influence (O'Neil & Sutherland 1997). The capacity of SWC was further reduced when, in 1993, the Liberals downgraded the position of the Minister Responsible for the Status of

Women to the lower rank of Secretary of State Responsible for Status of Women. The Secretary of State for SWC has not been entitled to sit at the Cabinet table, the central decision-making body of government, since that time. This has left SWC with little direct policy capacity, relying instead on the political will and leadership of other Cabinet members to support SWC endeavors (Grace 1998; O'Neil & Sutherland 1997).

Burt and Hardman (2001, 203) observe that SWC is also limited by virtue of being “poorly organized and small.” In her comparison of women’s policy machinery in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, Marian Sawer (1996, 12) concludes that SWC was weak from its inception, because “it was neither located within the chief co-ordinating agency nor, because of its free-standing character, did it have a powerful department behind it.”

Today, SWC continues in its capacity as the federal government agency mandated to promote gender equality and the full participation of women in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada. It focuses its work in three areas: improving women’s economic autonomy and well-being; eliminating systemic violence against women and children; and advancing women’s human rights. Its responsibilities include:

- Working to ensure that legislation, policies, and programs advance women’s equality throughout the federal government;
- Promoting and monitoring the progress of the status of women throughout the country;
- Funding policy research and integrating the research findings into the policy development process;
- Providing financial, technical and professional assistance to women’s and other voluntary organizations at community, regional and national levels, to support actions which advance women’s equality; and
- Collaborating with provincial and territorial governments, international organizations and other countries, women’s organizations, and other stakeholders, to address women’s equality issues.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, SWC also has the lead responsibility for promoting the implementation of GBA throughout the federal government, as well as conducting GBA of legislation, policies, and programs, with a view to recommending changes to ensure that government decisions are of equal benefit to women and men.

State Feminism in the 1980s and Beyond

State feminism in Canada continued to take on new dimensions in the 1980s. With the election of the Progressive Conservative Party at the federal level in 1984, the government consistently cut back on the meagre commitments that the Liberal governments of the 1960s and 1970s had made to a more representative form of policy-making (Phillips 1991). The new Conservative government was committed to privatization and free-market values (Burt 1993). It ushered in a “renewed reverence for women’s familial responsibilities...based on a vision of the male wage-earner nuclear family” (Burt 1993, 225-26).

In response to protests from feminists, the government argued that women’s interests could be more legitimately represented by the women who had been elected to Parliament and/or appointed to Cabinet rather than by representatives of community-based feminist groups, such as NAC (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999). It also questioned the right of these non-governmental organizations to criticize government policy. Bergqvist and Findlay (1999, 132) report that, “Those who protested against such policy were negatively characterized as part of an “extra-Parliamentary opposition.” By the mid-1980s, the federal Conservative government refused to participate in NAC’s annual lobby. Consultations with feminist groups continued, but were controlled by government

officials and focused on government priorities rather than women's demands (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999).

Funding for feminist projects was also under attack. In 1986, responding to pressures from Realistic Equal Active for Life (REAL) Women, an anti-feminist group that lobbied government for a return to traditional values, the federal government initiated a parliamentary review of the Women's Program (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999). In 1989, REAL Women received federal government funding through the Women's Program for the first time in history, despite its lack of support for the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*, the usual threshold for women's group funding. In the same year, the budget of the Women's Program was reduced by 15 per cent (Burt 1993, 226). In 1990, another 15 per cent was removed (Burt 1993, 226).

In 1990, the Conservative government also began to substitute "irregular project funding for stable operational funding" (Heitlinger 1993, 90). Heitlinger (1993, 90-91) argues that, in so doing, the Conservative government indicated that its "primary interest [was] increased state control over, rather than empowerment of, grass-roots feminist organizations." Consequently, core operational funding was dramatically cut from numerous feminist organizations, such as NAC, and feminist service providers.

The retreat from initiatives to promote women's equality continued into the 1990s, despite the return to power of the Liberal Party in 1993. In fact, the structures of state feminism at the federal level have become significantly compressed since the election of the Liberals in 1993 (Rankin et al. 2001). As noted above, in March 1995, the Liberal government dismantled the CACSW. One month later, both the research program of the CACSW and the Women's Program became part of the responsibilities of

SWC (Rankin et al. 2001). As a consequence, SWC became the central mechanism for the advancement of women's equality.

The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Sheila Finestone, stressed the positive side of this "consolidation," suggesting that it would "create a single-window operation," and "enhance[e] communication and access to government...from local grassroots groups, through the regional staff of the Women's Program, to government policy-makers...to the Cabinet table – and back" (SWC 1995b, 2). Yet, Bergqvist and Findlay (1999, 133) argue that it is hard to see how such an amalgamation could ever increase women's access to the policy process, particularly given that neither the Minister nor SWC has the authority to make its perspective heard in the policy process. The portfolio for SWC has consistently been delegated to women with junior Cabinet status.

Rankin et al. (2001, 9) contend that the amalgamation of women's policy structures must be understood as being "set within an economic rationalist discourse and the argued need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the bureaucracy as a whole." Brodie (1995) similarly argues that the context for these developments was the general dominance in the 1990s of neo-liberal ideology and an administrative culture that dismissed women as one of a number of 'special interest groups' making excessive and unwarranted demands on government (Brodie 1995). Within this context, feminists in the 1990s began to face "more solid resistance in their ongoing struggles to make women's interests part of the policy-making process in state institutions" (Findlay 1997, 303).

Struggles in State Feminism from 1954-1995: A Post Mortem

What lessons or patterns with respect to state feminism and women's policy machinery up until 1995 can be gleaned from the above discussion? Findlay (1988a, 7) offers an excellent summary:

The commitment to participatory democracy that had marked the late 1960s and 1970s [gave] way to a cry for evaluation and accountability. Social programs were increasingly on the defensive, as the state declared its intention to increase efficiency... Good government was defined in administrative terms. Good government defined in these terms could no longer "afford"... to organize itself in the interests of the "disadvantaged"... The apparent commitment to "advocacy" that had drawn many activists into government programs, task forces and commissions in the late 1960s and early 1970s was replaced with formal and traditional mechanisms of representation. Many feminists left the state in this period, frustrated by the bureaucratization of their work and the inevitable loss of credibility with their constituency – the women's movement. The "feminist presence" in the bureaucracy gave way to the "feminist perspective" as defined by a bureaucracy committed to a set of priorities that were quite antithetical to the feminist projects... Feminist struggle within the state had been effectively controlled and ultimately blocked.

Cast in those terms, it is perhaps no wonder that Canadian feminists have provided a generally negative evaluation of the achievements of state feminism at the federal level. Yet, clearly some progress for the advancement of women has been achieved at the helm of state structures and their staff, albeit with constraints and compromises involved. Heitlinger (1993, 91) concludes that feminism within government "functions best when there is a sympathetic government, reacting to strong pressure from feminist groups outside the government and its own civil servants." Geller-Schwartz (1995) adds that Canadian femocrats have been effective when they have been able to exert pressure for compliance with international obligations or when they have fostered pressure from non-government lobbies through resourcing and information, or both.

III. CONTEXTUALIZING GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

In 1995, there was a shift away from special programs for women to the ‘mainstreaming’ of gender concerns, or the application of a ‘gender lens’ to government policy. In Canada, the gender lens was labelled *gender-based analysis* (GBA). This shift came at a time when the majority of the federal women’s policy structures had been dismantled, as noted above. The newly reorganized machinery counted within its ranks only SWC, with a much reduced Women’s Program within it, and the Women’s Bureau in the newly established HRDC (Burt & Hardman 2001).

GBA is meant to result in gender analysis occurring widely throughout government, as opposed to gender considerations being solely or mostly the responsibility of women’s policy machinery, as occurred in the past. However, as both this chapter and Chapter V will explain, GBA focal units are presently assuming the majority of work in putting GBA into practice. Some of these units (e.g., those within Human Resources Development Canada and Health Canada) already existed prior to the emergence of GBA but have since been reorganized to assume responsibility for guiding implementation of GBA within their respective departments/agencies. Others were established in response to the call for GBA. In this respect, the legacy of what was formerly known as ‘women’s policy machinery’ continues to date, albeit in an altered form.

Canada’s Commitment to GBA

Burt and Hardman (2001, 208) explain that, “[l]ike most of the major status of women initiatives from the federal government, GBA was partly a response to international pressure.” In recent years, and particularly as a result of the impetus of the

Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, 'mainstreaming' gender considerations has become "a key element in a global movement to institutionalize the goal of promoting women's equality at every level of state and organizational functioning" (Lahey 2002, 5).

In 1990, instead of a World Conference on Women (which previously had been held every five years - 1975, 1980, 1985)¹⁹, a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi *Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*²⁰ was held at the 34th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The conclusions of the review and appraisal were that, while there was progress in the situation of women after Nairobi – particularly in the removal or amendment of discriminatory laws – progress was uneven, and de jure changes toward equality were not accompanied by de facto equality. Many governments had adopted legislation dealing with the concerns of the *Forward-Looking Strategies* but had not allocated sufficient resources to ensure that this legislation could be adequately implemented. It was decided that a Fourth World Conference on Women would be held in 1995 in order to mobilize political will toward further progress.

The review and appraisal was explicit about how the Fourth World Conference on Women would move the women's agenda forward. It noted that the structure of the Nairobi strategies, which had very broad and general coverage, did not lend to appraisal. The Fourth UN World Conference on Women was therefore mandated to produce a

¹⁹ The first three UN World Conferences on Women were held in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), and Nairobi (1985).

²⁰ *Forward-Looking Strategies* is the name of the final document of the Third UN World Conference on Women, in Nairobi, at the conclusion of the UN Decade for Women in 1985.

concrete and action-oriented blueprint for change²¹ focusing on a few critical areas for which specific recommendations would be made.

It was with these goals in mind that the Fourth UN World Conference on Women was held September 4-15, 1995 in Beijing, China. At that time, the 189 member countries present, including Canada, adopted the *Platform for Action (PFA)* which represented a commitment to support women's empowerment, guarantee women's human rights, and achieve gender equality. The *PFA* embodied ten years of review by governments of the situation of women in their respective countries.

Among the commitments²² within the *PFA* was a commitment to "integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, [programs] and projects...and seek to ensure that before policy decisions are taken, an analysis of their impact on men and women, respectively is carried out" (UN 1996, 117). This declaration represented a global consensus that the realization of gender equality would require the 'mainstreaming' of gender concerns within public policy (Rankin et al. 2001).

The *PFA* includes three strategic objectives that governments are required to achieve: (1) create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies; (2) integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs, and projects; and (3) generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation (UN 1996, 196-209). In keeping with the pragmatic focus of the Conference, the *PFA* included detailed methodological guidelines which states were expected to follow in developing the capacity to mainstream gender.

²¹ This blueprint for action was not intended to override the *Forward-Looking Strategies* but rather intensify action on its implementation.

²² The *Platform for Action* includes strategic objectives and actions in 12 critical areas of concern agreed upon by the 189 governments present. "Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women" is one of the 12 critical areas of concern.

Each UN member state was asked to formulate a national plan to advance women's equality as part of the Beijing conference. In 1995, as one of the signatories to the *PFA*, the Government of Canada developed *Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equality*. The *Federal Plan* is Canada's "statement of commitments and framework" toward the goals of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (SWC 1995a, i). It was prepared through collaboration among 24 federal departments and agencies, led by SWC, and drew in particular upon the Canadian International Development Agency's detailed policies on gender equality.

The *Federal Plan* documents some of the salient issues to be addressed by Canada, both within its own borders and globally, in the movement toward full equality for women and men, and highlights broad guidelines for future federal initiatives. Eight key objectives with respect to promoting gender equality and enhancing women's well-being are identified in the *Federal Plan*. The first of these eight objectives makes a commitment to implementation throughout federal departments and agencies of GBA in the development of policies, programs, and legislation. The specific commitments made are stated as follows:

The federal government is committed through the *Federal Plan* to ensuring that all future legislation and policies include, where appropriate, an analysis of the potential for different impacts on women and men. Individual departments will be responsible for determining which legislation or policies have the potential to affect women differentially and are, therefore, appropriate for a consistent application of a gender lens.

The federal government is committed to:

- the development and application of tools and methodologies for carrying out gender-based analysis;
- training on gender-based analysis of legislation and policies;

- the development of indicators to assess progress made toward gender equality;
- the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data as appropriate;
- the use of gender-sensitive language throughout the federal government;
- the evaluation of the effectiveness of the gender-based analysis process.

The Government of Canada made an additional commitment to GBA by endorsing the international *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development* in 1995, which, like the *PFA*, obligated signatories to implement a gender analysis mechanism into state processes. That same year, Canada's GBA initiative as framed in the *Federal Plan* was approved by Cabinet. This officially committed all federal departments and agencies to incorporate gender analysis into their policy and program development.

The *Federal Plan*, like the *PFA*, had a five-year time frame for implementation, ending in the year 2000. At the end of this period, Canada participated in a Special Session convened by the UN General Assembly from June 5-9, 2000 in New York, entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development, and Peace for the Twenty-First Century"²³. The purpose of the Special Session was to review and assess progress in implementing the 1995 Beijing *PFA*.

The review provided an opportunity for member states of the UN to examine how much had been achieved in the five years since Beijing²⁴. Governments identified obstacles and challenges in the implementation of the *PFA*. They acknowledged that the

²³ Also known as 'Beijing+5.'

²⁴ As part of the review and appraisal process, Canada was required to respond to a standardized questionnaire, prepared by the UN, to identify progress in implementing the *PFA*.

goals and commitments made in the *PFA* had not been fully implemented and achieved. They resolved to reaffirm their commitment to the goals and objectives in the *Forward-looking Strategies* and the *PFA*:

We the Governments at the beginning of the new millennium, reaffirm our commitment to overcoming obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and to strengthening and safeguarding a national and international enabling environment, and to this end pledge to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation, inter alia, through the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and promoting women's full participation and empowerment and enhanced international cooperation for the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. (UN 2000, Chapter 3, para. 8)

Governments agreed upon further actions and initiatives at the local, national, regional, and international level to accelerate implementation of the *PFA* and to ensure that commitments for gender equality, development, and peace are fully realized. The actions to be taken at the national level by governments related to GBA were fairly extensive. They required nations to strengthen efforts to implement fully national action plans developed for the implementation of the *PFA* and, where necessary, adjust or develop national plans for the future. Governments also agreed to regularly assess further implementation of the *PFA* with a view to bringing together all parties involved in 2005 to assess progress and consider new initiatives (UN 2000, Chapter 3, para.9).

In June 2000, coinciding with the Special Session, the Government of Canada, led by SWC, began to work on an Agenda for Gender Equality (AGE). The AGE is a strategy to build upon the foundation of the *Federal Plan* and to guide the Government of Canada's future work on gender equality. As promoted in the government's Speech from the Throne in 2001, results to be achieved under the AGE should address persisting imbalances in specific priority areas, and expand opportunities.

The AGE provides SWC with a mandate to continue to work until 2005, in partnership with departments, on targeted issues considered critical to advancing women's equality. This strategy is intended to help accelerate the 'engendering' of policy and program development. It includes the enhanced development of GBA tools, training, and other supports – for example, pilot projects, and performance and evaluation frameworks – to demonstrate how GBA can be introduced in a systematic manner and effectively contribute to better policy outcomes.

Increased financial support to SWC is part of the AGE and, in addition to supporting GBA initiatives, will be used to aid women's organizations and others in participating in the development of public policy to assist the Government of Canada in meeting its gender equality objectives. Funds have also been allocated to continue to meet Canada's international commitments on gender equality issues.

What is GBA?

SWC (1996a, 4) defines GBA²⁵ as follows:

Gender-based analysis is a process that assesses the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies, programs and legislation on women and men. It makes it possible for policy to be undertaken with an appreciation of gender differences, of the nature of relationships between women and men and of their different social realities, life expectations and economic circumstances. It is a tool for understanding social processes and for responding with informed and equitable options.

The *Gender-Based Analysis Backgrounder* prepared by HRDC further describes GBA as a process that:

takes into account social and economic differences between women and men at every stage of policy development to ensure that: potential impacts of policies, programs and legislation on women and men are discovered; and

²⁵ There are many different definitions offered for GBA, as well as many different terms used for GBA. The latter point will be taken up in Chapter V.

existing and proposed policies have intended and equitable results for women and men, boys and girls. (HRDC 1997a, 1)

GBA is meant to be anticipatory. It attempts to anticipate the results of policies, programs, and legislation in terms of their potential gender impact while they are being formulated. If it can be demonstrated that adverse outcomes will ensue from a particular policy, the opportunity is there to modify it before it causes harm. Rather than addressing the consequences of gender inequality once they have already occurred, GBA strategy requires policy-makers to eliminate them at the planning stage. This strategy is intended to change existing practices so that eventually gender analysis will become “integral to the policy process, not an add-on” (HRDC 1997a, 5).

GBA can be conceptualized as a policy ‘lens.’²⁶ The concept of a lens is synonymous with parallel policy tools, such as a ‘screen,’ a ‘filter,’ or a ‘strategic assessment.’ All are designed to view the impact of emerging policies, programs, and legislation on a particular group, such as women, or on a particular subject, such as the environment. In recent years, a number of lenses in addition to GBA have emerged within the federal government, including the Rural Lens, which takes into consideration the effects of policies, programs, and services on rural Canada; the Canadian Strategic Environmental Assessment, a process of evaluating the environmental effects of a policy, plan or program, and its alternatives; and the Integrated Diversity and Equality Analysis Screen, a federal/provincial/territorial screen used to assess the impact that policy initiatives could have on groups who frequently experience disadvantages (e.g., gays, lesbians, and bisexual persons; Aboriginal people; seniors; refugees) within the justice system.

²⁶ In fact, GBA is often referred to instead as a ‘gender lens.’

Why Do GBA?

GBA derives from the insight that, given “the different physical, social, economic positions and life experiences of women and men” in society (HRDC 1997a, 3), one can never assume that women and men will be affected in the same way or benefit equally from any given action, policy, or program. The relative impacts on women and men may be very different. It is therefore important to consider how programs, policies, and laws affect women and men. As explained in the rationale section of the *Gender-based Analysis Background*,

Men’s and women’s realities may be different as a result of both sex (biological differences) and gender (social differences). A policy or program developed without taking these differences into account may not meet the needs of both women and men nor have the intended effect. (HRDC 1997a, 1)

Gender differences are evident in most of everyday life, hence no government activity is likely to be gender neutral in its effects. For this reason, it is important to move beyond specific ‘women’s programs’ (although such programs may continue to be warranted in certain instances) to ensuring that all government activity is monitored for its potential impact. SWC (1996a, 4) states that:

The potentially differential effects of policies, programs and legislation on women and men can often be masked or obscured. When gender is explicitly considered in policy analysis, these effects are revealed, and previously hidden implications come to light.

As noted in Chapter II, gender inequalities and relations are partly constituted through the state. The state partly reflects and partly helps to create particular forms of gender relations and gender inequality, though not in any fixed way. State practices construct and legitimate gender divisions, and gendered identities are in part constructed

by the laws, policies, and programs which emanate from the state. As explained by Sandra Burt (1993, 212),

In Canada, [and] throughout the world, public policy has been made almost exclusively by men and has generally reflected men's assumptions about women's and men's needs and abilities. While over time some of these assumptions have changed, overall policy has been framed within the context of patriarchal patterns of authority.

Maintaining the status quo, supporting capitalism and patriarchy, and keeping women in a financially precarious position are not the stated goals of most policies. However, they are visible if one inspects the policies and their outcomes from the perspective of women (Spakes & Nichols-Casebolt 1994).

GBA is cast by the federal government as “an important aspect of good governance” – one which leads to “informed policy-making” (SWC 1996a, 5); greater fairness, equity, and justice for women and men; and contributes to social, cultural, and economic progress (CIDA 2000, 6). However, it is interesting to note that, in keeping with the neo-liberal spirit of the day, GBA is also officially promoted as a “more efficient and potentially less costly” approach to policy and program development (SWC 1995a, 17), as it may prevent “costly *Charter* challenges” (HRDC 1997a, iii).

The equality provisions of the *Charter* provide the basis for challenging laws that result in unequal outcomes for women, and are thus often cited as the providing the legal basis and the momentum for the application of GBA in the development of policies and legislation (Dwyer-Renaud 2002). To date, *Charter* challenges have been made in relation to employment opportunities and pay, spousal support, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, pregnancy, pensions, and violence against women. The Court Challenges Program assists Canadians to challenge legislation through the court

system. It provides financial assistance for test cases of national significance put forward on behalf of or by groups or individuals that will clarify language and equality rights under the *Charter*.

Applying GBA

SWC (1996a) published a guide, entitled *Gender-based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making* introducing GBA and explaining how to apply the 'eight steps of GBA.' This guide has been streamlined by a number of other federal departments/agencies for their own specific needs. For instance, HRDC has produced a *Gender-based Analysis Guide* similar to the SWC guide which outlines a six step process for carrying out GBA.

The eight steps described by SWC are designed to integrate gender considerations into each step of the standard policy development process. Kathleen Lahey (2002, 17) notes that, although the steps "may look like a checklist, [they are] really more like a framework for analysis that can become extremely detailed as relevant data is incorporated into the analysis." The eight steps include (SWC 1996a):

- Step 1 – Identifying, Defining, and Refining the Issue
- Step 2 – Defining Desired/Anticipated Outcomes
- Step 3 – Defining the Information and Consultation Inputs
- Step 4 – Conducting Research
- Step 5 – Developing and Analyzing Options
- Step 6 – Making Recommendations/Decision-Seeking
- Step 7 – Communicating Policy
- Step 8 – Assessing the Quality of Analysis

The SWC guide in which this methodology is published provides numerous suggestions and pointers for applying each of these steps, as well as a list of questions that may be asked at each stage.

A background paper used to guide a 2001 on-line dialogue on GBA (CCLOW 2001) lists further examples of questions that can be asked when conducting a GBA.

These include, for instance:

- Does this policy/program improve the welfare of women/men?
- What resources does a person need to benefit from this policy/program? Do women and men have equal access to the resources needed to benefit?
- What is the level and type/quality of women's and men's participation in the policy/program? Has this changed over time?
- Who controls the decision-making related to this policy/program?
- Who controls/owns the resources related to this policy/program?
- Does this policy/program have any unexpected negative impacts on women and/or men?
- Does this policy/program benefit men more than women (or vice versa)? If so, why?

While such questions provide an important starting point for conducting GBA,

SWC's *Gender-based Analysis Backgrounder* points out:

A gender-based approach to policy development and program planning is more than answering a checklist of questions. It requires gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, questioning basic assumptions, and developing an understanding of how social and economic factors affecting women and men may have an impact on the possible outcomes of the policy you are developing. (HRDC 1997a, 5)

Legislative/Policy Context

As noted above, the Government of Canada's commitment to implementing GBA is set forth in the 1995 *Federal Plan*, which was approved by Cabinet the same year. A commitment to GBA was also made when Canada adopted the *Commonwealth Plan for Action on Gender and Development* in 1995. The AGE, initiated in the year 2000, represents a further commitment to GBA.

GBA is not a legislative Bill. However, GBA can be seen to build upon and be in full conformity with the principles of an existing legislative framework in the form of Canada's domestic and national commitments.

At the national level, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, passed in 1977, provides protection for women's equality by prohibiting discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted. The Act provides a mechanism for addressing complaints made by individuals or groups that involve government programs, policies, or legislation, and discriminatory acts in employment or services involving federally-regulated companies. The Act explicitly prohibits sexual harassment and requires employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value to employees.

Canadian legislation, policies, and programs are subject to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* which forms part of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. In 1985, sections 15 and 28 of the *Charter* were enacted, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex. Section 15 guarantees every individual "equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination," and specifically includes race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability as prohibited grounds of discrimination. Section 28 guarantees all rights and freedoms in the *Charter* "equally to male and female persons." Generally speaking, the *Charter* applies to relationships between an individual and the government (federal, provincial, and territorial) rather than between individuals.

In addition to building upon its national commitments to gender equality, GBA also builds upon Canada's global commitments to act on its endorsement of major international human rights agreements. Canada has been an active participant at the UN Commission on the Status of Women since 1958. In 1981, Canada became one of the first countries to ratify the 1979 UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). CEDAW, which is known as an 'international bill of rights for women,' is legally binding upon the countries which have ratified it to examine the effects of legislation for their potential to be gender-discriminatory, and to take actions to correct historical patterns of discrimination based on sex. As such, it bears particular relevance to GBA.

There are a number of other international treaties and conventions promoting equality between men and women in addition to CEDAW to which Canada is a signatory. These include, for example, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*; the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*; the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*; and the *Commonwealth Plan for Action on Gender and Development*.

Institutional Infrastructure

Status of Women Canada (SWC)

Both the SWC mandate and the *Federal Plan* provide for SWC's leadership role in the process of coordinating the commitment to GBA. The role outlined for SWC with respect to GBA is to collaborate with other departments in developing the concepts, tools, and methodologies required for GBA. This includes, for example, tackling difficult

conceptual issues, and working with departments to develop the sector-specific analytical tools. SWC also promotes dialogue and understanding of GBA through policy discussion at roundtables and workshops with both government and non-government agents. The original timeframe set for SWC to make the federal government fluently conversant in the application of GBA was the year 2000, but, as noted above, has since been extended to 2005 because of the AGE.

SWC instituted a GBA Directorate and appointed a Director of GBA in March 1999. The role of the Director is to encourage and assist other federal departments and agencies to set up their own processes to ensure that GBA is incorporated into all of their policy and program development activities. Specific actions include:

- working with departments to create action plans to integrate GBA in their work;
- developing training modules for departments and other interested parties;
- establishing accountability and evaluative processes to assess progress made;
- building a resource library, developing further reference materials and tools for the use of departments, and encouraging them to develop and use their own sectoral tools; and
- establishing appropriate interdepartmental mechanisms to advance implementation.

The Director also chairs an Interdepartmental Committee on GBA (IDC on GBA), which is a focal point for coordination, facilitation, and support of GBA activities across federal government departments and agencies. It is comprised of gender specialists from a variety of federal departments, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canadian Heritage, the Canadian International Development Agency, Citizenship and Immigration, the Department of Justice, Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Statistics Canada, and Solicitor General. The IDC meets every 3-4 months. Until recently, these meetings primarily adopted a table ronde format and provided a forum for identifying and sharing GBA information and resources,

including best practices on implementing GBA. However, in Fall 2002, the format of the meetings changed to workshop format, focused on professional expertise, professional exchange, and brainstorming.

Although SWC has the leadership role for GBA, all other federal departments and agencies are responsible for implementing the government's commitment to GBA within their mandates. The *Federal Plan* clearly stated federal departments' and agencies' responsibility for GBA and envisaged that implementation would be phased in over a five-year period, as various departments and agencies developed the necessary expertise and capacity. While some departments/agencies had already established an office or unit on gender issues prior to the emergence of the *Federal Plan* in 1995, the 1995 commitment to GBA has encouraged others to take a similar step.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

The focal point for gender issues at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is the Farm Women's Bureau. Although the Bureau is not yet conducting GBA per se, it is gradually moving in that direction and participates in the IDC on GBA. The Bureau provides a single window to farm women in Canada and supports the Minister of Agriculture and Secretary of State for Rural Development in their dealings with farm/rural women. The mandate of the Bureau is to advocate and promote the equitable representation of farm women in agricultural consultations, policy, and decision-making.

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Established in 1968, CIDA is the federal government organization responsible for implementing Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policies and

administering the majority of the ODA budget. CIDA's mandate is to "support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world."

CIDA is recognized as a forerunner within the Canadian state apparatus to promote gender equality, and has served as a model for the development of GBA. CIDA undertook a formal commitment to GBA in 1996. However, the Agency has a longer history of gender equity policy. In 1976, CIDA became the first development agency in the world to adopt a set of policy guidelines to integrate women into the development process. In 1984, the Agency developed its first Women in Development (WID) Policy and a five-year Plan of Action (1985/86-1990/91). The WID Action Plan set out goals and objectives for integrating women into every project CIDA planned and implemented around the world. In 1992, CIDA renewed its WID Policy, emphasizing that true sustainable development is only attainable when women are guaranteed their rights and their participation as decision-makers.

In early 1995, CIDA's policy was revised in to emphasize the importance of gender equity and women's empowerment. It was named WID and Gender Equity Policy. As a result of international commitments, including the *PFA*, and in response to other factors, the WID and Gender Equity Policy was updated and, in 1999, CIDA initiated its Policy on Gender Equality.

The Gender Equality Division of the CIDA is the agency's focal point for gender equality. Its activities include: developing mechanisms to mainstream gender perspectives into CIDA's management, planning, and performance assessment systems; contributing to the Agency's knowledge base on gender equality; participating in

conferences and international policy dialogue on gender equality; and managing information of gender equality issues, particularly lessons drawn from gender equality policy implementation in developing countries.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

The focal point for GBA at CIC is the Gender-based Analysis Unit, a small central unit that was established in March 2000 within the context of incorporating gender considerations in the implementation of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. It is co-located with Strategic Policy.

The Unit's functions have since expanded to issues beyond those related to the Act. It is working to integrate gender and diversity considerations into government policy, program, and legislative work throughout the department. In order to build capacity, the Unit has undertaken development and delivery of training to departmental employees on GBA. It is also working to formally establish a Network within the department in Spring 2003, and to complete a departmental policy framework on GBA.

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)

The International Women's Equality Section of DFAIT functions as the focal point on issues of gender equality and women's human rights within the department. It works to integrate these issues into foreign policy development, into Canada's input to world conferences, and into the work of multilateral organizations. With respect to GBA, the Section works to mainstream a gender perspective in foreign policy development, application, and advocacy.

Health Canada

The Women's Health Bureau of Health Canada, established in 1993, promotes GBA of policies and programs within Health Canada by developing health sector-specific tools and training, and by providing advice and resource materials. It is also coordinating women's health networks in supporting GBA in their respective branches. In 1999, the Women's Health Bureau prepared a guiding document, *Women's Health Strategy*, which situates gender issues in the context of health, and serves as the basis for Health Canada's GBA implementation.

The work of the Women's Health Bureau is strengthened by inputs from the five Centres of Excellence for Women's Health. Initiated in 1996, the Centres of Excellence were provided with six years of federal funding (1996–2002) to conduct policy-based research on women's health.

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

HRDC uses a "hub and spoke" model, which means that it has a centralized gender analysis directorate, called the Gender Analysis and Policy Directorate (formerly the Women's Bureau²⁷), which coordinates GBA by interacting with other groups located in the department, and with a Network of Gender Advisors. The GAP-D is situated within the department's Strategic Policy Branch. The GAP-D leads the integration of gender analysis into the department's work through a variety of means including: ongoing development of the Network of Gender Advisors through provision of training and resources; and expertise and advice on the use and practice of gender analysis.

²⁷ As noted earlier in this chapter, the Women's Bureau was established in 1954 within the Department of Labour. It became part of HRDC when HRDC was created in 1993 from the amalgamation of several former departments. The Women's Bureau changed its name to Gender Analysis and Policy Directorate in September 2001 "to better reflect its mandate of promoting GBA" (HRDC 2001a, 1).

The Network of Gender Advisors, established in 1999, involves staff members throughout the department who are trained to become gender advisors in their area. The Network allows for organization-wide information exchange on gender issues and gender analysis. Individual Gender Advisors contribute to the application of gender analysis within their area by: leading by example through applying gender analysis in their work; sharing information and responding to requests from colleagues about gender analysis and gender issues; supporting colleagues to practically apply gender analysis; and communicating with the GAP-D about their area's requirements for gender analysis, experiences, and lessons learned. The Network is currently limited to National Headquarters, but will eventually be expanded to the regions.

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice established the Office of the Senior Advisor on Gender Equality in 1996. Its major activities included: designing analytical tools to conduct gender equality analysis in the areas of litigation, legal opinion, legislative drafting, policy and program development, and management practices and policies; developing and offering training modules on the application of gender equality analysis in law; designing awareness mechanisms; and contributing to the analysis of all substantive issues arising in the department to ensure that they are examined from a gender equality perspective. A Gender Equality Network was established to facilitate its work.

In October 1999, the Gender Equality Initiative was merged with the Diversity, Equality and Access to Justice Division to form the Diversity and Gender Equality (DAGE) Office. The Office was mandated to establish the necessary structures, processes, and tools to institutionalize the practice of diversity analysis as an obligation

on policy makers, litigators, legal advisors, and legislative drafters within the department. The Office also developed an Integrated Diversity and Equality Analysis Screen (IDEAS) for use in the assessment of the possible impact of justice initiatives on Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, youth and children, racial minorities, women, and other vulnerable groups. Similar to the Gender Equality Network, a Diversity Network was established to ensure that diversity analysis would be performed at all relevant points in the department.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

In February 1998, in response to the *Federal Plan*, the Minister of INAC (then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) created the Office of the Senior Advisor on Women's Issues and Gender Equality. This office became the focal point for women's issues in the department. It had the mandate to develop and implement a *Gender Equality Analysis Policy*, which received Senior Policy Committee approval in late 1998, and to address gender equality issues within the department as they relate to First Nation and northern partners. To assist the office in carrying out its mandate, a department-wide Advisory Committee on Gender Equality (ACGE) was established, comprising representatives from the regions and headquarters.

The office is now called the Women's Issues and Gender Equality Directorate. Its work continues to be founded on the department's *Gender Equality Analysis Policy* (INAC 1999a), which requires that gender equality analysis be integrated into all of the department's work, including: the development and implementation of departmental policies, programs, communication plans, regulations and legislation; consultations and negotiations (including, for e.g., self-government and land claims, treaty land entitlement

and devolution); and instructions and strategies on research, dispute-resolution, and litigation. In addition to the *Policy* document, INAC has also developed a detailed *Guide to Gender Equality Analysis* (INAC 1999b).

IV. CONCLUSION

Following the tabling of the report of the RCSW in 1970, Canada developed a multi-level national machinery for promoting the advancement of women. The creation of women's policy machinery in Canada was assisted by a political opportunity structure in the early 1970s which saw the federal government responding to national and international pressures, and eager to expand the policy agenda and economic prosperity (Sawer 1996). Greater citizenship participation was another "watchword" of this period – one which favoured the entry of new groups into the policy process (Sawer 1996).

Women's policy structures and their staff experienced a great deal of struggle within the bureaucratic state. Later shifts in public agendas – including the emergence of neo-liberal agendas and priorities – created an increasingly difficult environment for women's policy machinery. In the 1990s, the majority of the women's policy structures erected in the 1970s were dismantled.

In 1995 a shift came to GBA, which was intended to mainstream gender analysis throughout the Government of Canada and, in so doing, move responsibility for 'gender' considerations (as opposed to 'women's interests') from the purview of women's policy structures to a collective ownership throughout government. Yet, as the description of the gender focal units within various departments and agencies offered in this chapter makes clear, GBA may be said to still remain largely in the hands of small units and the networks they support.

The next chapter will analyze primary and secondary documents, and interviews with ten officials working in GBA focal units, with a view to assessing the strengths, limitations, and challenges associated with GBA to date. In so doing, the nature of the ongoing struggles associated with state feminism, including struggles faced by state employees working to implement gender equality policy, will be highlighted.

As a preface to the following chapter, I will cite the words of Fiona Beveridge et al. (2000b, 391), who point out:

...mainstreaming has the potential to deliver far more radical change than positive discrimination and may therefore be a more constructive approach as far as women are concerned. The impact of mainstreaming depends, however on the specific form which mainstreaming initiatives take within specific contexts. If it is really to overcome the failings of previous equality strategies, mainstreaming must be utilized to produce results that are transformative and agenda-setting.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF GBA

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the achievements and challenges associated with federal GBA initiatives through an analysis of information obtained from key primary and secondary documents, and interview findings. The central question to be addressed in this chapter is: What are the struggles associated with attempting to implement GBA in the face of myriad contradictions within the state in relation to women, and associated with state feminism more broadly? Flowing from this overarching question are a number of sub-questions: In what ways do the political climate and bureaucratic context in which Canadian federal GBA initiatives are implemented define and constrain the possibilities and limitations, and strengths and weaknesses of GBA? How much space and manoeuvrability can exist within the state to work on gender equality policies such as GBA? What does this mean for the capacity and effectiveness of GBA overall? What contradictions are GBA specialists facing in relation to their work? Is there any evidence that GBA is making a difference? What could be done to enhance GBA?

As the interviews I conducted with ten GBA specialists in fall 2002 revealed, there is a wealth of experience-based knowledge related to GBA. Key findings from the interview process²⁸ included findings on major strengths of GBA; the challenges and struggles encountered by the GBA specialists working to implement GBA; and lessons learned. These findings will be related to the theoretical approaches presented in Chapter II on the state, women, and feminism, as well as to the historic struggles associated with

²⁸ All quotes from GBA specialists will appear in italics in this chapter. This chapter should not be looked upon as a complete account of the full range of experiences and opinions relating to GBA among the interview participants nor among Government of Canada GBA specialists as a whole.

Canadian federal state feminism described in Chapter IV. This chapter will paint a picture of the types of struggles GBA specialists are encountering in their work to advance GBA within a state that is profoundly contradictory, always changing, and currently engaged in a number of priorities that compete and conflict with the objective of gender equality. The strategies used by GBA specialists to reconcile the contradictions they encounter will also be discussed. At the heart of this chapter is a consideration of the limitations and opportunities for GBA within the current political and bureaucratic context.

II. STRENGTHS & ACHIEVEMENTS OF GBA

Although the implementation of GBA in Canadian public policy is ongoing, the Canadian federal government has made some significant gains to date. This section will discuss the major strengths and achievements of GBA arising from analysis of GBA literature and interviews with GBA specialists in the federal government.

GBA as a Progressive Initiative

The most important strength of GBA is the promise it holds as a socially progressive tool or process. GBA is progressive both conceptually and at a level of process.

GBA cannot be thought of as an entirely “new” approach to policy-making. As noted in Chapter IV, SWC has been coordinating a form of GBA since 1976 when an

integration policy was devised. Likewise, CIDA, Canada's key development agency, adopted gender as a factor within its processes beginning in 1976.²⁹

While not entirely new, GBA "constitutes a more systematic approach to addressing gender equality than ha[s] ever been attempted previously in Canada" (Rankin & Wilcox 2001, 1). GBA can be seen both as an emerging development in the Government of Canada's history of gender equality initiatives and as an evolution of previous approaches. It includes and builds upon the understandings of equality/inequality and the processes for working toward gender equality developed in previous generations of equality strategies in Canadian public policy.

First, GBA reflects an important shift from 'formal equality'³⁰ to 'substantive equality'³¹ that has been occurring in Canada since the 1980s.³² Formal equality, when applied to women, represents an attempt to give women access to decision-making and to existing political and economic structures – such as education and employment – without fundamentally altering any of those structures. It focuses on obtaining the same treatment, opportunities, and privileges for women as for men on the assumption that this will achieve sameness of results. The advancement of formal equality has led to very important reforms, such as women's right to vote, and adoption of laws and policies in the 1960s and 1970s which provided legal protection from discrimination on the basis of sex and promoted equal rights and equal treatment. However, formal equality strategies have a number of limitations. First, they identify the problem of women's inequality

²⁹ It is important to note that CIDA's gender guidelines apply to the international work of the federal government, not to its domestic policy. Establishing standards for partner countries is different from implementing standards nationally (Jennissen 2000).

³⁰ Also known as 'equality of opportunity' or 'equal treatment.'

³¹ Also known as 'equality of outcome.'

³² The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* has since 1985 given legal force to the notion of gender equality as equality of outcome.

principally as a labour market problem and as a lack of access to traditionally male prerogatives within the public sphere (Bacchi 1999). Issues faced by women in the private sphere – such as male violence against women, women’s unpaid work in the home, and sex role socialization – are, for the most part, left untouched. Second, by defining equality as treating women the same as men, formal equality strategies explicitly hold up men as the standard against which women are measured (Beveridge et al. 2000b, 387). From this perspective, whatever differs in women from the male norm (such as menstruation, childbearing, or the caring role) tends to be “screened out,” because these experiences do not fit into the male-focused classification of equality (Heitlinger 1993). Finally, formal equality strategies leave untouched the problems of institutional discrimination – the systemic or structural inequalities faced by women.

The shortcomings of formal equality acted as a catalyst to find alternatives. Substantive equality has gained prominence globally in recent years and is the touchstone of ‘gender mainstreaming’³³ initiatives. Substantive equality calls for the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play. It recognizes that equal treatment may not produce equal outcomes. Instead, different treatment of women and men may sometimes be required to achieve sameness of results.

³³ The term ‘mainstreaming’ here is separate from, and not to be confused with, the term ‘mainstreaming’ used in Chapter II in the context of the ‘politic of disengagement’ vs. the ‘politic of mainstreaming’ debate adopted by feminists with respect to the state. Gender mainstreaming surfaced as a concept and became a dominant theme in gender policy circles in the early 1990s (Andersen 1993). Mainstreaming evolved from the earlier call for the integration of women in international development, dating back to the 1970s. It was highlighted following the 1985 UN Women’s Conference in Nairobi, reflecting in part the perceived failure of national women’s machineries to achieve significant results or influence other government policy (Baden & Goetz 1997). It is the strategy informing the Beijing *PFA* and *GBA*.

Substantive equality is at the heart of GBA. *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making*, published by Status of Women in 1996, identifies the need for equity, which may mean different rather than the same treatment of women and men. Gender equity is the process of treating women and men fairly. Ensuring fairness may necessitate taking specific actions to overcome or compensate for the historical and social barriers that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field.

Equity can be understood as the means, whereas equality is the end; “equity leads to equality” (CIDA 2000, 3). The overarching goal of GBA is to promote gender equality, a situation wherein men and women experience equal conditions for realizing their full human rights, for contributing to society economically, politically, socially, and culturally, and for benefiting from those contributions. Gender equality entails “the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play” (SWC 1996a, 3). Thus, gender equality does not mean that men and women have to be the same; rather, it means that the dissimilarities between men and women must not lead to inequality in terms of status in society.

The shift from equality of opportunity to equality of outcome underlying GBA is a major strength. GBA “gives public servants a tool for challenging the traditional bureaucratic adherence to the principle of neutrality” (Burt & Hardman 2001, 209). As explained by one participant, “...*It ferrets out...the personal assumptions of the policy and program people and the decision-makers, and it questions the assumptions about the worldview upon which a policy is based.*” In so doing, it “*helps people see things that they might not have seen before.*” Thus, GBA is progressive because it opens up the

possibility³⁴ for bureaucrats to take the differing social and economic realities of women and men into account, to recognize that policies may affect women and men differently, and to take corrective action accordingly.

GBA also represents progress over earlier initiatives at a level of process because it seeks to ensure that the effects of policy choices on women and men are understood *before* policy decisions are made, and not after the fact. Florence Ievers (2000, 1) argues that, in so doing, “‘getting policy right’ the first time is more typically a given.”

GBA is also progressive at a level of process because it attempts to broaden responsibility for gender. Chapter IV described how, in the past, gender equality work was understood as mostly or solely the responsibility of the few officials concentrated in women’s policy machineries. GBA represents a call for the eventual diffusion of responsibility for gender to the range of sectoral and technical units within departments.

In the words of one individual:

...You could get feminists who...say, “...We used to do this 25 years ago. What’s the difference?” The difference is, it’s not just feminists. It’s not only in the hands of specialized officials. It is assumed that the responsibility to use GBA will be across the board, and that’s [a] strength onto itself...It brings it down [to] all layers of the organization. It doesn’t ghettoize the whole area of gender equality in a small unit [that can be subject to] “Oops! We have no more money in our budget. Gone the unit”...which...is a disadvantage of having these special units. When you make everyone accountable for this, when you make gender equality the business of everyone...there’s your strength in numbers...It’s not just my responsibility, but [also] everybody else’s.

Lahey (2002) concludes that this approach has the potential to move along the process of advancing gender equality much more quickly than when it was largely the responsibility of women themselves to do this work.

³⁴ The wording “opens up the possibility” is used here instead of “guarantees” because, as this chapter will convey, there are no guarantees that corrective action will be taken even in cases where GBA points to the potential for deleterious gender impacts.

The GBA specialists interviewed for this study were unanimous in stating that GBA is simply a strong tool or process. In the words of one GBA specialist, “*GBA is just the most intelligent thing to come around.*”

Development of Tools and Methodologies

The development of appropriate tools and methodologies – particularly tools and methodologies specific to particular ministries and policy sectors – was recognized in the *Federal Plan* as an element required for the successful implementation of GBA. A common message heard in the interviews for this study was that officials charged with coordinating GBA are often asked by colleagues in their respective departments for detailed guidance, procedures, and checklists to enable them to carry out GBA. Such requests for guidance highlight the need for appropriate tools.

One of the major achievements with respect to GBA has come in the form of meeting this need. To date, a number of guides, procedures, and checklists have been developed with a view to enabling officials to carry out GBA.

Following the Beijing conference, SWC prepared a manual entitled *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making* to provide a general framework upon which other departments and jurisdictions could build, and outlining the eight steps of GBA discussed in Chapter IV. This document was updated in 1998. As well, a number of sector-specific manuals have been produced to date. These include, for example:

- A *Gender-Based Analysis Guide* (1997) and a *Gender-Based Analysis Backgrounder* (1997), prepared by the Women’s Bureau (now Gender Analysis Policy Directorate) of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).
- A 1998 manual by the Department of Justice, entitled *Diversity and Justice: Gender Perspectives – A Guide to Equality Analysis*. This manual provides guidance in taking up gender equality issues in policy development, litigation,

prosecutions, legal advice, and legislative and regulatory drafting processes.

- A 1999 manual by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, entitled *A Guide to Gender Equality Analysis*. This manual explains the application of gender equality analysis and provides modules for training within the department.

Erin Skinner et al. (1998, 1) explain that GBA tools “are important because they create standards for conducting gender analysis and extend expertise beyond that of the gender specialists operating in women’s bureaus by helping transfer their knowledge and expertise more broadly.” As one participant concluded:

I think that one strength is that there's a guide on how to do [GBA] ...that [there are] clear steps on how to do [GBA].

Awareness-Raising and Training

A number of GBA specialists noted that their department/agency has developed and conducted information sessions, workshops, and training programs in order to facilitate the use of GBA and to orient policy-makers, program developers, and other officials, including senior management. More broadly, discussion on GBA has been stimulated through dialogue, roundtables, symposia, information fairs, and conferences with governments, women’s organizations, and other non-governmental stakeholders.

Participants concluded that the fact that GBA is opening up dialogue on gender considerations is a major strength because it leads to increased awareness overall and the potential for increased action. One individual summed this up as enhancing the potential for achieving the “*the ripple effect*.”

Development of Gender-Based Research, Data, and Indicators

In the wake of the *PFA*, there has been an increased demand for research and information related to gender in Canada. All stages of the GBA process depend on the

availability and accessibility of timely, policy-relevant research, as well as statistics and indicators to support GBA. Without such data, assumptions are often made which can prove very counterproductive.

New and significant initiatives in the area of gender-based research have developed to support the mainstreaming of GBA. For instance, SWC launched its Policy Research Fund in 1996 (SWC 1999). The primary objective of the fund is to support independent, nationally relevant policy research on gender equality issues. As well, the federal government set up five Centres of Excellence in 1996 to promote much-needed research on women's health in Canada and to direct more attention to the health concerns of women (SWC 1999).

In recent years, Statistics Canada³⁵ has undertaken a number of activities to respond to the increased demand for information needed for GBA, particularly sex-disaggregated and gender-disaggregated data. For instance, in 1998, in partnership with the Policy Research Fund at SWC, Statistics Canada published *Finding Data on Women: A Guide to Major Sources at Statistics Canada*. This reference document provides information on gender-disaggregated data sources that can be used in carrying out GBA.

Other key initiatives in the area of indicators include the following:

- In 1997, the federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women commissioned a report from Statistics Canada. The publication, entitled *Economic Gender Equality Indicators*, outlined a set of benchmarks to assess the relative status of women and men, and to measure change over time. The set of indicators was designed to contribute to public policy discussion on social indicators, an understanding of women's realities, and the promotion of gender equality.

³⁵ Canada's national statistical agency.

- In 1998, an international symposium on gender equality indicators was co-sponsored by a number of Canadian federal departments³⁶ as a way to stimulate public policy discussion on equality indicators. A report of this symposium, entitled *Gender Equality Indicators: Public Concerns and Public Policies*, was published the same year.
- A *Guide to Gender-Sensitive Indicators*, with an accompanying project-level handbook, was published by the Canadian International Development Agency in 1997.

Changes to Policies, Programs, and Legislation

A final strength of GBA is that it has generated change. To date, GBA has been applied to a broad range of policies, programs, and Acts. A comprehensive GBA has been successfully applied, for instance, to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and in the context of the recent extension of the eligibility period for parental benefits under Employment Insurance.

One concrete example of change occurred in the context of health policy. The application of GBA to the process of approving new drugs revealed a gender bias and challenged the scientific validity of findings. As a result, beginning in 1996, Health Canada adopted a Clinical Trials Policy which requires that drug companies include women in clinical trials, in the same proportion as are expected to use the drug (Health Canada 1999; 2000).

Participants explained that it was impossible to list all examples where GBA had been applied and had an effect. It was reported to be more frequently the case that GBA had been applied to certain parts of a policy, program, or Act, or via informal input mechanisms than it was the case that a major, comprehensive GBA had been performed. It was also reported to be difficult to assess progress due to a lack of mechanisms to track

³⁶ Status of Women Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Statistics Canada, and Health Canada.

all of the instances where GBA had been applied and the outcomes of these. The issue of tracking will be taken up later in this chapter.

One participant suggested that it is not always obvious where changes have occurred, and that this is simply the reality that GBA specialists face:

As far as actual kind of policies or programs that we've been involved in from start to finish and said, "Ok, it's obvious that gender analysis was done here," I don't think that I've seen anything like that, and I think that's the nature of our work.

Another participant suggested that the changes stemming from GBA likely occur on a smaller rather than a larger scale:

I see short terms things [where] ...the question was inserted or the language was changed, but I can't point to a particular...seismic shift that happened due to gender analysis.

III. CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH GBA

In its 1999 response to the UN Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing *PFA*, SWC stated that, "Despite progress made in Canada on the integration of GBA...there is still much to be done in order to fully integrate GBA" (SWC 1999, 8). SWC's 1999 Performance Report similarly noted that "much work remains if we are to ensure the systematic application of GBA" (SWC 1999, 8). Challenges exist on a number of different levels – technical, institutional, conceptual, and political.³⁷ Each of these will be discussed in turn.

³⁷ Interview questions were organized under the following categories: process; ideology; political will; resources; and assessments of the overall potential of GBA. Key themes within the findings from each of these categories led to the creation of new categories (i.e., technical, institutional, conceptual, and political) to describe the challenges associated with GBA. Other authors (e.g., Saulnier 1999) have used similar categories to discuss challenges associated with GBA.

Technical Challenges

Analytic and Data Resources

A major strength of GBA identified in the previous section – development of gender-based research, data, and indicators – is also a major challenge associated with GBA and area where further work is needed. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud (1998, 7) observes that “[d]ata and analytical methods are not sufficiently developed and integrated into the overall processes at the present time to provide accurate information on either women or men.”

Canadian Experience in Gender Mainstreaming, written by SWC in April 2000 to report back to the UN on progress made in achieving the goals of the *Federal Plan*, states:

Despite much progress in developing data that reflects women’s experiences, initiatives in gender-based analysis have revealed major gaps that inhibit assessments of issues and policy options. (SWC 2000, 19-20)

The major gap identified by the *Canadian Experience* report pertains to indicators. GBA specialists explained that indicators are important to their work, particularly in terms of knowing the impact one’s work is having. As one individual stated:

...Quite frankly, our money comes from the taxpayers and...at the end of the day, I want indicators...that will tell me that this policy has made a difference in how we implement projects, and that it has made a real difference in the lives of men and women...

Further work must be undertaken to refine indicators, and to develop indicators that will take into account diversity. As discussed in Chapter II, ‘women’ are not a homogeneous group. There is a need for indicators that will reflect the ways in which factors such as disability, race, age, family status, and rural or urban location, interact with gender (SWC 2000, 20). There is also a need for further progress in analysis and interpretation of

indicators (SWC 2000, 20). The *Canadian Experience* report contends that the existing Economic Gender Equality Indicators “over-represent progress” by not sufficiently taking into consideration the situation of the most disadvantaged groups of women (SWC 2000, 20).

Statistics Canada similarly points to the need for further work on analytic and data resources. Statistics Canada (2000, 2) identifies the need “for improvement in coordination and collaboration of data collection and research activities” for analysis of gender-related issues. Statistics Canada (2000, 6) also comments that more work is needed on the processes underlying data and analysis:

Producing sex-disaggregated data is but a first step. A key challenge for improving gender statistics at Statistics Canada is to continue to question basic assumptions about the way data are collected, analyzed, and disseminated.

GBA specialists identified the need for further work in the area of data. In response to the question, “What could be done to enhance GBA?,” participants commented:

One of the application challenges is, unfortunately, data...In a lot of instances, simply because nobody has ever thought of it, there won't be any data upon which to draw, let alone disaggregated data.

...If you don't have the number crunching to show...the gender implications of something, it's going to get lost in the water.

Data. Data, data, data, data. Sex-disaggregated data. And...that should be just one of the levels of disaggregation...And then, once you've collected the data, analyze it. Keep it up to date...Keep looking at it. Because that will reveal whether there are patterns of discrimination in the decisions that are being made.

While GBA specialists were enthusiastic about the relationship between GBA and data, which was seen to help them better make the case for GBA – an issue to be revisited later in this chapter – it is interesting to note that some authors have expressed concern

about the importance placed on data and evidence in relation to gender mainstreaming initiatives such as GBA. Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz (1997), for example, are critical of the emphasis on sex-disaggregated data. While they recognize the value of such data, they also express concern that the approach de-emphasizes issues of power relations between women and men that maintain gender inequalities:

Bureaucratic requirements for information tend to strip away the political content of information on women's interests and reduce it to a set of needs or gaps, amenable to administrative decisions about the allocation of resources. This distillation of information about women's experiences is unable to accommodate or validate issues of gender and power.

Based upon this view, the emphasis on data may be seen as a factor that could depoliticize GBA.

Institutional Challenges

Human & Financial Resources

The GBA process needs to be adequately resourced in terms of both money and personnel. Yet, a number of participants reported that resources on both of these fronts are lacking:

There's always too much work and not enough people...

We need more money dedicated to [GBA] ...so that we have more bodies to be able to accomplish it within the context of...the government.

There's not enough money. And if you really want to have good implementation, you invest upfront...

You're given a huge mandate, and you're not given any money. So, it's like, change the way the department does things, but you're not going to get any funding – you don't have any budget.

Among the six GBA focal units from which participants were drawn for this study, all but one were operating with a staff of five people or less. In some cases, only

one or two employees were substantively responsible for doing the bulk of the GBA work for their department/agency. Some units had experienced downsizing, in which a significant portion of their staff had been lost.

Given that in many federal departments/agencies, responsibility for applying GBA is still primarily concentrated in GBA focal units while attempts are made to more fully implement GBA, the finding that most of these units are short-staffed and under-resourced raises major implications. It calls into question whether these units have the ability to ensure that the commitment to do GBA is taken up.

While the women were clear that there is a lack of resources, they were less clear in articulating the scope and focus of additional resources needed:

...You could always have more resources - I mean, more would obviously be better - but how much more, I'm not sure.

We are doing the best we can with the resources we have to get the biggest bang for the buck, in terms of results. If we had more funds, we probably could do more. But you'd have to stand back and assess whether that was the best use of that money, whether it should be used for some other purpose...That being said...if there were some external standard that we were trying to say, "Ok, can we reach that?"... "Do we have enough money to get to that?"...Then you might get a different answer.

...Maybe the question is what to do with money...I'm not entirely sure I would necessarily spend money in creating [GBA] units in every department... Although...it helps if you have an entity that has been addressing these issues historically in a department because it will help to facilitate the understanding, the moving forward on the issue. If you've never had anybody or anything do that in your department [and] then you come in cold...that's a very difficult entrée to get into...But is that where you want to put your money? Is your money going to be in creating that infrastructure, or do you want to put the money into...better training or tools that people can use, and support for people that actually are using GBA? I don't know. It's a catch 22. So, [the funding is] inadequate, definitely, but if you were to give us more, what would we do with it would be my question.

One individual commented that enhancing resources is simply one piece of the puzzle, and one way among many to improve GBA:

People tend to think that you throw resources at anything and it will help the problem. Well, sometimes it does. But if you're talking institutional change, organizational change, change of thinking processes, all the resources in the world may not make as much of a difference as simply being able to formulate, direct, and let loose a train of thought that is so clear, and precise, that nobody could find any possible exception to it. So, resources are always helpful, but you could have...3,000 people working on this and if 3,000 people can't explain it with such precision and clarity and conviction that people will understand it, then, well, who cares? ...I'm not saying resources are a bad thing...I'm saying [they're] not the be-all and the end-all.

Systematic Implementation & Application

The *Canadian Experience in Gender Mainstreaming* report states that “[d]espite the commitment to gender-based analysis, implementation varies” (SWC 2000, 19). The *Federal Plan* declared a commitment to ensuring that “all future legislation and policies include, *where appropriate*, an analysis of the potential for different impacts on women and men” (SWC 1995a, 17). Yet, the *Federal Plan* did not identify in what instances GBA is appropriate, and in what instances it is not. It simply noted that, “Individual departments will be responsible for determining which legislation or policies have the potential to affect women and men differentially and are, therefore, appropriate for a consistent application of a gender lens” (SWC 1995a, 17).

This commitment outlined in the *Federal Plan* has since been restated in a number of publications and speeches – sometimes with the “where appropriate” clause, and sometimes not. For example, in a statement to the 42nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on March 3, 1998, Hedy Fry, describing GBA within the Government of Canada, commented: “...A key component of our approach is

the active and visible mainstreaming of a gender perspective in *all* government activities” (Fry 1998, 1).

Yet, it is clear that GBA is not being applied in all government activities, or across the full complement of policy issues. As observed by Vickers et al. (2000, 26),

GBA is generally limited to a sub-set of issues, policies, and programs. This sub-set is wider than the old box of “women’s issues.” But GBA is still rarely used with regard to economic and technology policies.

GBA can be applied to almost any type of policy, program, or legislation. But it tends to be applied narrowly to social policy or in instances where there is obvious relevance to women, such as in the context of recent amendments to parental benefits.

At the heart of this problem is the fact that the federal government decided to implement GBA in a decentralized fashion, counting on individual departments and agencies to assume responsibility to implement GBA (Grace 1998). To date, only a handful of departments/agencies have taken up this responsibility. Nearly eight years after the release of the *Federal Plan*, a number of departments/agencies continue business as usual without GBA. As noted by one woman:

*...What we see is that we have a couple of departments who are really, really interested...in doing [GBA]. And these are the departments that deal with social programs, humans...What about PCO – Privy Council Office – where all the big decisions are made? They’re not there. Finance, Treasury Board, they’re not there.*³⁸

That some of the Government of Canada’s heaviest-hitting departments/agencies – particularly the central agencies – have not initiated activity around GBA is cause for major concern. For example, the absence of Finance Canada – the department responsible for the national Budget – caused Sunera Thobani (1996, 97) to comment:

³⁸ The Privy Council Office, Finance Canada, and the Treasury Board Secretariat are three of the Government of Canada’s central agencies.

In my term as president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), I met with Paul Martin Jr., the federal minister of Finance, on at least five separate occasions... We asked him whether his department does a gender analysis of the budget, the most important policy-making instrument in the hands of the government. Did his department know how budgetary matters affect women and women's equality? And Mr. Martin said "No," he does not do that; his department does not do that. Last time we met with him, he said: "Quite frankly, Ms. Thobani, our department does not have the capacity to do that kind of analysis."

This is unacceptable. Women are 54% of the population of this country and all of us are affected one way or another by government policy. For the minister of Finance to say that the most important instrument in the hands of the government does not have a gender analysis is unacceptable.

With some departments/agencies working to implement GBA, and others not, how are we to ensure that any progress achieved by one department/agency of the state will not be neutralized or undermined by another?

Another issue acting as a challenge to the systematic implementation of GBA is that the various federal departments/agencies engaging in GBA are extremely diverse in their mandates, effort, and resources. As one individual explained:

...As departments, we aren't necessarily unified in our approach. And we do pretty different business... Our client groups are all different, and our purpose for being is different. We've adapted [GBA] to fit our work, and we're not necessarily the same. So, how you bring those approaches back together and say, "Ok, here's the big project"... That's a challenge.

This message that application of GBA is inconsistent was raised by a number of participants, as reflected in comments such as the following:

Right now, it's sporadic. It's left up to departmental initiative.

...I think you're at least at the stage where people know that they need to acknowledge it. But the extent to which it's being done? I don't know... I think it's a pretty mixed picture.

...A lot of what is going on from a GBA perspective is either a GBA unit has been doing the work, or it's a fluke, or it's somebody's good intention that actually

that takes account of gender. For example, every Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) must include an assessment of potential *Charter* implications to assess whether a specific measure complies with the equality protection as it has been interpreted and applied by the courts. Any gender inequality issue arising in the development or in the application of a policy, program, or legislation is potentially a *Charter* issue that could be raised in an MC under “potential *Charter* implications.” In addition, some departments/agencies have adopted Cabinet guidelines wherein all MCs are to include a gender analysis or gender impact statement.

Participants relayed that the gender analysis in MCs is often hastily or poorly done. As explained by one individual:

For the majority, they write the paragraph at the 11th hour, and then they call us to review the paragraph. But...I would doubt that there is a [GBA] file in their filing cabinet attached to their policy or program.

The general consensus was that by the time GBA specialists are consulted by colleagues for their input, MCs and various other products such as briefing notes are already “a long way along.”

A number of women mentioned that while GBA can serve to uncover inequalities, there are no guarantees at the end of the day that decision-makers will make a decision to apply the information. Participants commented:

Even if you raise concerns, you know that there will be some negative implications, and...you brief the senior officials...it doesn't get to the Minister. And even if it gets to Minister, or if it gets to senior people, there are other dimensions that will probably take over.

...I think since decisions ultimately are made at a political level, often...what tends to happen is that [gender] becomes...something that's considered but doesn't necessarily have to be reflected in the decision taken. And I think that that's where the bureaucrats can provide all the information they want, but when a political decision is made, it's out of your hands, and the best you can do is say

you've provided them with the factors and the analysis. And my impression is that that's what tends to happen more than seeing it actually in the outcome of the decision.

Accountability, Monitoring, and Reporting

Closely related to systematic implementation and application are issues of accountability, monitoring, and reporting. These issues present major challenges to GBA.

'Accountability' involves taking action to meet responsibilities, and rendering an account on how, and how well, one's responsibilities are being met. According to most of the women interviewed, real accountability for ensuring that GBA is integrated into the policy and program development process is seriously limited at present, or non-existent. When asked, "What accountability or enforcement mechanisms are in place in your department for GBA?," virtually all participants suggested that accountability is weak, with no real mechanisms in place. As one woman explained, "*...There's a soft compliance, there's a soft accountability, but not enough to bring, to bring...real results at the end of the day.*" Two individuals stated that GBA relies purely on "*moral suasion.*" Participants also reported that there are no consequences for non-adherence. As summed up by one individual, "*nobody gets their hand slapped if they don't do [GBA].*"

Limited accountability was described as a problem not only within the context of individual departments/agencies, but overall. Participants explained that the accountability surrounding GBA was compromised from the outset because it was given little attention back in 1995 when the *Federal Plan* was developed. The *Federal Plan* did not include any accountability mechanisms for GBA. The climate of demand for

government accountability and for measurement of effectiveness has since heightened. Accountability is now understood as a necessary and critical component of GBA. Some women expressed optimism that broad accountability for GBA will be enhanced at least somewhat under the AGE. The AGE squarely places the ability and the responsibility on SWC's Secretary of State and three other Ministers to question their colleagues at the Cabinet table about progress on GBA in their departments. However, this has not yet been fully operationalized.

Participants explained that a "*well-defined and operationalized*" accountability framework – including both senior management and line accountability mechanisms – would greatly facilitate progress on GBA. As noted by one GBA specialist, "*An accountability framework would help see more and more policies...developed with the aid of GBA.*"

One individual described the challenge ahead as "*building an appetite for accountability.*" A number of departments/agencies are currently addressing this challenge by undertaking efforts to develop or improve their accountability mechanisms. However, some suggested the need to proceed strategically on accountability within the bureaucracy:

I think one has to be careful about how you raise those issues inside your own department. You need to be very sensitive to your department's mandate, to what its comfort level is on accountability issues...

Another part of the challenge entails determining the best possible accountability strategies to use. Participants connected this challenge to the fact, as discussed above, that the move to accountability mechanisms and frameworks is relatively new. It is as yet unclear what strategies would yield the greatest success. Prospective options identified

by participants included measures such as progress reports on the incorporation of GBA into departmental work; incorporation of GBA into performance appraisal systems; and development of evaluation plans identifying key performance indicators. One individual expressed an interest in a centralized accountability mechanism:

I think if there was a centralized accountability for GBA, where Ministers were accountable for it, where Cabinet held people accountable for it, that you would quickly find the dance would turn quite a bit...It's essential in my view...for broader success.

Another message heard in the interviews was that, in order for there to be meaningful accountability, there needs to be effective monitoring and reporting, with identified targets, data generation and analysis, periodic reviews, and results identified, tracked, and reported. Currently, there is no systematic tracking or reporting of GBA. Consequently, as noted earlier in this chapter, it is very difficult to know whether or not GBA is having an impact. As stated by one participant:

I don't have a specific example that I can say... "[GBA] made this difference" ...

The latter statement should not be taken to suggest that no examples exist; as described earlier in this chapter, there are examples where changes have occurred at least partly as a result of GBA. It is more the case that, in the absence of monitoring and evaluation, it is difficult to trace back a given outcome to GBA. One woman remarked:

...At the end of the day, can you say, "This happened because of a gender analysis"? I think that would be hard.

In some cases, change could have occurred for any number of reasons, but not because of GBA per se. In other cases, one could believe that a change is occurring when in fact it is not. As summed up by one individual:

...I think until you have...more concrete examples, and more measurement of what you're doing, to say, "This is what you think you're doing, [and] here [are]

the actual results that you're seeing," ...you assume you're doing what you think you're doing, but [you don't] know.

The overall consensus among staff members was that steps must be taken to monitor operational processes and results. Engaging in such activities would help the project of pinpointing specific areas where progress is being achieved and where gaps remain.

One participant suggested that steps should be taken to monitor the processes used by policy and program officials to integrate GBA in their work:

...We need to be able to demonstrate what we did – not just say, "Yeah, we did it." We need to be able to show people how we did it, and what we did.

Those interviewed also reiterated their comments on indicators, noting how further development of indicators was not only important in the context of data but also in the context of accountability. If the overarching goal of GBA is gender equality, the signs marking progress towards this goal need to be identified. One participant stated:

There must be performance measures to determine if objectives are being achieved and a clearly defined way of measuring these objectives in a timely and regular fashion.

With respect to reporting, GBA specialists suggested that further developments in that area would be a strategic move. As noted by one participant:

...If you have to report on something...[that's a] good incentive to...start early in making change.

Thus, instituting some form of reporting mechanism may be a particularly useful device for ensuring that GBA is applied in the first place. Importantly, under the AGE, departments will report back on a yearly basis on progress made with respect to GBA. However, as noted previously, the AGE is still a work in progress, and only time will tell what outcomes these annual reports will have once operationalized.

Consultation

Both Chapter II and Chapter IV discussed the challenges that have existed over the years in establishing effective consultation mechanisms and fostering trust between femocrats and feminists working outside of government. Yet, these chapters also spoke to the importance of these relationships in order to advance state feminist initiatives.

The potential of the GBA approach is based in part on the quality and integrity of consultation processes (Vickers et al. 2000). There have been some very positive developments in this regard. The most notable examples have come in the form of on-line discussions about GBA. One such on-line dialogue on GBA, initiated by SWC and led by the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities (CCLOW), was conducted with women's organizations and individuals across Canada³⁹ from January to April of 2001. The dialogue was found to be quite successful in raising awareness about GBA among participants. It also generated feedback on GBA. For example, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) expressed that it was generally supportive of GBA as a tool, but felt that a strong effort had to be made to ensure that it was inclusive of all women's groups and organizations, including Aboriginal and Métis women, visible minority women, and women with special needs (Kartini International 2001).

A second on-line discussion was initiated by CIDA, when it posted a draft of its 1999 gender equality policy framework on a website and invited interested parties – both inside and outside CIDA⁴⁰ – to provide consultative feedback and input electronically.

³⁹ CCLOW made particular efforts to ensure that the organizations invited to participate in the dialogue represented a diverse cross-section of Canadian women and that the dialogue was readily accessible to women with special needs, and to women who do not have access to the internet. A total of 60 people registered to participate in the dialogue.

⁴⁰ There were two sites to provide input into the virtual consultation: one within CIDA for participation of CIDA personnel, and one made available externally. This second list was open to any interested party,

This gender policy Internet discussion lasted from August to September of 1998.

Participants came from varying backgrounds (academics, NGOs, grassroots groups, government organizations, journalists). Input ranged from comments about conceptual issues (e.g., definition of gender equality, 'equality' versus 'equity,' partnership, empowerment, mainstreaming) to concrete suggestions on specific parts of the policy document. Major themes included gender equality results, gender equality and sustainable development, and women's rights. Participants' feedback was incorporated into the draft policy framework.

Despite these positive initiatives, research for this study pointed to the need to engage in further work to improve consultation processes. In asking GBA specialists about their consultation processes, all stated that their department/agency consults on the gender issues underlying a variety of policies and programs. As well, part of their work is to encourage colleagues to make sure that they include women's groups and equality-seeking groups in their external consultations when developing policy and programs. However, most individuals noted that little consultation is carried out on GBA specifically, beyond seeking advice on specific GBA learning tools and teaching aides.

Several participants related that consultations are largely discretionary and, at the end of the day, departments/agencies are free to take up or ignore the advice and policy recommendations that consultations generate. One individual stated:

The extent to which [groups'] concerns get reflected back – that's really a crapshoot, to put it quite bluntly. A lot of it has to do with what they have to say and how far the department is willing to go...

including NGOs and members of the general public, both nationally and internationally. The discussion was assisted by placing the draft policy framework on-line in three different languages (English, French, and Spanish), accompanied with very specific questions such as: "Is this concept clearly expressed?" A panel of six guest facilitators helped to shape the discussion.

Another woman explained that “*consultations are a political hot potato.*” Other participants took up this perspective by stating that their department/agency is more likely to meet with groups considered to be politically and bureaucratically acceptable.

One individual commented:

...It depends a little bit on how government-friendly...the group is. And government-friendly meaning...how it's perceived – if it's perceived to be very radical, as say (NAC)⁴¹ is...

Those interviewed also suggested that consultation processes generally proceed by seeking input from a small number of organizations, rather than opening up dialogue across a range of organizations and interests. The limitation of this approach was articulated by one participant as follows:

You cannot get a full range of perspectives unless you consult broadly, yet consultations are carried out narrowly with only some groups.

The groups that tend to be consulted are ones that have been consulted in the past, are known or familiar to a department/agency, and have a demonstrated understanding of government processes and policy.

Based on international research on gender mainstreaming, Beveridge et al. (2000b, 390) contend that two broad approaches are currently employed by countries when implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives: the ‘expert-bureaucratic model’ and the ‘participatory-democratic model.’ Under the expert-bureaucratic model, gender analysis is regarded as a task to be performed by specialists. This group includes gender

⁴¹ NAC is the main organizational vehicle of the English-speaking women’s movement in Canada. It is an umbrella organization whose membership has increased from 30 women’s groups when it was created in 1972 to 650 member organizations by 1997 (Teghtsoonian & Grace 2001, 247). NAC works for improvements in the economic, political, and social status of women. It serves as a lobbyist on issues with policy relevance to women. Issue priorities are set each year at the annual general meeting, and positions on these priority issues are then presented to the federal Cabinet at an annual lobby session. In addition, informal links with public officials, especially those in SWC, together with the publication of publication/research papers, help to publicize NAC’s views.

experts with specialized training and sound knowledge of gender relations. It also includes administrators who are highly familiar with policy-making and the policy area in question, but are unlikely to possess a highly developed understanding of gender relations or gender analysis.

Under the alternative participatory-democratic model, a range of individuals and organizations are encouraged to contribute to gender analysis processes. This model promotes participation, access to policy-making, and accountability on the part of officials.

GBA within the Canadian federal government would seem to most closely approximate the expert-bureaucratic model. Various departments/agencies use the term 'specialists' or 'advisors' to refer to the persons employed in their GBA units or working as part of their GBA networks. I myself have used the word 'experts' and 'specialists' a number of times in this study in relation to participants.

Some participants seemed uncomfortable with the label of 'expert.' One individual explained:

...I don't truly believe that there's anybody who [is] an expert because [GBA is] constantly evolving...even...from month to month sometimes...So, "expert" is not a great word.

Participants conveyed that there is a learning curve associated with GBA. Even those who have been working on GBA for a few years can be surprised by new findings, or confused about how to proceed when faced with new barriers. Thus, a sense of mastery over GBA is difficult to achieve.

One participant believed characterized perceiving oneself to be more knowledgeable than other colleagues in government as "*patronizing*":

...People in the public service...are talented, skilled, trained people, and they have a contribution to make to you and your understanding of the world and how gender plays itself out. So, I think one lesson I've learned is to recognize that and build on that. Never assume that you know much more than they do. Because that's patronizing in the literal sense of the word...If we haven't learned that in feminism, then we haven't learned much.

Yet, the same participant subsequently commented:

I want gender experts to be recognized as gender experts...to be allowed to be treated as gender experts...

In my work as a 'gender advisor' through the Network of Gender Advisors at HRDC, I have personally found the main challenge inhering from the role of 'gender expert' to be that one runs the risk of being the only one expected to think about gender. If a group perceives that it has a resident gender expert, others in the group may come to believe that there is no need for external consultation. They may also come to perceive that they have no contribution to make, or no responsibilities of their own. To circumvent this, the challenge becomes to position oneself as less of an expert, and more of a resource for others to draw upon – a resource person who does not have all the answers.

The finding that the expert-bureaucratic approach is overshadowing the participatory model in federal government GBA initiatives becomes easier to understand in the context of discussions first initiated in Chapters II and IV. A 'gender expert' sounds far more technical, and less politically threatening than a 'feminist.' As Vickers et al. (2000, 27) suggest, "Because the bureaucratic culture in the federal civil service in Canada is hostile to advocacy, the garb of 'expertise' is more compatible with conventional civil service values than feminist advocacy."

Yet, this raises a number of issues. Vickers et al. (2000, 27) contend that, “If the advocacy element is removed, GBA can become a status quo approach.” GBA could simply come to represent the perceptions of GBA experts as if they were the perceptions of all women (Vickers et al. 2000). Femocrats and their colleagues generally have a certain degree of privilege by virtue of having relatively well-paid, stable careers. Those interviewed for this study were well-educated, with several having graduate degrees. One individual commented that similarity, rather than difference, prevailed among women in her GBA unit. She remarked that, on the one hand, this is a positive thing because “*there are no power struggles*” within the workplace. On the other hand, she noted that a high degree of sameness could “*be a weakness in the future*” and that having a group with greater variety in experiences could bring rich and valuable perspective.

Overall, the substitution of federal government GBA expertise for consultations can take away from the ability to hear what other women have to say (Vickers et al. 2000), particularly low-income and minority women, who lack leverage in political processes in the first place (Rhode 1994). As Phillips (1995, 13) underscores, “When policies are worked out *for* rather than *with* a politically excluded constituency, they are unlikely to engage with all relevant concerns.”

All participants in this study conveyed that they recognize the importance of close liaison and consultation with non-governmental organizations and equality-seeking groups. Conversely, it is also clear that women’s groups are keenly interested in learning more about GBA, and in becoming more involved in federal GBA processes. They have, for example, been coming forward and asking for money through the Women’s Program

– the SWC funding program discussed in Chapter IV – to develop GBA capacity within their organizations. One individual commented:

Women's groups...have come around and said, "We want the training that the departments are getting so we can interact with the departments on...not necessarily a 'level' playing field, but with the same concepts."

Sawer (1996) argues that the advancement of equality agendas requires not only routinized accountability mechanisms within government, but also strong pressure from outside government. Participants in a study on GBA conducted by Skinner et al. (1998) agreed that external attention plays a critical role in ensuring that GBA occurs in the policy process. Women's groups and other equality-seeking organizations are particularly important in this regard. As stated by Teghtsoonian and Grace (2001, 265),

...[I]t is important to ensure that the work of women's policy agencies within government is supplemented by well-resourced feminist organizations operating outside government. With greater freedom to engage critically with government policy proposals in public arenas, such groups can make a valuable contribution to the work of ensuring that women's interests and needs become a routine component of the public discourse around proposed policies.

The reference to "well-resourced feminist organizations" in the above statement is key. Chapter IV explained that the funding once provided to women's and other equality-seeking organizations in Canada was seriously cut back by the Liberals in the 1990s, at around the same time that GBA was initiated. Thus, organizations may very well wish to engage with government officials on GBA, as discussed above, but may be seriously limited in their ability to do so. This is cause for concern. Ideally, the new funding for organizations allocated through the AGE would work to alleviate this situation.

However, this remains to be seen.

The importance of providing support and putting mechanisms in place to facilitate regular consultation with civil society groups and equality-seeking

organizations will be raised again later in this chapter. At present, this remains an area with room for improvement.

Overall Coordination and Leadership

A final institutional challenge pertains to leadership. This issue was not one that I had thought to ask participants about. However, it surfaced nonetheless, particularly in the context of discussing how GBA could be enhanced. A number of participants raised the point that the success of GBA depends in part on strong and active leadership, and that this is an area with room for improvement.

As Chapter IV explained, responsibility for overall coordination and leadership of GBA lies in the hands of SWC. Those interviewed suggested ways in which SWC could enhance its leadership. One individual highlighted the need for a “*different kind of leadership on the issue*” – a style of leadership that targets the top:

...I think we need more focused leadership at a political level and also at a high bureaucratic level on the issue... We need somebody at the senior management level at...Status of Women Canada, who...talks [GBA] up...[For example], those DMs Breakfasts⁴²...are particularly important entrées that I think need to be explored.

Another individual likewise suggested that leadership efforts should be directed at a higher level. She noted that efforts could be redistributed, with SWC “*not focusing so much on providing training to departments,*” and instead focusing on “*making a stronger presence [for GBA] in the Government of Canada.*”

A third woman reflected upon the importance of leaders positioning GBA “*strategically*” and commented:

⁴² Refers to the weekly Deputy Ministers’ breakfast meetings on Parliament Hill, which are the bureaucratic equivalent to Cabinet meetings.

I think that there is insufficient leadership at this particular historical moment in Status of Women...in terms of being able to push an agenda forward...

None of the GBA specialists who discussed SWC's leadership on GBA spoke about *why* it may be limited at this juncture. Yet, this seems an important matter to consider. Therese Jennissen (2000, 9) argues that "a number of factors work against the SWC's successful promotion of GBA." First, as discussed in Chapter IV, SWC is not a core agency or department in the federal government, which places limits upon its overall organizational capacity and power.⁴³ Second, SWC is working with a weak mandate. As noted above, GBA is not supported by an enforcement mechanism. Thus, the best SWC can do is to encourage other departments/agencies to implement and apply GBA; it cannot compel them to do so. Finally, SWC received no extra funding specifically for its work on GBA following approval of the *Federal Plan*. Funds were only recently allocated for GBA with the advent of the AGE. In their analysis of GBA, Burt and Hardman (2001, 214) concluded:

In theory, the adoption of GBA should help [SWC] increase its profile within government. For GBA is a lever for gaining access to other departments. However, the department continues to be plagued with small budgets, a small staff, and problems of organization.

Thus, while the women who were interviewed made important suggestions about how leadership on GBA could be enhanced, it remains unclear to what extent SWC has the capacity to take up these strategies. What is clear, however, is that GBA specialists

⁴³ Burt and Hardman (2001) argue that SWC functioned best when it was headed by Ministers with other significant portfolios; these Ministers were able to use the leverage of their position within Cabinet to advance SWC's files. However, when the Cabinet position was downgraded to Secretary of State, SWC lost its position at the Cabinet table. As noted in the context of discussing accountability above, there is some speculation, however, that the new ability of SWC's Secretary of State and three other Ministers to question colleagues at Cabinet about progress on GBA will increase SWC's influence.

working in departments/agencies have a number of ideas about leadership that could be explored.

Conceptual Challenges

Finding a Consistent Language & Conceptual Framework

GBA is a “loosely-defined” tool of policy analysis (Burt & Hardman 2001, 209). The *Canadian Experience in Gender Mainstreaming* report suggests that further work to clarify terminology and definitions will be critical to the success of GBA (SWC 2000).

GBA has been given different names by different departments/agencies across the federal government. For example, some call it ‘gender analysis,’ others call it ‘gender equality analysis,’ and yet others call it ‘gender equality and diversity analysis.’ A document produced by HRDC (2001b, 2) notes that the use of various terms for GBA is not cause for concern:

[The terms] gender-based analysis or gender analysis...and a number of other terms are used interchangeably...The name doesn’t matter as long as it conveys the idea that both women’s and men’s situations are taken into account at every stage of policy development, and program design and delivery.

Some participants agreed with this perspective. In the words of one woman:

I don’t get stuck up on the language thing...I really don’t care what you call it, you know? It’s just is the whole principle behind it [that matters].

However, at least one participant saw the inconsistent language as a challenge:

We don’t have common language for GBA and I think it’s a problem...Somebody has a GBA unit, somebody else has a gender equality unit, somebody else has a gender diversity and analysis unit...I think that...cloudiness is difficult.

Above and beyond the issue of nomenclature for GBA is the issue of GBA as a concept. The wording of the *Federal Plan* was vague, suggesting several possible interpretations of GBA. This has made it more difficult for the bureaucrats charged with

implementing GBA to develop clear policy guidelines (Burt & Hardman 2001). A few departments/agencies have a policy statement on GBA that describes how that organization intends to achieve its vision, mission, and goals and how it will promote gender equality across all areas of that organization's work. However, to date, some of the departments/agencies represented in this study are still working to develop or publish a departmental/agency policy statement on GBA. A clear message emanating from the interviews was that, without a formal policy in place, such as a plan or statement, success will often be hit and miss within departments/agencies.

There has been little attempt to develop a general theory of GBA which transcends the diversity of departmental/agency practice in order to provide a universal frame of reference by which GBA may be understood. Participants disagreed on whether they perceived this as a challenge. Some saw the value of a shared conceptual framework:

...I acknowledge that you need to be flexible enough to tailor to your own department. However, I think standardized guidelines, language, concepts would be really nice to get to eventually.

While acknowledging that some difficulties inhered from a lack of a shared conceptual framework, others did not see this as a cause for concern. One woman regarded the overarching shared goal of working toward equality as more important than having common language and concepts:

...Government people – not just GBA people – government people in general have so many different interpretations and perceptions of GBA that sometimes you feel you're not talking the same language. So, we have that dynamic happening plus [non-governmental organizations], who don't have the same understanding of GBA that anybody in the government might have. And then you have the academics who have a different understanding as well. [But] ...ultimately, everybody [is] heading towards equality. Ultimately, no matter what road they're taking or what river they're canoeing down, it doesn't matter...It makes no sense

to waste a lot of energy and time battling ideology and process, especially if some of the conceptual obstacles are based on rhetoric or terminology.

Vision of Gender Equality

Most interesting about the preceding quote is its suggestion that the ultimate goal of GBA is gender equality. The point that GBA is intended to advance gender equality is stated time and time again, in government documents, speeches, and by federal government bureaucrats. For example, in her 1998 statement to the 42nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Hedy Fry (1998, 2) referred to GBA “as a critical means of achieving gender equality.”

Yet, it remains unclear what vision of gender equality GBA works toward. ‘Gender equality’ is a term that covers a broad spectrum of ideas and practices. As Phillips (1987, 1-2) suggests, “a commitment to [gender] equality does not itself tell us what shape that equality should take.” Different approaches to the concept of gender equality define different policy objectives.

The question, “What vision of gender equality does GBA work toward?” elicited a broad range of responses from individuals in this study. Some commented upon the absence of a vision for GBA in their department/agency. Others spoke to the disconnect between GBA, the tool, and GBA as a vision of gender equality:

For me, GBA doesn't necessarily translate easily into a gender equality vision. GBA is, for me, an analytical tool that has the ability to expose potential gender differences.

Those interviewed also described a disconnect between the vision of gender equality underlying GBA, on the one hand, and actual practice, on the other. As noted by

one individual, *“There’s a difference between what’s envisioned and what’s actually happening.”*

One woman remarked that GBA shares the same vision as gender mainstreaming: Making gender considerations an integral part of policy and program development, and reaching a stage wherein applying GBA is *“as natural as breathing.”* This vision places more immediate emphasis on routinizing application of GBA than on achieving gender equality – a focus which was shared by another participant:

...I no longer expect an outcome at the end of the day from an equality perspective. I hope it will do that. I’m certainly for it to influence that. But my objective now and expectation is geared more at seeing people practice GBA.

By far the most common vision identified was that of achieving substantive equality. Participants were clear in differentiating substantive equality from formal equality. As one individual noted, substantive equality *“doesn’t just mean that men and women are treated the same.”* Other staff members similarly emphasized that substantive equality means ensuring equal outcomes and benefits for women and men, not simply equal access and opportunities.

The fact that the majority of participants identified substantive equality as the vision of gender equality underpinning GBA could be interpreted as indicating that there is, indeed, a clear vision of equality at the heart of GBA. However, what exactly does this vision translate to? The latter point seems unclear. What kind of equal outcomes and benefits are we striving for? Beveridge et al. (2000a) observe that substantive equality is often presented as a laudable goal without any clear articulation of what it represents. They ask:

If substantive equality were achieved, in what ways would society be transformed? Would there be equal numbers of women and men in company

boardrooms, in national legislatures and in the professions? Would the task of childcare be split equitably between a child's parents? Would wealth be equally distributed between the sexes so that the process of the femini[z]ation of poverty would be reversed? (Beveridge et al. 2000a, 16)

The ambiguity surrounding the vision of gender equality underpinning GBA is not altogether surprising when one considers the extent to which egalitarians today disagree over the kind of equality that institutions and public policy should promote. The fundamental question that they raise is, Equality of what? There is no consensus about the ways in which individuals should be made equal (Sen 1992). Burt and Hardman (2001, 209) explain that "equality is a highly contested concept that could be so extensive as to include reforms in child care provisions and family law, or limited to improving opportunities for women to compete for jobs in the public sphere."

Molyneux (1985, 232-33) makes a distinction between 'practical gender interests,' as those which respond to immediate, situationally-specific needs and which may not challenge prevailing forms of gender subordination and 'strategic gender interests,' which entail transformative goals such as women's emancipation and gender equality. It is unclear which of these GBA seeks to advance. Yet, as Burt and Hardman (2001, 209) underscore, "If the ultimate goal is women's equality, policy-makers need to articulate their vision of gender equality." Without a clear articulation of the kind of equality GBA promises to work toward, it becomes difficult – if not impossible – to assess progress in any substantive way. It also makes it difficult to know whether the vision underlying GBA is progressive enough, or whether it merely seeks to uphold the status quo. Further exploration and clarification of these issues therefore seems warranted.

Ideology

Similar to the issue raised above about the vision of equality underpinning GBA, I also set out to explore the ideology informing GBA. I did so by asking GBA specialists: “Is there an agreed-upon ideological framework for GBA in your department? If so, what is it?”

Some individuals commented that the ideological framework for GBA is that of existing legislation:

...The framework that [my department] refers to would be the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the essential foundation...GBA works from that...

In departments/agencies with a departmental policy statement on GBA, the majority of participants suggested that this formed the ideological framework for GBA. As noted by one woman, “*There is a policy statement that gets reiterated.*”

Several individuals expressed their discomfort with the term ‘ideology.’ The most common response was to clarify that GBA is a method, tool, or process – not an ideology:

...To my mind, our emphasis is more on the method, not the ideology – much more on the steps, the tools, and less quibbling about the intent and the ideology and sort of much more nuanced or academic kind of issues.

An ideological framework? I wouldn’t think of it as an ideological framework. I think of it as a method, as an analytical framework, as a package of tools that policy analysts can use to make policy decisions that are informed decisions. I would say we keep ideology out of it as much as possible.

Reasons for wishing to distance GBA from ideology were not readily apparent at the time I conducted my interviews. Confusion on this point was increased by responses such as the following:

I wouldn’t call it ‘ideology’...I would call it an approach. Maybe it is ideology, but anyways...

The general message, though, seemed to be that ideology is somehow unacceptable within the state bureaucracy in a way that it is not within academia or grassroots organizations. As one individual commented:

I don't like using that [term] 'ideology' because, in government, ideology is like a bad word...

An additional dimension was added to this issue when another participant explained:

GBA is a methodology to help you get to gender equality, but it takes it out of the ideology. Because then you get into all of the debate about feminist analysis versus gender-based analysis, and one [is placed] against the other, and there could be a holy war out there. And, really, when you sit down...the goal is the same. The outcome [is] the same. It's gender equality.

From this perspective, at least part of the discomfort with connecting GBA to ideology may stem from a perception of that such a connection is tantamount to linking GBA with feminism. And, as discussed in Chapters II and IV, whatever too closely resembles feminism is met with resistance within government and often gets reformulated. In this view, GBA is more acceptable to the bureaucracy if it is described as a methodology, process, or tool – not as being underpinned by an ideology such as feminism. This point will be revisited later in this chapter.

One reason to ask about the ideology underlying GBA is that there has been a disturbing trend in recent years toward couching gender mainstreaming within an ideology emphasizing neo-liberal objectives of the day such as cost-effectiveness and efficiency. The World Bank's policy document for the Beijing *PFA*, for example, makes the case for gender mainstreaming almost entirely on efficiency grounds, constructing a convergence between the interests of women and the promotion of economic liberalization. The document notes that, "Sound economic policies and well functioning

markets are essential for growth, employment and the creation of an environment in which the returns to investing in women and girls can be fully realized” (World Bank 1995, 5).

The *Gender-based Analysis Backgrounder* articulates its benefits to the Government of Canada (HRDC 1997a, 4):

- “More informed decision-making – Analysts and decision-makers take significant social and economic factors into consideration which may otherwise have been missed”;
- “The Government’s national and international commitments to equality will be met”;
- “Policies, programs, and legislation will be less likely to be subject to challenge on the grounds of sex under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*”;
- “The Government will not be subject to potential embarrassment which occurs when programs, policies and legislation are critici[z]ed as having a disproportionately negative impact on women.”

The GBA *Backgrounder* also states that GBA is used to inform decision-making at the outset in order “to save time and money later,” for example by preventing “costly *Charter* challenges” (HRDC 1997a, iii).

A “Frequently Asked Questions” section in the *Backgrounder* responds to the question, “What does it matter if there’s a wage or income gap between women and men?” as follows:

First and foremost, there is the matter of fairness and the personal costs to over half the population. Secondly, Canada quite simply can’t afford continued gender inequality. The underutili[z]ation of half the population particularly in high-growth areas such as technology can affect Canada’s international competitiveness. As well, the reproduction of conditions which eventually leads to older women having to rely on government for a larger proportion of their retirement income is not sustainable... (HRDC 1997a, 22)

INAC's *Gender Equality Analysis Policy* document adopts a similar tone. A section entitled "Why Do Gender Equality Analysis?" emphasizes that gender equality issues must be analyzed at the outset in order to mitigate the "costly" and "time-consuming" formal processes⁴⁴ that are increasingly being initiated by First Nations and Inuit women (INAC 1999a, 6).

Taken together, while these documents make arguments for GBA on the basis of fairness, and the need to meet international commitments to equality, most of the rationales are stated in economic terms: alleviating labour underutilization; improving competitiveness; saving on retirement benefits that are not linked to employment; and avoiding expensive legal challenges. One might ask how these types of arguments can be seen to be in keeping with the true spirit of enhancing gender equality. What ever happened to promoting gender equality because it is the right thing to do? Baden and Goetz (1997, 43) suggest that, while instrumental arguments may prove successful in raising gender issues, they "are problematic in that attention to women or gender is often simply a means to other ends."

This discussion will be revisited later in this chapter. At issue is whether instrumental arguments that frame GBA squarely within the neo-liberal government agenda represent the co-optation and depoliticization of state feminist initiatives such as GBA. Or, alternatively, are such arguments simply necessary "trade-offs" one makes if one wishes to advance GBA at all within the current political and bureaucratic context?

⁴⁴ i.e., Court challenges, complaints to human rights organizations, and lobbying activities.

From Women to Gender: Depoliticization?

As described in Chapter IV, past federal state feminism initiatives focused on improving the status of women. However, more recently, there has been a shift away from talking about 'women' to talking about 'gender.' Instead of focusing on women as a disadvantaged group, the emphasis is now on the social construction of gender identities and the nature of the relationships between women and men.

This shift is evident in the *Federal Plan*. The *Federal Plan* moves beyond the objective of 'women's equality' to that of 'gender equality,' and emphasizes 'gender,' not 'women,' as the key concept underpinning GBA. Rather than focusing on women in isolation, GBA focuses on the relationships between women *and* men in their access to, and control over, resources, decision-making, and benefits/rewards within a particular system (CIDA 2000). Gender equality is not viewed as a 'women's issue' but as a relational one, and the overarching objective of GBA is to benefit not only women but rather society as a whole. That said, a move toward GBA does not necessarily preclude the need for specific policies, programs, or projects targeted to women. Special measures or women-specific activities may also be necessary to address gender equalities.

Participants were very clear in emphasizing that GBA does not focus on women alone. They frequently commented that the point of GBA is to identify if and how programs and policies affect women and men similarly or differently. For instance, when asked, "In your opinion, does GBA address the realities of all women?," one person replied:

I'm not interested in "all women." I'm interested in all men, all women, all boys, all girls... Gender equality means you look at the women and the men. It's relational.

The only reason offered for the conceptual shift from women to gender underpinning GBA is the vague explanation that in “recent years the concept of gender equality [has] gained prominence” (SWC 1995a, 11). While, on the surface, this shift may seem fairly innocuous, some writers have voiced concern. For instance, Grace (1998, 585) suggests that “transforming women’s equality into gender equality has far-reaching consequences not only for what it conveys but for what it *does not* convey.” This move is seen by Grace (1998, 585) as turning the project of equality into a “vague, all-encompassing concept that does not attend to the distinctiveness of women or to the specifics of women’s oppression.” Grace also argues that liberal conceptualizations of ‘gender’ as individual equality and opportunity issues are at odds with and preclude collective orientations that emphasize women as an oppressed segment of society. Upon this view, an emphasis on gender ignores the specifics of women’s collective social reality *as women* and, as a result, structural forms of oppression. By way of example, Grace argues that HRDC’s gender analysis of reforms to the Employment Insurance arising in the late 1990s failed to address the structural barriers to employment facing women as a social collective, developing instead a discussion of context-less ‘women workers.’

Baden and Goetz (1997) similarly take exception to using the concept of gender as the backbone of mainstreaming initiatives. They critique the way in which the definition of the term gender has become flexible to suit organizational needs. They also object to the way in which the meanings given to the term gender by activists, policy-makers and some researchers often are not informed by feminist theory and methods. Baden and Goetz argue that if the term gender is used in a descriptive way, the question

of power relations can be lost. Like Grace, these authors point out that the category of gender obscures the category 'woman,' which then makes it difficult to make political demands on behalf of women when pursuing activism and in undertaking policy work. They also contend that there is a "disjuncture between the feminist intent behind the term [gender] and the ways in which it is employed such as to minimize the political and contested character of relations between women and men" (Baden & Goetz 1997, 43).

This discussion brings to light themes explored in Chapter II about the state's antipathy to the use of feminist language, and reframing, redefinition, and depoliticization of feminist perspectives. Hence, initiatives such as GBA are acceptable to the extent that they refer to 'gender,' not 'women,' and to 'gender equality,' not 'women's equality' or 'feminism.' This theme was taken up as participants responded to a question⁴⁵ I asked about the relationship between feminism and GBA. One individual stated:

I don't think GBA is about feminism. It's about morality. We can lose sight of objectives if GBA becomes a 'cause.' Probably, feminism does not help GBA. It probably hinders it.

In this instance, the less political term 'morality' was substituted for 'feminism,' in much the same way as some people say that they are 'humanists,' not 'feminists.'

Earlier in this chapter, there was a discussion of participants' discomfort with the term 'ideology' in relation to GBA. Some GBA specialists emphasized that GBA was a tool or process, not an ideology. A similar trend was observed in response to the question about the link between GBA and feminism. Some participants expressed discomfort with the term 'feminism' in connection to GBA, and emphasized that GBA was a tool, a methodology, or an analysis, but not a 'feminist' methodology or analysis:

⁴⁵ The specific question asked was stated as follows: "How would you describe the type of feminism informing GBA?"

I separate out GBA from feminism. I don't see it as a replacement. I don't see it as an equivalent. They're very different things...For me, GBA is a tool. It's a perspective. It's a methodology. It's not necessarily a 'feminist' methodology the way I might have talked about feminist methodology when I was [a student]. But I live in an applied policy world now in the federal government, and...you come to see things somewhat differently. You have to.

We do not talk about feminism or as GBA being a feminist analysis. We know that it is, or had its roots there...But in bureaucratic circles, it is not good to talk about feminism, and you do not talk about equality as a women's thing.

These last two statements resonate with an observation once made by Lynne Dee Sproule (1998) in a paper she wrote during her tenure as a Department of Justice femocrat. Sproule comments:

While most Department of Justice femocrats drew heavily from feminist scholarship and writing to inform their own thinking and analysis, they would not try to sell a policy explicitly requiring 'feminist analysis' in the department, familiar as they are with the pockets of antipathy towards even the less 'radical' term of 'gender equality.'

From this perspective, femocrats may make trade-offs and concessions in terms of language and in terms of how they frame their work as they try to advance state initiatives such as GBA. This point will be revisited later in this chapter.

Diversity

Ensuring that the interests of people who experience multiple layers of discrimination do not fall through the organizational cracks continues to pose a real challenge within government overall, but also in relation to GBA specifically (Teghtsoonian 2000). In addition to gender, barriers to full equality exist in relation to factors such as race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability. As well, many women encounter obstacles related to their family status, particularly as lone parents, and to their socio-economic status, including not only their income but also

factors such as living in rural or isolated areas. Additional barriers also exist for refugee women, as well as for immigrant women and migrant women, including women migrant workers.

These challenges raise important questions about how an initiative such as GBA might attend to diversity in a positive and productive way. As noted in Chapter II, women are not a single constituency with the same social and cultural backgrounds, the same relationship with the state, or the same needs, and to approach the issue of GBA on this basis would simply be to repeat past mistakes.

A question-and-answer sheet written by HRDC responds to the question, “Does gender-based analysis focus on gender at the expense of race and other diversity factors?” as follows:

No. Gender-based analysis means looking at potential impacts on men and women, *in addition to*, not instead of, other factors. It *broadens and deepens* the analysis, rather than limits it. It recognizes that gender, as well as race, socio-economic status, ability, geographic location and so on are important factors that influence people’s life experience... (HRDC 2001b, 2)

Yet, Burt and Hardman (2001, 210) argue that GBA “does not take into account differences *among* as well as between women.” One participant stated that GBA, as it was developed in the *Federal Plan*, is a “*mainstream concept*” and does not adequately address itself to diversity considerations. Another individual explained that part of the problem relates to the conceptual cloudiness of GBA:

...There’s still a lot of different interpretations about GBA in and of itself as a concept, never mind the tool or the application of it, and, so, people get very, very confused about...where...diversity fit[s] into this...

To clarify this matter, one of the questions I asked in the interviews was: “Do you see GBA as being able to address the realities of all women?” Three participants

replied that they felt that GBA adequately addressed diversity considerations. All three worked in a department/agency that had a mandate for addressing diversity on some level.

The much more common message was that GBA addresses diversity in theory, but not in practice:

Ideally, it would. But practically, I don't think it does. I don't think it addresses race, and disability, and these other considerations particularly well...

We always say that if you apply GBA properly, you will get the intersectionality, because you won't be able to just look at middle-class, white, privileged women. You will look at the whole spectrum of your demographics. The problem is, we're not there yet.

All participants identified a need for GBA to become more inclusive. As stated by one individual:

I think it's crucial to understand that a diversity analysis is...part of a GBA analysis...You really do need to understand that not all women are the same, that they [are] different ages, [have] different ethnic origins, different races...

I think one of the challenges that we really need to get our heads around is what are we going to do about diversity issues, and where does gender fit within the context of diversity.

While it seems clear that issues of diversity must be better incorporated into GBA, the means by which to do so are much fuzzier. As one person explained, “*We really need to get our heads around is what are we going to do about diversity issues, and where...gender fit[s] within the context of diversity.*”

One individual suggested that a good starting point would be to open up dialogue on the issue of diversity:

I think there's an opportunity for those who have been working in the area, both in academia and in social society, and in government, to start to think about... how...we [can] expand [GBA]...What have we learned that we can apply?...What

[can] others who are working on diversity...tell us that can help us to do what we're doing better?

Teghtsoonian (2000) explains that the existing fragmentation of attention to various dimensions of identity within different government agencies and initiatives has led some to wonder whether a more integrated approach might be preferable. It has been argued, for instance, that it may be more appropriate to mainstream equality as opposed to gender. There are a variety of views on this issue. Some contend that mainstreaming equality would be more effective and more socially inclusive than mainstreaming gender (Verloo 2000). Others argue that the factors underlying gender inequality are very distinct from those involved in, for example, racial inequality, and it would be impossible to devise a single lens, mechanism, or set of tools to mainstreaming equality per se (Verloo 2000).

A number of participants discussed the pros and cons of working towards a different, more integrated kind of lens. One concern was that collapsing all of the different types of lenses into one all-encompassing lens might *"just dilute all of them."* Another concern was that an integrated lens could *"downplay some of the gender issues"* or lead to gender issues *"taking a back seat."*

On the other hand, separately applying numerous lenses was viewed as being potentially *"cumbersome"* and as *"mak[ing] it difficult to deal with [issues] in a real way."* One individual commented upon the inefficiency of such an approach:

If we were to introduce a lens for everything – a separate lens – there's no way [that] we could get everything done....and make timely policy.

Another individual concluded that separate lenses could prove onerous, but that this should not necessarily be a deterrent:

I think people suffer a lens fatigue, you know? The rural lens, the age lens, the gender lens, the disability lens...It's hard for policy analysts to think about all those things, I suppose. On the other hand, it's a complicated world we live in. And if you want to be a good...public servant, you have to think about the world as being a complicated place.

Thus, while it is clear that more work is needed to find ways to ensure that GBA can attend to the diversity and complexity of people's needs and interests, it is less clear at present how to proceed. As one participant seemed to sum up for the group, "*I'm not sure what the alternative is.*" Further work is required to overcome this challenge.

Political Challenges

A final set of challenges are political. GBA is an activity that is embedded in political and bureaucratic contexts. Feminist political economy, as discussed in Chapter II, instructs us that contexts figure prominently in any new initiative. This section will discuss the challenges associated with GBA related to aspects of the political and bureaucratic contexts in which it is being implemented. It will indicate how the ongoing tensions and struggles faced by femocrats and associated with state feminism more broadly, as first discussed in Chapter II and elaborated upon in Chapter IV, are being enacted in relation to GBA today.

Political Commitment

Securing 'Buy-In'

Those interviewed for this study frequently mentioned that securing high-level bureaucratic commitment to GBA is a pivotal enabling factor, yet by no means an easy task. It therefore represents a major challenge for GBA specialists.

Management support was identified as critical in ensuring that gender-related issues are raised in the first place and then actively pursued as discussions and decision-making develop. Management support was also seen as helping to set the tone for the rest of the department/agency, and as facilitating broad support for GBA within the policy ranks:

It's challenging in that – especially, it depends on the department you work in obviously – it depends on the culture of the department, it depends on the culture of senior management...[what] their level of commitment [is]. I think that's crucial, to have high-level commitment to the issue.

Karen Grant (2002, 7) argues that “because GBA is not applied systematically...it depends too much on the willingness and ability of individuals (usually women) at senior levels to take such work on.” A number of participants noted that political commitment at the senior level is often contingent on the particular orientations, level of enthusiasm, or interest shown by senior officials, right up the line from Director Generals, to Assistant Deputy Ministers, to Deputy Ministers, and, finally, to Ministers. One woman remarked:

...What it comes down to [is that] it has everything to do with the individual...what their perception of [GBA] is and how important they think it is...

Participants noted that commitment to GBA, once established, cannot be taken for granted. As one individual explained:

...You have experiences where you'll finally have your Director General and your [Assistant Deputy Minister] on board, and then they'll both leave or get transferred to [another] department, and then you're back to square one. So, sometimes you are constantly reinventing the wheel, and re-rationalizing, and re-educating...

The women I interviewed were divided in their perceptions of the degree of commitment that exists within their department/agency. Comments ran the full spectrum, with some reporting a healthy level of commitment (e.g., “I’d say we get relatively good

support across the department”), others reporting a more intermediate level of support (e.g., “It has not achieved buy-in overall, but there is some buy-in”/“Could be worse. Could be better”), and, finally, still others reporting a complete lack of commitment (“There’s no commitment. Nothing at all”). One individual explained that the political commitment can vary from rung to rung of the organizational hierarchy:

I think at the working level, we are moving along fairly steadily. I think at sort of lower level management, we have good acknowledgment. I would say as you go further up the management team, as with any department, they’re juggling so many issues that it isn’t always front and centre for them.

The general message was that political commitment is highly variable, and needs to be improved overall. Various factors mediating political commitment will be discussed below.

Resistance

Participants commented that there are pockets of resistance, not only within individual departments/agencies, but also within the realm of the “big P” political climate to providing political commitment to GBA. In a recent presentation on GBA, Grant (2002, 2-3) stated:

Although some in government have been focused on applying the tools and techniques of GBA for a long time – even before the formal policy was launched by the federal government – it is not surprising that this has been met with resistance in some quarters, and outright hostility in others.

The reason that it is not altogether surprising that GBA might be met with resistance is that, like many state feminist initiatives of the past, GBA requires not only a reform of policy-making procedures, but also a reconfiguration of power relationships. As noted in one GBA resource document, GBA “involves challenging the status quo” and “is a transformative process that involves rethinking social values...” (CIDA 2000, 6).

GBA represents a challenge to business-as-usual politics and policymaking. If fully implemented, GBA could lead to a restructuring of the lives of both men and women. This, in itself, may be cause for resistance to political commitment by some:

...In some cases, there's a fear of upsetting the balance of power. It's that simple...If you're holding the power and you're quite content with the status quo, and you look at...GBA, and you can see the potential for rocking the boat and shifting the power dynamics, you're not going to want to play.

I think perhaps some of the resistance at political levels may be because some people realize better than we do how powerful a tool it can be...The more there's a backlash to something, the more it's an indication of the power inherent in that thing...in this case, in GBA...Because when you're not a threat to the power structure, there is no fear, there is no backlash. You're dismissed as unimportant. And, while there is a certain amount of dismissal of GBA as being unimportant – [the] “Oh, let the women in the department work on that. It will keep them busy while we work on serious things” kind of attitude – the really smart people see the potential for GBA, how it could shift things...at a societal level, [not just at] a government level.

One individual emphasized that the challenge GBA represents to the status quo is not overtly discussed within government. Yet, the challenge is nonetheless present:

If we're sitting in an [interdepartmental meeting] with... the Finance department, Treasury Board...[the Privy Council Office], we are not going to sit there at the table and say, “We're talking about the change of power dynamics.” ...You won't really hear people in the government articulate it as such, but that's what it is. It's...re-establishing the power dynamics and the power balance...

A major component of the work to entrench GBA involves changing the attitudes of individuals, organizations, and systems (CIDA 2000). This work is particularly challenging, and opens up another reason why GBA is resisted. As stated by one individual:

...Gender equality is a difficult area to work at in terms of attitudes and beliefs, because it touches everybody. “My mother didn't work outside the home,” “I'm having divorce difficulties with my wife, and we can't reach agreement” ...You run into these rock hard places because of people's personal experiences and attitudes.

While a stereotype sometimes exists that it is women who are more likely to support initiatives that challenge the status quo – and hence the preponderance of women working on such issues both inside and outside of government – some participants suggested that this is a fallacy. Resistance to political commitment comes not only from male colleagues and politicians, but also female:

...Sometimes the worse challenges to GBA are other women – other bureaucratic women – because they have tried so hard to fit into the mainstream bureaucratic mold that anything that smacks of upsetting the mainstream culture, they're going to shy away from.

Requirements for and Limitations to Political Commitment

GBA specialists were clear that a major part of their work is to counter resistance and to drum up political commitment. They underscored that, in order to prosper, GBA requires a supportive political and organizational context. It also requires political commitment that represents more than mere political rhetoric or “lip service.” There needs to be understanding and commitment from authorities, including officials at the highest levels. As noted earlier in this chapter, there must also be the determination to put in place the resources and the processes to ensure that GBA will succeed. At the same time, there must be the political will to involve non-traditional actors, such as non-governmental organizations, within the decision-making process. Without political commitment on this scale, GBA will be little more than a declaration of intent or a paper exercise rather than an engine for substantive change.

One limitation of GBA is that it is a reactive process. It can be used to appraise only those policies which the government decides to implement. It cannot force a government which is hostile or indifferent to gender equality to put forward new, helpful

policy initiatives. The best it can do is to draw attention to the adverse effects of those policies a government chooses to promote. The targets of GBA are policies, programs, and legislation, rather than the state and the political climate which produce them, per se. If feminist theory is correct in drawing attention to the 'maleness' of the state, then GBA specialists may find this limitation difficult to counteract, particularly given that the *Canadian Experience in Gender Mainstreaming* report notes that, "The successful implementation of [GBA] to further the progress in gender equality requires and depends on the political commitment of the party in power" (SWC 2000, 20). Yet, as concluded by one individual, "*In Canada, the political will is fuzzy.*" As will be discussed in the next section, political will waxes and wanes with changes in political climate. What this means is that GBA specialists must be prepared to react and strategize in response to change, and seize upon windows of opportunity as these arise.

Political Climate

The political climate in which a policy or initiative is generated figures largely in its development. As noted in SWC's *Guide to GBA*, "Bureaucratic and political processes are steeped in values that influence policy-making" (SWC 1996a, 9). Gender equality initiatives such as GBA may conflict, at times, with the dominant values around which society is organized. GBA specialists must contend with these conflicting and competing values. They must also contend with a political climate wherein there is a backlash to advancement of gender equality.

GBA within a 'Pecking Order' of Interests and Priorities

GBA was described by participants as not being on the “radar screen” of politicians as a real priority. One woman remarked:

You never hear anything about [GBA] ...Like, they're not debating about it in Cabinet right now, or anything. It's just not on people's minds...

Another woman suggested that the task of advancing GBA would be far easier if it were on the radar screen:

If the Speech from the Throne had an entire paragraph on how important it was to do [GBA], that would be fantastic. If the Budget said, “And now, we're going to do gender analysis on every program in the federal government, and we might...think about...[making] gender budgeting the next step”...that would be lovely. Any time that your program shows up in bold text, life is easier...

Allan Howatson (1994, 5) argues that “all [public policy] decisions involve priority setting” and “where priorities are not explicit, they may be inferred by examining the expenditure of key resources such as time and money.” One participant took up a similar perspective by noting:

...A lot of gender groups are in trouble, either staffing-wise – they've been reduced in size – or there [are] some organizational problems...I think one might look at that and...say that, “You know, that's indication that...[GBA is] not considered to be really important if groups are being reduced in size...

A key message heard during interviews for this study was that GBA is being spearheaded within a political climate in which there is a “pecking order,” or hierarchy, of interests. GBA competes and conflicts with “vested, higher-level interests, whatever these interests may be.” Participants suggested that the major priorities of the day include: “fiscal restraints [and] Banks,” “money and economic development,” “big enterprise...big business,” and “[making] good deals with the private sector.”

Those interviewed clarified that GBA may well have a place on the list of state priorities, but not a very high-ranking one. GBA tends to get swept under the carpet as other priorities prevail:

...You have...the policy...climate of, "Well, [gender] is not a priority right now, but we'll get to it"...that's often expressed as "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we know there's got to be gender stuff in there. We'll do it after. But right now, we have to do this first."

There is a commitment to [GBA] until there is something else that comes along... and then [GBA]...falls to the wayside. GBA is done if it is convenient.

Some participants articulated that one problem is that, while gender should be thought of as a component of all issues, and therefore figure within a range of priorities, it tends to get excluded. As stated by one individual:

*I don't see gender as **an** issue. I see it as part of every issue...Unfortunately, I don't think everyone sees it that way...*

Another participant suggested that part of the problem is that "*people tend to compartmentalize and think in boxes*" and space is not made within these conceptual boxes for GBA. An example was offered in relation to the political priorities which have arisen in Canada since the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11th, 2001:

Since September 11th, security's been the big thing...A lot of other issues on the government agenda got dropped off because the focus, the money, the resources, the thinking, the restructuring, was focused on that...When you have that sort of obsessive drive to deal with something, very issue-driven or thematically imposed, you get into this box – this compartment – and all of a sudden, anything outside the compartment is seen as distinct and separate and apart from. And so, [going] back to the security issue, they will look at security as...tightening up the borders...But they won't necessarily consider that there are gender and equality components to that...From our perspective...of course we can see gender implications. But, for a large portion of policy people or politicians, they don't see that...The totality of the policy decision-making will be geared around the theme of security without necessarily seeing that there is...a myriad of

components to security, and that gender is one of them, and diversity is one of them.

Some of the women interviewed concluded that the challenge becomes to “*find yourself in the priorities*” of the day, and to convince others that GBA needs to be included in a range of priorities:

...There is a gender aspect [to every] issue and the challenge is: Let's make sure that [gender is] included...Let's ask the question or frame things in a way that facilitates including these issues...There are, of course, big themes – globalization, [the] security issues we saw a year ago, the big challenge of...skills and the large-scale political issues that the nation is facing – all of those things. But if you step back a minute and say, “Ok, that's a framework. Now what do we do?,” then you try to make sure that your issues are included.

Part of the work to ensure that GBA is included within the priorities of the day entails “*carving out a role for oneself*” within one's department/agency. This means demonstrating to colleagues the importance of GBA to their files:

...If you're trying to engage in a certain set of policy issues that are housed and led by another group...[you end up] saying, “We need to be at the table. Here's our value added. Here's why we need to be engaged.” Because some groups may see a role for a gender group, and other groups may not...Some are opposed, I suspect, but some others may not have considered it. So, you're sort of having to insert yourself into things...

Working within a Chilly Political Climate

“Inserting oneself into things” is by no means an easy task in the current political climate. Grant (2002, 3) argues that GBA is being carried out “amidst a growing backlash against feminism.” As one woman remarked, “*We are in a very conservative world right now.*”

Participants expressed that today's political climate presents challenges to the advancement of gender equality issues:

I think we've seen now in this context...gender issues taking a back seat. We don't have the numbers...of women in the House and the Senate where some of these decisions are made, so we lack that kind of critical mass. Some of the institutional structures that supported a move towards greater gender equality are weakening and I think that has an impact. I think...that right now we've got...a Prime Minister who's not...as vocal on some of these issues.

Many GBA units and their staff are facing restructuring consistent with the broader trend of massive government restructuring initiatives occurring today. In this regard, Saulnier (1999) identifies a central contradiction of GBA. It is designed to help bureaucrats understand the impacts of policies and programs on gender, avoid inadequate planning and design, and thus improve policy outcomes. However, this approach would seem to suggest that state bureaucrats can 'neutralize' the unequal gender impacts of restructuring and, moreover, that they have not been implicated in producing these differential impacts in the first place. In other words, Saulnier (1999, 8) concludes, "these types of strategies assume that differential gender impacts were accidental when they were more likely integral to the neo-liberal agenda."

While this point of view may seem rather cynical, it does raise some interesting questions when one considers, as discussed in Chapters II and IV, that GBA was introduced in 1995 at a time when contradictory actions – actions which seemed quite antithetical to the advancement of equality – were also undertaken by the Liberal party. These included, for example, the dismantling of various women's policy structures and cutbacks in funding. Rankin and Wilcox (2001, 2) comment:

The irony of the simultaneous introduction of the [*Federal*] *Plan* in the midst of dramatic state reorganization was unmistakable. Within the *Plan*, the government pledged to apply a gender lens to all federal government policy and program development and evaluation processes, while at the same time, ushering in restructuring initiatives, the gender implications of which were virtually ignored.

The full implications of attempting to implement GBA within the context of an era marked by globalization, tax cuts, balanced budgets, decentralization, and restructuring are as yet unclear. However, the *Canadian Experience in Gender Mainstreaming* report identifies “adapting to a changing government and economic environment” as a major challenge with respect to GBA (SWC 2000, 19). In their analysis of GBA, Burt and Hardman (2001, 210) express concern that, if approaches taken in the current government and political climate generally disadvantage women, “the application of GBA to specific policy initiatives will have only a very limited impact.” “Indeed,” they comment, “GBA may [simply] add the veneer of legitimacy to measures that clearly do not contribute to women’s well-being” (Burt & Hardman 2001, 210).

There is reason to question why the government would be undertaking GBA at all within the current climate given that initiatives such as GBA are fundamentally at odds with various aspects of neo-liberalism’s emphasis on individuals and suspicion of identity-based politics (Teghtsoonian 2000). As one individual observed:

There is an assumption of...gender neutrality within the context of privilege that we share in Canada...western industrialized capitalist society... We’ve internalized these values very, very well. And we are hard-pressed to see systemic injustice, wherever it occurs...There’s shock at injustice, when it’s individually focused, but not an understanding of injustice when it is systemic. And there’s a hesitancy to address systemic injustice, but there is a great willingness, in a positive way, to address individual injustice or unfairness, as it’s seen in terms of giving to the United Way, as an example. So, there is a tension there. GBA is an analysis of systemic things.

Many participants highlighted that that there is a misperception that women’s rights have already been secured, and that GBA is therefore unnecessary:

...In some instances, some political people actually do believe we’ve achieved equality...And, so, to try and tell them, “Well, no, we haven’t” is nonsensical to them...They believe, “Oh, the problem’s been resolved. What are you women still

complaining about?" And they won't even go beyond their own assumption that equality's been addressed.

...Gender equity...[is] seen to have had its day...It's true [that things are getting better. But, that doesn't mean that they're sufficient...

People question, "What's wrong with women? They're equal. My wife works. She's got a job." ...Do they question what kind of a job, and how much money she's making? ...People are saying, "You know, you're talking to me about violence against women again. What else do you want? Isn't it resolved?" And...it has a tendency...to go back to a personal attack kind of thing: "Well, we haven't resolved it because they're attracting it, or they put themselves in the situation that created that violence." And that drives me crazy.

One individual explained that colleagues mistakenly equate GBA with other existing measures, and therefore regard GBA as redundant:

There's the tendency for people to assume, well, we have Employment Equity, therefore we don't need GBA.

Another individual spoke to the difficulty of advancing GBA within the context of a backlash against promotion of the rights of so-called 'special interest groups' (e.g., women, Aboriginal peoples, people of colour):

Some people respond very negatively... "This is about special interests." "This is...not really relevant in 2000+." You know, there's been a backlash...

Clearly, the current political climate poses particular challenges for GBA.

However, my analysis of the interviews did not reveal that the political climate precludes space for GBA entirely, or that GBA is being altogether opposed or dismissed. Despite the challenges associated with the political climate, participants conveyed that positive change is occurring. In the words of one individual:

There are issues that are being discussed from a GBA perspective now that would never, never have made it on the agenda years ago.

A State of Contradiction

It is important to bear in mind, as emphasized in Chapter II, that the state is contradictory. While the state is currently engaged in priorities that are antithetical to advancement of equality, the state also has a liberal-democratic character, with a tradition of democracy. There are significant legal commitments, most notably through the *Charter*, guaranteeing freedom from discrimination. The latter factors create space for initiatives such as GBA.

As noted in Chapter II, the state's relationship with civil society is complex and contradictory. It is too simplistic to view the state as operating in the interests of the dominant group in society. This point of view was expressed by participants, one of whom commented that the state is involved in "*the interplay of a really complicated set of factors that influence policy decisions.*"

Chapter II also emphasized that neither the state nor the political climate in which it is embedded is static. Governments will change and priorities will shift. The state is not a monolith, but rather a complex arena, changing over time. As one participant stated quite matter-of-factly, "...*The ground is constantly shifting under your feet, you know?*"

A major challenge for femocrats is thus to be prepared to respond to changing circumstances, and to seize upon opportunities when they arise. As expressed by one participant, one must always realize that "*big changes, systematic changes are going to come from the political side.*" Seeing things from this perspective allows for the possibility that different opportunities for GBA will exist at different times. It also creates room for optimism, expressed by participants as follows:

I think obviously the political events that we're all living through now, [September 11th], all of that stuff, has made the...complexity of the world much

more salient for people. And I think we are moving on a path that is not linear. Obviously, there are a lot of cricks in the road, but I don't think it will be as much of a problem in ten years as it is now.

...You know, with cycles, you live to fight another day.

Bureaucratic Context

In addition to challenges arising from the current political climate, GBA specialists also face challenges related to the state bureaucracy in which GBA is embedded. But it is important to note that GBA specialists face bureaucratic challenges that affect many public servants, irrespective of the files they are working on, GBA or other. For instance, like many other public servants, GBA specialists face pressures within the bureaucracy associated with a new philosophy of governance emphasizing efficiency. As noted by one woman:

Time often is a challenge...It's similar in many places, but we're being asked to do a lot with fewer resources, trying to be as efficient as possible. And the process for Cabinet, the process for decision-making sometimes happens...really rapidly and there just isn't enough time...And that's just a reality of policy and program design.

However, a number of pressures and challenges associated with working in the state bureaucracy are specific to GBA specialists. These will be described in turn.

'Learning to Fox Trot and Waltz at the Same Time': Fitting GBA into the Mainstream

A first challenge is working to fit GBA into the existing national policy-making culture, described by one participant as follows:

...You're constantly juggling...what the language and the culture and the understanding already [are] ...and trying to create sort of ...the space, if you will, for the new concepts and the new language of GBA, but in a way that will make sense to...people. So, it's a really...it's almost like...you're dancing the fox trot and they're waltzing and you want to create a hybrid so that you could, you know, fox trot and waltz at the same time without stepping on each other's toes.

The issue of resistance, first raised in relation to the issue of political commitment, was raised by staff members in relation to their attempts to introduce GBA within the existing bureaucratic culture:

...If there hasn't been a tradition or a corporate history for gender equality, it's difficult for GBA to be introduced...A lot of organizations remain male-dominated...so you're going to always...encounter...resistance.

In a presentation to the GBA Resource Fair in November 2000, Diana Rivington (2000) commented, "We bureaucrats who work to make gender equality a horizontal factor in all economic, social and political decisions, we femocrats...will always be challenged because we are trying to promote transformatory evolution."

A document prepared by HRDC (2002), entitled "Recognizing and Countering Resistance," lists many forms of resistance that one may encounter from others in relation to one's work to apply GBA. Examples include:

- **Claiming ignorance:** "A person claims to not understand what GBA means nor know how to do it; or s/he may claim to have been misunderstood;"
- **Closed-mindedness:** "A person simply continues to repeat that the status quo is unchangeable and sees no need to apply GBA in their work file;"
- **Deflection:** "When issues regarding GBA are raised, the person changes the subject or deflects the responsibility to others;"
- **Denial:** "A person may argue that GBA is not relevant to their work area, or that a particular policy, program, legislation, or service delivery process does not impact on women;"
- **Selection of a token action:** "A person acknowledges that something should be done about equality issues, but they are unwilling to think about significant change. They select a specific project or component within a project. Thus when asked about what they are doing on gender equality issues, the person points to this specific project to demonstrate that they are doing "something." In reality, however, equality has not been taken up in a serious fashion;"

- **Lip service:** “A person acknowledges gender issues at the level of rhetoric, but fails to take meaningful action;”
- **Shelving:** “A person/organization postpones or delays action on equality issues because there are other priorities;”
- **Compartmentalization:** “A person does not recognize equality issues as cross-cutting and delegates all actions to the person officially responsible for ‘women’s issues’;”
- **Stonewalling:** “A person refuses to address gender equality issues. This is demonstrated by not responding to questions, telephone calls or letters on the subject.”

Participants reported experiencing a number of these forms of resistance. One individual summed up the most prevalent forms as follows: *“It takes too much time. [It] costs too much money. I don’t know how to do it. Will you do it for me?”*

Working to Satisfy Two Different Masters

A second challenge faced by GBA specialists is that they face contradictory expectations from two separate communities – the surrounding bureaucracy, and the external social movement itself. As noted in Chapter II, Summers (1986) theorizes that femocrats are suspected as ‘missionaries’ by their bureaucratic peers, and are perceived by grassroots feminists to have sold out to become ‘mandarins.’

Findlay (1988a, 8) similarly notes that femocrats “inevitably must account to two ‘masters,’ the government and the women’s movement,” with all of the tensions inherent in that situation. This theme was heard a number of times from participants in this study, as illustrated by comments such as the following:

You’ll have situations in consultations where there’s government reps. and NGOs and at some point, every time, there will be a point where a woman from an NGO will go to the [microphone] and say, “We need a feminist caucus now. Will all the government people leave the room...and then you sort of watch the faces of some of the women from the government departments...and some of them will just

go red because they are so pissed off at being excluded because...working in the government and being feminist are not mutually exclusive, but there's this perception. And, then, other government people's reactions are kind of like, "Oh God, there they go again," and they're quite happy to leave...

Sometimes you're getting slapped up the head by the bureaucrats one day and the next day slapped up the other side of the head by the feminists and the next day slapped up the head by the academics, and the next day slapped up the head by the NGOs. And then the next day slapped up the head by your bureaucratic colleagues again.

Comments such as these point to the continuing existence of old struggles and impasses between grassroots feminists and femocrats, and between femocrats and their colleagues in the bureaucracy, as described in Chapter II.

In her paper, "Between a Rock...Finding a New Place," public servant Lynne Dee Sproule (1998, 1) characterizes Government of Canada femocrats as being caught "between a rock and a hard place" because of their marginalization within the state bureaucracy on the one hand, and lack of credibility with grassroots feminist organizations on the other. As noted by Sproule (1998, 5),

Feminist officials within an institution like the Canadian federal [government] are considered by many colleagues and managers as unreliable, "too radical," incapable of advancing balanced advice, too captured by a single (feminist) interest group and therefore inclined to behave too much like an advocate. Their views and advice are often greeted with anything from quiet scepticism to open contempt.

Many women in grassroots, feminist organizations, on the other hand, observe that these same officials are comfortable, middle class, (for the most part) white, well-paid women whose class privilege obscures their perspective, no matter how good their intentions.

Advocate vs. Analyst

The perception of femocrats as advocates within the bureaucracy described in the above statement by Sproule was a major theme heard in the interviews for this study.

Several participants expressed the challenges and frustrations associated with being perceived as an advocate by their colleagues:

...You'll have colleagues who will immediately dismiss any analysis you do as being advocacy based.

I [have found] it very frustrating to try...to work from an issue base and [be] perceived as an advocate.

It's like, excuse me, when you develop policy that impacts favourably on men, or 49% of the Canadian population, don't you dare come and say that something that implicates the rest of the 51% of the population is 'special interest' or 'advocacy.' Or when your economic policy is basically geared towards the Toronto Wall Street brokers, don't you dare say that Aboriginal women are a special interest group...It is not advocacy, and... people need to understand that.

The nature of the work [leads you to be] seen as an advocate for NGOs when really one is a GBA advocate. People think you're biased, whereas, in actual fact, everyone has a bias, even people in other groups outside GBA – the biases we grow up with our entire lives.

I think maintaining that distinction between advocacy and analysis is a really crucial and fundamental challenge that we all face.

Some GBA specialists described the tactics they use to distance themselves from the advocacy role, most notably by playing up their analysis function:

I like to focus on the persuasion and on the analysis, rather than on the advocacy in the bureaucratic context.

I think when you're working inside a federal government department, you need to make a very careful distinction between analysis and advocacy, and that's what I do consistently...is say [that] our job is analysis...I don't want to be known as an advocate. I want to be known as an analyst who brings a certain expertise, a certain analytical perspective to a problem.

Whereas the majority of participants were clear that they did not want to be perceived as advocates, some had no objection to that characterization:

I feel like I'm a lobbyist in...the department. I feel like we are like a women's group in here trying to advocate all the time...That is what we do...We are activists, definitely. Definitely.

...You need to be a women's advocate...you need to be able to go to meetings and say, "This...makes no sense. Are you nuts?"...You need people who...have that capacity to constantly challenge people. It doesn't matter if they hate us...Sometimes I say, "Look, we can take another couple of enemies in the department"...

Those who were comfortable with the role of advocate were more frustrated with the challenges that inhered from "going against the grain" rather than with the label of advocate per se:

...It's frustrating, because very often you're swimming counter current. Sort of like salmon swimming upstream, right?

It is interesting to note that a number of the available GBA publications and guides explicitly state that GBA is not advocacy. For instance, a fact sheet addressing frequently asked questions about GBA prepared by HRDC (2001b, 1), provides the following response to the question, "Is gender-based analysis advocacy?":

No. Gender-based analysis describes a socio-economic context using a variety of quantitative and qualitative research and data.

Gender-based analysis does not advocate a response. What it does is enable decision makers to take potential differential impacts on women and men into account when choosing among policy and program options.

Likewise, both the *Gender-based Analysis Backgrounder* and INAC's *Gender Equality Policy* note that GBA "[does not promote any particular] view, such as a lobby group's view" (HRDC 1997a, 20; INAC 1999a, 10). Susannah Bush (2001, 78) interprets this as a deliberate effort "to elevate [GBA] from the *implied* subjective work initiated by national advocacy organizations."

Attempts to differentiate the work of femocrats from the work of advocates are not new, as we saw in Chapter IV. Advocacy has long been viewed by the bureaucracy with suspicion. As one woman concluded, "*Advocacy in government is a strange*

comundrum, a strange bird." Where state feminist initiatives have been perceived as advocacy, they have been blocked or altogether struck down.

Identification with Feminism

In addition to being perceived as advocates, the GBA specialists interviewed for this study also spoke about being perceived as feminists. One individual expressed:

[GBA] is often seen as...a women's issue...When [colleagues] see us going to...meetings, they say, "Oh my God. Not these women again." That...these are the feminists of the department...

The historical overview of state feminism presented in Chapter IV of this paper indicated that there was a time when those working in gender focal units shared very strong ties to the grassroots feminist community; often came to their positions in government after working in the grassroots community; and were all or nearly all self-identified feminists. This was particularly the case with the staff of the Women's Program. However, some participants for this study shared their perception of a shift having occurred, with more of a mixed picture occurring today:

I'd say some [people in my group at work identify as feminists], and some don't. And my impression would be that, a few years ago... most would have. And that's why they'd be working here.

I think you occasionally will have people working on, working in a gender shop ...who may or may not have any prior knowledge or interest in gender issues, and they find it interesting...So, people who aren't necessarily coming to it with a strong kind of gender background, or a feminist background...I think maybe ten years ago...women's bureaus had a certain ideology and the people who worked there shared that. Whereas I think, now, that's perhaps shifted a little bit...

Of the ten women interviewed for this study, six were self-identified feminists, three self-identified as non-feminists, and the remaining person did not wish to comment. Among those who identified as feminists, comments such as the following were heard:

I don't know how you can work on women's equality with men...and not recognize your feminist roots.

One thing I will say is that if somebody comes in and says, "I'd like to work with you but I'm not a feminist," I'm thinking why are you coming to see me? ...Because I do get people who say that, "I want to work with women, but I'm not a feminist." I'm thinking: You're missing the point...In order to make change...you need to start from a very clear analysis.

I'm not afraid of the word, that's for sure. I'm a feminist.

...I would say that...yes, my feminism is there...I think feminism is a position of strength.

Some of these women described in rich detail what 'feminism' means to them.

One individual discussed the concept of power as being central to her conceptualization of feminism:

...I guess, ultimately, feminism for me is just about...acknowledging, recognizing, internalizing, acting out on the inherent natural power that women have. Because we do. And we spend so much time internalizing everybody else's judgments about us as women that we lose sight of that...And I don't believe that women can keep standing outside sort of the infrastructure of society saying, "Give me power." You have to step into it and take it, because nobody's going to give it to you. And the mainstream is going to do its best to make sure you don't get it. So, it's about power...it's about power dynamics in between women, it's about power dynamics between women and men, it's about power dynamics between nature and artificial reproduction of...goods in consumer-based society...To me, all of that comprises feminism.

An interesting component of the above conceptualization is its reference to women engaging with "the infrastructure of society." From this perspective, women must engage with state structures in order to shift the balance of power.

Another person stated her conceptualization of feminism as recognition of differences, not only between men and women, but also based on facets of identity besides gender:

I would say that, for me, [feminism] is an acknowledgment fundamental that there are power differences between men and women, period. Those power differences

are manifested economically, psychologically, socially, culturally, politically, ideologically. That's my bottom line for starting off thinking about feminism and what it means...I also recognize that that's mediated by class relations, by race, by ability level, by sexual orientation, so I really do think about those as interlocking analytical perspectives or analytical foci.

Finally, a third individual described her own feminism as a journey:

I think feminism to me is very much – well, it has been an evolution, I think, for me. It certainly meant, many years ago, looking at the whole issue of women's rights and looking at, you know, how do women fare, you know, next to men in certain situations and in certain areas, and that there were also very specific areas that needed to be paid attention to...And I think that feminism has evolved [for me] ...to see it from different perspectives...Not necessarily always looking at it from a woman-specific perspective but moving into that gender dynamic perspective.

The passion with which some individuals described feminism suggested to me that one's feminism is not automatically stripped away or lost when one becomes a femocrat, as suggested by some feminists. Indeed, many of the above thoughts on feminism are quite similar to statements I have heard from women's movement activists themselves. Sawyer (1990, 252) once suggested that, ultimately, whether feminists are able to preserve their values within the bureaucracy "depends to a considerable degree on the presence of supportive networks inside and outside government."

Among those who did not identify as feminists, the overarching message was not that feminism is a worthless enterprise, but rather that feminism was seen as failing to address the realities of all women. For that reason, it was difficult for some women to engage with feminism:

I don't want to be a part of [feminism] ...Feminism is an exclusive club of mainstream women and does not include the perspectives of various groups of women.

In a few instances, those who did not identify as feminists still offered a description of what the term 'feminism' means to them:

Feminism for me is to...ensure that...it means for me that women can speak, and women can do whatever they want if they want, but they're not forced.

Feminism... for me... just [means] that I'm pro... having women on an equal footing, in an equal place. It doesn't mean, like, I'm a radical feminist, either. I don't identify myself as being a feminist. However, I guess if I look at the definition of feminism, I am.

One person concluded that while not all women working in gender focal units in government would necessarily identify as feminist, most all gender specialists have a strong commitment to equality:

...One of the overwhelming similarities among people that I know who've worked in gender issues in departments is that they seem to feel very strongly about equality issues. And... people describe them in different ways. Some talk about fairness, some talk about...women and influence, some talk about ...more traditional feminist lingo, but, overwhelmingly, a lot of women are very aware of the situation of men and women in Canadian society and feel really strongly about increasing opportunities for people...Whether they call themselves feminists...Some do, some don't.

Hester Eisenstein (1990, 90), reflecting on the Australian context, once wrote that the most striking thing about femocrats is their “undisguised commitment to feminism.” Although a number of women interviewed for this study – the majority – did identify as feminists, an ‘undisguised commitment to feminism’ was not necessarily evident within the bureaucracy. Some of the women interviewed explained that they often have to reconcile their personal commitment to gender equality or feminism, on the one hand, with their commitment to the mandate of their department/agency, on the other:

*The way that I think about gender equality is really...It's part of my personal life, it's part of my community activities, it's part of my work, yes...It's part of all kinds of things. But inside the department, our expertise is **analytical** expertise.*

In my view, it's always a balancing act and, while I may have a philosophical commitment to gender equality, I know that as a decision-maker in a department that has a certain mandate, I'm balancing all of the time competing philosophical commitments.

This sense of mediating between the personal and the professional also emerged when one woman, in talking about her department's priorities, suddenly shook her head and noted, *"I'm sounding so much like a bureaucrat right now..."* Another woman prefaced her response to a question on GBA and feminism as follows: *"I would say this in my government hat, not my personal hat, because those are two different things..."* A third individual expressed the tension by noting:

...I would make a very clear distinction between feminism in the workplace and feminism in my personal life...I think the two are not particularly connected. In fact, I would say in the workplace, that the approach is...to not try to [take] a feminist approach, but to say, "It's about gender, not women." And to say... "It's good policy," as opposed to "It's socially just." ...I find that difficult at times, but I think that I just sort of have a clear division between what I see [as] my role...in this workplace, and then the rest of my life.

A comparative analysis conducted by Vickers et al. (2000) sheds some light on the personal life/professional life divisions made by some GBA specialists. A key finding was that women working within the bureaucracy in Canada, despite strong feminist values, cannot 'act as femocrats' to the degree that they can in Australia. The authors explain that the bureaucratic culture in Australia actually permits and encourages public servants to advocate for social interests from within the administrative arm of the state. By contrast, the "Whitehall, neutral public service model" adopted by the Government of Canada funds the development of pressure groups to operate from outside the bureaucracy, instead of developing effective advocacy structures within (Vickers et al. 2000, 20). Linda Geller-Schwartz (1995, 49) concurs that, in Canada, "the idea that civil servants should adopt the role of internal lobbyists for women as a definable group [is] an anathema." This places limits upon the extent to which femocrats can fully express advocacy or feminism, even if they identify with those positions.

The Struggle for Legitimacy

In addition to fighting against being perceived as an advocate or a feminist, those working as GBA specialists struggle against “being branded as a single issue person” (Grant 2002, 8), or, as one person put it, “*a one trick pony*.” In the words of another participant, “[*You don’t want to be seen as] somebody...[who only] want[s] to talk about...gender...*”

It is not surprising that the majority of participants in this study wanted to avoid being seen as workers who are singularly focused on gender. Vickers et al. (2000, 20) note that, “The recruitment and promotion system...punishes advocates so ambitious women know that their careers depend on being generalists, not femocrats.”

Chapter IV relayed that those who have worked as femocrats in Canada have written of initiatives being stonewalled and trivialized, of being treated with indifference and impatience or ‘wilful misunderstanding’ by senior managers. According to Vickers et al. (2000, 20),

Given a bureaucracy intolerant of advocates in general, feminist advocates have been seen as particularly threatening and the structures within which they operate have been marginalized in all senses.

Within this context, GBA specialists expressed their ongoing struggle to be recognized as “*legitimate partners*” or “*credible partners*” by others in the bureaucracy.

As noted by one individual:

Coming into a unit like this is like a kiss of death...You’re seen as working on a soft issue – a fringe issue. People don’t take you seriously.

Participants expressed that they wanted to be perceived as providing “*objective*” policy advice to their colleagues. This was seen as being counter to the “advocacy” role. As one woman remarked:

If people can say, "Oh yeah, they're not just flakes, they know what they're talking about, they raise some important issues"...That [is the] strategy that I've tried to use here.

The Need to be Strategic

Kathy Ferguson (1984) has analyzed bureaucracies from a feminist perspective, looking specifically at the way in which they are structured according to a male idiom. Ferguson (1984, 93-94) articulates the way in which bureaucracies order knowledge and how "certain social acts are established and maintained, certain social objects are valued, certain languages are spoken, certain types of behaviour are required and certain motivators are encouraged."

As noted in the discussion of political climate above, a major theme arising in the interviews for this study was that GBA specialists are faced with the challenge of "*demonstrating that [GBA] is worth doing.*" This often translates into promoting GBA in a way that will be bureaucratically palatable, through use of accepted language and practice. Sawyer (1996, i) argues that the mandated concern of femocrats for gender equity brings them into an uneasy relationship with what Sawyer terms 'ecorats,' i.e., a new generation of decision-makers guided by principles of 'economic rationalism.' Within this context, femocrats have had to shift from social justice discourse to market discourse – stressing efficiency arguments for gender equality – in order to be heard.

My analysis suggested that the women interviewed in this study engage in subtle forms of resistance, by seizing upon certain aspects of the bureaucratic structure to maximize the opportunities to promote GBA. Karlene Faith's thoughts on resistance seem fitting here. Faith (1994, 39) writes:

Resistance may...be a choreographed demonstration of cooperation. The 'willing victim' may be operating from the vantage of strategic resistance, watching for openings and coalescing the fragmentary forms of resistance which, in combination, articulate a potential challenge to the status quo.

In a similar vein, Foucault likens resistance to the martial art of judo, proposing that sometimes "the best answer to an adversary manoeuvre is not the retreat, but to go along with it, turning it to one's own advantage, as a resting point for the next phase" (cited in Baudrillard 1987, 65).

Skinner et al. (1998, 7) state that, "Making the case for integration of gender-based analysis requires persistence...and some marketing savvy." Throughout the interview process, I consistently found that the term "marketing savvy" was an apt way to characterize the approaches taken by participants in this study. GBA specialists have often been able to manipulate various aspects of the bureaucracy to their advantage to lend greater credence to GBA. This points to the potential of femocrats working through the state by seizing opportunities where they arise by being extremely strategic. In the words of one participant, "...you take your power where you can."

A first way that GBA specialists used aspects of the bureaucracy to build a case for GBA was by aligning GBA with Government of Canada's recent trends emphasizing the language of 'evidence,' 'results,' 'statistics,' and 'data.' This strategy was deemed to be more effective than, for instance, couching GBA in the language of 'advocacy,' 'feminism,' or 'rights.' The following statements illustrate this tactic:

... We're making pretty innocuous technical suggestions...[And] trying to back [them] up with fact. "You should consider this...because, demographically, this is an important factor"...It's that kind of argument, as opposed to a sort of a radical feminist argument.

[If] you bring all of that critical analysis, and you bring all of those arguments to buttress what you're trying to say, and you show with evidence and you show with

results...at the end of the day, it's hard for people to say, "That's not right" ... "No, women don't need this," "No, women don't need that," "There's no problem with women and men in Canada. They're equal." It's way easier to... counter [arguments like that] when you've got some...strong evidence.

[I] ...push for a better collection of data, and statistics, and indicators, and things like that, because...Numbers count. Counting makes it matter...If you're not counted, then you're invisible...With gender issues, we need to quote, unquote "prove injustice" on more than anecdotal basis.

Some authors argue that the new 'culture of evidence-based decision-making' within the federal government has facilitated uptake of GBA commitments, particularly in the field of health. Diane Ponée (1998, 4), for instance, contends that the "new-found respect for evidence...may well have been one of the factors that helped the government recognize that there were vast gaps in knowledge about women's health and served to pave the way for the establishment of five centres of excellence on women's health." Ponée (1998, 5) further contends that using evidence-based research language and concepts makes it easier to attain legitimacy for the argument that "gender is a *variable* in research and one that will add *validity* to findings." Saulnier (1999, 8) therefore concludes that "[the] language and current policy orientation of the government may have opened the door to the development and implementation of GBA strategies."

Earlier in this chapter, I cited instances where, in policy documents on GBA, instrumental arguments were offered as justification for doing GBA. In a similar vein, GBA was often couched in the language of "efficiency," a word which, like the word "evidence," is popular within federal government at present:

...[GBA] helps you to be more efficient in the way you address... problem[s], and [to] allocate resources more efficiently.

One participant emphasized that GBA is consistent with, and supportive of, existing legislative provisions:

...The Charter of Rights in Canada and the clauses that refer to gender are what's driving [GBA]...We've had those commitments for 20 years in Canada. So, there is a foundation and a basis for demanding that our programs be equitable and that they treat Canadians fairly, and that gender be considered.

Finally, GBA was presented by a number of women as being a “skill” and as a component of “good policy”:

Well, I think that we try to pitch it...as improving your policy skills.

...We're hoping, by showing people the logic of applying a GBA model, the moral persuasion will be backed up with, “Hey, this is just an intelligent way to do policy.”

You have to be careful on that balancing act between selling it as a methodology and a tool, and helping gender equality. Sometimes, people...don't hear the first part about it at all, they only hear the gender equality part, and they close off. In fact, I've had – I won't give their level and I won't give their name – but I've had important people in jobs that wanted to have the two split completely. Because they could see how it makes sense from a policy perspective, but became very uneasy when it was tied to gender equality...

One participant underscored that using the types of language described above makes it easier for GBA specialists to get their point across, and thus facilitates implementation of GBA:

The more you can frame it in sort of policy language, or statistical language, the more it just blends in with other things that people are considering, and they don't get their back up.

Another individual identified that being strategic is a key component of working as a GBA specialist:

...It takes all the strategic skills, and positioning skills that you have at your disposal in order to make [GBA] work inside an institution. You have to know who to talk to, and how to talk to them, and how to massage it, and when to push it...You need to be very strategic and position it, literally positioning it as a competing priority.

Being strategic can entail downplaying the feminist or equality tones of GBA:

...As a feminist, it is often hard to deflate or diffuse the equality component of it to make it more comfortable for people to get their heads around. Sometimes you want to say, "Don't you see this is about equality?" and they want to hear...that this is about opportunity, about access, about fairness. And so, sometimes, you have to pull your punches... You have to hold back a little bit. And sometimes that's a challenge...[However], I'm much more interested in the outcome of having someone understand the issues and change the way they do policy work, or change the way they do program work, than I am for them to say, "Oh yes, I see the feminist way is the way to go"...Sometimes...I would wish we could be much more blunt, and other days...it's a better strategy and a more comfortable strategy to not have that big "F"⁴⁶ on your chest.

A few participants stated that promoting GBA in a non-adversarial way is also a wise strategy to employ:

I think...having a team that doesn't take an adversarial approach...has been our strength...one that sort of works for the people and works within existing processes...

...We're not police, and I don't want to be seen as police.

Our domain is trying to encourage people to apply [GBA], and encourage as opposed to enforce...

The key is that we cannot be in a position where we're saying, "Tsk, tsk, naughty, naughty." Because that is a power relationship and that defeats the purpose of what we're trying to do.

...If you try to trample with heavy feet, you won't get anywhere. In fact, you will lose ground.

It was clear throughout the interview process that, when it comes to how one positions or promotes GBA within the bureaucracy, there is a major catch-22 in play. If GBA is framed as consistent with the government's agenda, it becomes easier to advance. In the current political and bureaucratic context, this translates to femocrats positioning gender concerns within a framework of governance that constructs gender equality as a cost-saving measure or as a means to enhance efficiency, rather than as a laudable goal in

⁴⁶ i.e., "F" for feminist. A number of feminists referred to feminism as the "F-word." One participant told me that she argues repeatedly *"that [women]...should take back the word as their own...as opposed to having it used against them, and used as a dirty word."*

and of itself (Franzway et al. 1989; Rankin & Wilcox 2001). However, this may open up the possibility of a co-optation or depoliticization of the issues over the long-term.

In addition to the trade-offs involved in positioning GBA, there are also trade-offs made in terms of having to choose among steps to take with respect to GBA at any given time. While GBA specialists would often like to do more, they are cognizant that they cannot do it all at once, particularly with the resources they are given, along with other limitations they face within the bureaucracy. Thus, difficult decisions must often be made:

The expression is, chase many rabbits, catch none...or just chase one or two rabbits, and make sure you get them...Chasing many rabbits is not the strategy, especially with a small [GBA] unit...

...If there's 25 [priorities], we can't do 25. We need to pick maybe 5.

People have scarce resources, scarce time. Is it more important to get the technical side of this project right, or the equality side? Can you do both?

None of the challenges identified above are likely to disappear soon. Thus, the onus probably will continue to be placed on femocrats to confront the contradictions of state feminism, and resolve dilemmas as they arise. As stated by participants:

...There [are] always struggles associated with working in government.

...The tensions are there as we try to move forward.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

From the interviews for this study, there are several lessons learned about state feminism and GBA. The following section will explore the five main lessons raised by participants. These lessons learned speak to many of the challenges identified above, and also have a relevance extending beyond GBA to state feminism more broadly.

Lesson 1: Implementation is as Important as Policy Itself.

The women interviewed in this study identified that, even in the ideal situation wherein politicians and policy-makers had no difficulty in making a commitment to GBA, in practice this commitment would be meaningless without the introduction into the policy-making process of the mechanisms to make GBA work in practice. As cogently summarized by Ievers (2000, 2), "...without mechanisms in place to coordinate and advance gender mainstreaming, a commitment is little more than words on paper."

The various departments/agencies represented in this study have attempted a variety of models, strategies, and approaches. However, a key message heard during the interview process was that trying to select the "best" possible GBA model from among the various array of models is not nearly as important as ensuring that the model one selects is well supported, and that the necessary building blocks are put in place. There must be an infrastructure to support any model. In the words of one individual:

Regardless of the model you select, the potential for success will be undermined or limited until such time as all of the [necessary] steps are implemented. The model you select does not change the fact that there are things that must be done.

Among the key building blocks identified by participants were: developing a clear statement of commitment in a key departmental/agency document, such as a strategic plan or policy statement; clearly articulating objectives and expectations around GBA; developing performance measures to determine if objectives are being achieved; developing a clearly defined way of measuring these objectives in a timely and regular fashion; developing a well-defined and operationalized accountability framework; and developing mechanisms to build capacity.

Lesson 2: Capacity Building is Key

CIDA (2000, 7) defines 'capacity' as the "wherewithal to function," and 'capacity building' as "strengthening technical skills and undergoing attitudinal change." All participants stated that there is an ongoing need and demand for institutional capacity building related to GBA:

Capacity building is really important. It's going to be a lot of investment at the beginning, but it's going to pay off long term.

I think you need to focus carefully on capacity building, because...it's an iterative process...and it builds upon itself. You know, once people have the tools and you get a critical mass, etc., I do think...[GBA] will take place.

As discussed above, participants spoke to the fact that some policy-makers resist GBA for a variety of reasons; some do not recognize the need for GBA; and others simply do not understand the concept. Saulnier (1999, 4) surmises that "outside of the women's secretariats, bureaus, etc. policy developers and analysts have a limited understanding, awareness and acceptance of gender analysis." It is therefore not surprising that a major part of capacity building, as described by participants, is facilitating attitudinal change among federal government employees:

...The biggest thing, right now, is just, I think...making [people] sensitive to the issues...just having them even aware of [GBA] and the reason why it's so important.

...For me, it's...understanding that people are just misinformed.

A key way of building awareness and facilitating attitudinal change is through training. However, staff members stressed that single training sessions and workshops are insufficient, and that ongoing effort is required:

The problem...is that...in most government departments, people are always changing. They're moving. You have to continually train. You can't say this is a good training program and you've trained everybody. Because there [are]

people leaving and people coming and so you constantly have to train. You constantly have to brief... You have to update your tools... It's always a moving target.

Dwyer-Renaud (1998, 5) states that the long-term objective with respect to GBA is to make it “an automatic reflex and an influence” within government. One of the participants in this study similarly described the long-term objective as trying to make GBA “*part of the psyche of policy design.*” Others emphasized that there is a need to make GBA everyone’s business – to have it become part of the everyday work practices and attitudes of all public servants, and to generate a sense of communal ownership of GBA:

...The idea is not that there is a GBA unit that houses all expertise and then acts as a watchdog, but rather to build the capacity of people across the board, no matter what capacity they are working in.

GBA has to move from an individual capacity basis to an organizational capacity basis... Not to say that it's an either or. The individual capacity will continue... But if we only try to improve the skills of individuals without turning the entire context into a context that understands the impact it has on the lives of half the population... a context of equality... If we don't move in that area, and if we don't find mechanisms for creating that organizational capacity, we are not going to move very far.

GBA is a collaborative phenomenon. You need to have that buy-in across the board... You need to have it from the data collector who is actually coding and recognizing that it is actually important to put in that this person is male or female, [up] to the Deputy Minister... You need that collaborative to make a paradigm shift...

Some GBA specialists looked forward to a day when they would have to provide less technical assistance related to GBA and instead play more of a co-ordination, monitoring, and evaluation role:

...The idea is... that you remove [the] mystification of gender. You remove the mystification of the application of the GBA tool as a policy tool, and you remove [GBA] from the hands of the specialists, so that it becomes the work of everybody in government... The idea is to get gender... to that point, so that it's not gender

focal units going "Ta ta ta. You didn't include gender considerations in your [Memorandum to Cabinet]," you know, or "You didn't analyze the impacts on Aboriginal women versus Aboriginal men, versus immigrant women versus white women, etc. etc. in your briefing note." It's the people themselves just automatically doing it.

The issue of capacity building related to GBA generates a resurfacing of longstanding questions about state feminism, in particular the existence of machinery within government for the advancement of gender equality. Specifically, the ascendancy of GBA as a primary strategy for pursuing gender equality has led to questions regarding the relevance of gender focal units. If departments truly begin to make gender analysis part of business, then what is the role of the gender focal units? What added value will these units contribute to government practice to justify their continued existence? Will they become obsolete?

As noted in Chapter IV, as far back as 1974, the Coordinator on the Status of Women declared that Canada was committed to the "full integration of women in all aspects of society, and an end to discrimination," noting that "when this is achieved, the national machinery...will become obsolete" (Canadian Department of Labour 1975, 11). This was also the idea underpinning GBA when the *Federal Plan* was approved in 1995. In keeping with that spirit, one participant in this study noted her own personal vision of GBA being that, "*we can retire...Because we have got [GBA] so firmly ingrained in the bureaucratic culture that gender experts are obsolete.*"

However, another participant felt it was less clear that GBA units would become redundant, even when GBA becomes more widely diffused beyond GBA units to a range of branches within government. She offered the following analogy:

...Once, presuming we are completely...successful and...everybody's doing gender mainstreaming...Does that mean they don't need [gender focal units]

anymore? Does that mean we disband because everyone can do it? Is that what the objective of mainstreaming is? ...About ...20 years ago, [there was] one computer for each branch or ...unit, and now everybody has a computer on their desk. And, before, you had one computer, and you had one [information technology] person, ok? Now that you have a computer on everybody's desk, it doesn't mean all of a sudden you don't need the IT people, the experts in the field. In fact, you even need more... Rather than making us obsolete, it will just mean that ...the gender expertise will be more focused perhaps, less focused on some of the ...things that we're doing now... But rather than making us obsolete, gender mainstreaming can strengthen the whole – and having units even [stronger] rather than downsizing them.

Thus, the future of machinery for advancing the status of women in Canada, which was initiated in 1954 with the establishment of the Women's Bureau, and has since gone through periods of expansion and contraction since the 1970s, remains unclear. With much work remaining on capacity building in relation to GBA, and with the new lease given to gender equality by the AGE (discussed in Chapter IV), which is just now truly getting underway, it seems that gender focal units are here to stay for the time being. Yet, much like in the past, their situation is precarious, with downsizing and restructuring currently occurring in some departments/agencies at the time of this research.

Lesson 3: The Need for Patience

In a presentation entitled “GBA: Beyond the Red Queen Syndrome,” Grant (2002) developed an excellent analogy between GBA and Alice's encounter with the Red Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. Grant (2002, 4-6) recited the following excerpt of the story:

Alice never could quite make out, in thinking it over afterwards, how it was they began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand, and the Queen went so fast that it was all she could do to keep up with her: and still the Queen kept crying ‘Faster!’ but Alice felt she could not go faster, though she had no breath left to say so. The most curious part of the thing was that the trees and other things round them never changed their places at all: however fast they went, they never seemed to pass anything. “I wonder if all the things move along

with us?" thought poor puzzled Alice. And the Queen seemed to guess her thoughts, for she cried, "Faster! Don't try to talk!"...And they went so fast that at last they seemed to skim through the air, hardly touching the ground with their feet, till suddenly, just as Alice was getting quite exhausted, they stopped, and she found herself sitting on the ground, breathless and giddy. The Queen propped her up against a tree, and said kindly, "You may rest a little now." Alice looked round her in great surprise. "Why, I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!" "Of course it is," said the Queen. "What would you have it?" "Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing." "A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, here, I see. It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

The sense of working very hard to implement GBA, often with limited resources, without necessarily feeling like one was seeing results at the end of the day was conveyed by the women I interviewed:

...One may not see positive results come from one's work... Ultimately, it's input, it's a factor being considered. But whether or not the consideration is reflected in the final decision, or the approach taken, or whatever... is a secondary issue that is... often beyond one's control.

As this study makes clear, there are a number of obstacles and challenges that exist in relation to GBA, and in relation to state feminism and gender equality initiatives more broadly. One consequence is that some of the GBA specialists experience frustration and fatigue:

...Sometimes... I have to admit that I feel like I'm tired... of having to convince people that this is the way to go, that this is necessary, that this is logical, that you can't do good public policy unless you think of gender... I get tired of having to make that argument over and over again... It's frustrating.

I think challenges are always – for me and for anybody who is working in this area – the challenges of getting a bit down-hearted at times because you feel like, "Oh wow. Don't they get it?"

I'm exhausted... I've lost that kind of "I'm going to change the way everything works"... I mean, it can be really discouraging... You say the same things to so many people and you just keep seeing the same results... And it gets really frustrating... But then, you see tiny, tiny little steps... tiny little... glimpses of hope,

and you [think], "Oh, ok, maybe it's worth it." But...the burn-out here is high...because you're spinning your wheels and you're not going anywhere, it feels like sometimes.

Frustration can also lead people to leave their position in GBA units:

There's quite a turn-over... partly because the frustration level will get to you...By year four of having other colleagues say, "Oh, you're an advocate," or "Well, I'm doing policy analysis, I don't know what you're doing," you get frustrated, you get pissed off, you get fed up, and you...leave.

However, the same individual clarified that those who work on GBA nonetheless have a high level of commitment to the issue:

...You're not in there unless you believe in the stuff because it is frustrating...The people involved in it really believe in it and want it to work and are trying to make it work and are banging their heads against a lot of walls in the process.

Another individual concurred:

...Luckily, I think that the people who fill [positions in gender focal units] ...[are] really motivated...They really like their jobs. I mean, as challenging as [their work] may be, they really, really feel like they're doing the right thing, and that it just takes a matter of time before their goals are achieved.

One lesson learned that was common to a number of participants is that the work of GBA specialists becomes easier once they come to accept that infusing the Government of Canada with GBA will not happen overnight. GBA entails breaking with tradition. As stated by one individual:

Government's been here a long time, and...we're talking about a paradigm shift...[in]... the way [people] see things and the way [they] work...Trying to implement that into...an old-time kind of thinking...[is] very difficult.

Several staff members indicated that patience is required by those who are working to facilitate this break from tradition:

You have to be prepared to let things go. You just have to say, "Ok."

The patience thing is just, you are trying to make people think differently, and you're not going to do that in a year, or two years, or even five years. And you're

not going to do it with one phone call, or one e-mail, or one meeting, or one presentation. It's like a courtship almost...because you're inviting people to step out of their comfort zone.

Once you understand that you're dealing with fundamental change – you're promoting, encouraging, and pushing for fundamental change – you have to be aware of the fear that is going to create in people. And once you recognize that there's going to be fear in the resistance, you have to be patient.

In addition to patience, one GBA specialist noted the value of not taking things personally, and keeping a positive outlook:

...I [feel] really guilty...when I...[hear] about how [GBA's] ...not even on the radar screen, and, you know, it's my job...But I can't take it personally, because I'm not given the resources...I'm only doing what I can, you know? Unfortunately, it's not working...But I don't think it's been set up to work...So, [you] just [have to] try not to take it so personally, and...try to keep...as optimistic kind of outlook on it as possible...Just believe in the principle...believe it's the right thing. As long as you think you're on the right side of the argument...it's worthwhile ...

Finally, connected to patience, another participant emphasized the need for persistence:

...[You need] persistence. No, I wouldn't say just persistence...You need to do things at a level of quality. You can't take it off the shelf.

Lesson 4: Baby Steps (or the Need to Understand GBA as an Incremental Initiative)

Related to the need for patience is the lesson that GBA must be understood as a complex, multi-dimensional, and long-term initiative. GBA is a process; it is not an end in itself. Dwyer-Renaud (1998, 8) explains that, “Gender-based analysis is best defined as a time sequential process. Currently, in Canada, there are certain steps that are being undertaken while other steps will require more time to refine or accomplish...” The perspective that implementation of GBA must be understood as a long-term process occurring in incremental steps was often voiced in the interviews:

I think the thinking around GBA would be that it's incremental...so that you may not...do a 90 degree shift, but rather that...small inputs are made along the way that contribute to, ultimately, good policy.

...The thing is, you have to start with the concrete, at the micro level, which eventually leads you to the broader outcomes of gender equality and the impacts. So, it's a very incremental process...Sort of like [how] we had to develop the alphabet before we could speak Greek.

[GBA] is a work in progress, and...I think that some things just take time...And as much as you'd like to see it happen yesterday, it's not going to happen. So, small steps, sometimes, is what you have to be prepared for sometimes – those small steps.

[I see GBA as] an ongoing process. It is a first step, a last step, and an ongoing process...It should never stop. We never stop thinking, we never stop being, we never stop relating, so why should this be any different to the way we live our lives?...As soon as we get wherever we think we're going, we should stop there and say, "Are we really where we want to be?" And usually the answer is no.

One participant concluded that the fact that routinizing GBA is an incremental process is not only a reality that one has to accept, but can actually be a plus:

...Yes, there have been positive impacts. I think we have made a difference...It's never...as much as you'd like, or as quickly as you'd like, but that's just the reality of it. And, I don't even know if I would want it to be that quick... We learn a lot along the way, and I think that our vision of GBA in 1995, when the concept was first introduced is significantly different now than it was then. And what if we would have gotten it all then? Would we like the world we're living in now? Would all the problems be solved? No. Because GBA was not sensitive to race, for example...and other diversity issues. So, I like an evolutionist approach that is slowly progressing... developing, and changing, and learning, rather than just having everything accomplished at once...The slow path is not necessarily a bad one.

The finding that GBA is an incremental process means that it shares parallels with past gender equality initiatives in Canada. As discussed both in Chapter II and Chapter IV, changes brought about through state feminism have never been achieved easily, quickly, or in any linear way in Canada. Yet changes do occur, often after much struggle, through much temerity on the part of those working for change, and with the passage of

time. Dwyer-Renaud (1998, 3) once concluded, during a 1998 speech on GBA, that “if a policy or legislation is to involve radical change to gender roles rather than incremental change, it is less likely to be enacted.” From this perspective, incremental change may be the only form of change that the state is prepared to undertake in relation to gender equality. Those working on gender equality initiatives, such as GBA specialists, are faced with the limitations of that reality.

Lesson 5: The Need to Foster Greater Knowledge Exchange

A final major lesson learned heard within the interviews pertains to the need for enhanced exchange of knowledge among all parties with respect to GBA. A number of participants identified this as a critical building block needed to enhance GBA. As described by one individual, the crux of the problem is that:

There's a deficit in the ability to reach out to other stakeholders and other partners, potential partners...

This deficit was described by GBA specialists as existing on a number of different levels, and across a range of sectors. First, there is at present room to enhance the knowledge exchange among federal government GBA specialists working in different departments/agencies. Throughout the interview process, it was clear that while participants were often keenly interested in the work of other GBA colleagues in government, they are often in the dark about what was occurring in other departments/agencies:

I don't think I have a good enough sense overall of what's happening in other shops around town...

[Referring to the situation of another gender focal unit]. They've imploded, or exploded, or been dismantled, or who knows what's happened. You might have a better idea than I do.

In this regard, it would seem useful to establish a culture of openness, in which there is frank dialogue across departments/agencies working on GBA, and wherein various departments/agencies co-ordinate efforts and co-operate strategically. To realize this vision requires the building of trust among the various public servants working as GBA specialists.

A second set of partners among whom knowledge exchange needs to be enhanced includes government GBA specialists and academics. Participants commented:

...When you're within government, you may not have a lot of time to do research and that sort of thing...You don't have the time to read it, and synthesize it, and apply it. And yet there are academics and students out there who are spending a lot of time studying this and are very current. And I think finding a way...for those two to engage [would be helpful].

I don't have a lot of time to look at academic work anymore. It would be nice to be able to do that...I know that there are academics around town who have done research and who have done consulting work, so having more of that...cross-over...between the two could be useful...For them to be exposed to us, but for us to be exposed to them, as well.

Other partners with whom enhanced knowledge exchange could take place include: provincial/territorial GBA specialists; multilateral organizations;⁴⁷ and officials from other countries working to implement GBA. All of these partners have a great deal to share on GBA, in particular with respect to determining what is working, and what is not working elsewhere. As one person stated:

I think one issue is producing more lessons learned on a couple of different things...As far as mainstreaming [GBA], there [are]...different models that exist in different countries but also within the federal government, perhaps even [in] provincial governments...Measuring or trying to study what...the strengths and weaknesses of those different approaches [are] would be one thing that would be

⁴⁷ Gender mainstreaming is a part of the mandates of several multilateral institutions. For example, in 1995, the same year of the Beijing Conference, the International Labour Organization explicitly incorporated GBA in all stages of its programming cycle. GBA guidelines were also implemented at the United Nations and the World Bank, and promoted by the Commonwealth through the *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development*.

useful. I think also just doing an assessment of...where...gender analysis [has] made a difference and why...What were the factors that led to it - in those cases where it's been quite an influential...addition to the process? And then, conversely, why not in other cases? ...And is it a question of individuals being resistant? Is it a question of cost? Is it a question of other factors just being way more important than this in the eyes of those making the decisions?

Finally, as noted above within the context of discussing consultation on GBA, there is a need for enhanced knowledge exchange among federal GBA specialists and representatives from women's groups and other non-governmental organizations. This returns us to the debates on state feminism discussed in Chapter II, particularly in terms of reconciling the debates on working 'in' or 'against the state.' Both Chapter II and Chapter IV concluded that it is the combination of women working from inside and outside government which has proven most fruitful. In the words of one participant:

...Sometimes, insiders are too conservative, and outsiders are too radical. So, you need to find that balance.

Sproule (1998, 1) concludes that,

...women's equality interests would be more effectively advanced, and the contradictions of state feminism rendered less powerful, if grassroots feminists and femocrats...were to find a new place for respectful dialogue and collaborative action...a space where we can more effectively use what is both common and unique to our experiences to jointly challenge state inertia on advancing women's equality...

One woman commented on the fruitfulness of one GBA initiative that has taken place to date involving the collaboration of GBA specialists and representatives from women's groups, along with other parties. The initiative – a three-week-long on-line dialogue⁴⁸ – was described as follows:

...There was this whole exchange happening on the internet between all of these different women's groups, and individual women, and feminists, and academics ...chatting with each other and saying, "Yeah, well I heard the government [did x,

⁴⁸ As discussed earlier in this chapter, there have been a few on-line dialogues in recent years. The initiative referred to in this instance is the initiative that was moderated by CCLOW in 2001.

y, z]" and, you know, somebody else responding and saying, "Well, when they did that, this is what happened, and we know because we [made] submissions to this department on that." So, what ended up happening is they actually dialogued a lot more amongst themselves and networked among themselves, which was really...interesting because they ended up sharing expertise with each other....Some of the women went away from this dialogue with all kinds of ideas for using GBA [in] their own organizations. But what it also gave us was a clearer understanding of where the NGOs are coming from, and it gave them a clearer understanding of where government is coming from, so that, ultimately, what we were looking for was that when the groups are in consultation with government departments, they will know what the government people are thinking and how they use the language and how they apply it. So that, they can all be speaking the same thing. And if the women's groups are going to lobby a government department on a certain issue on GBA, they'll know the process by which that government department got to the decision they got to, or the policy decision they recommended. Again, they'll be able to speak the same language.

The importance of initiatives such as the above cannot be overstated, particularly when one considers that successful advocacy often depends on groups' capacity to develop knowledge of the policy-making process and to gain information about specific policies. The overview of state feminism in Chapter IV indicates that some of the greatest achievement in state feminism were facilitated precisely because of strong information-sharing between femocrats and women outside of government. Likewise, groups have an important role in motivating government to fulfill its commitment to GBA. Saulnier (1999, 7) argues that developing a more participatory policy process around GBA between NGOs and government "raises its profile and aids in its acceptance." Participants similarly suggested:

In order to enhance [GBA], we need to get pressure from outside. And we should get it from the women's groups...so [that] the outside is putting pressure for you inside to ensure you do [GBA]. That's what I'd like.

...The pressure has to continue to be put on politically, bureaucratically, and from the inside as well.

...[It's] critical for institutionalizing gender-based analysis and gender mainstreaming to have that external [pressure]...You need those NGOs to

continue to put pressure on...the departments...And then our job as bureaucrats in gender and the gender experts who are in departments need to work and build upon those external pressures.

Vickers et al. (2000, 52) recommended that an annual conference be developed at which women from different contexts and localities can meet, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn about one another's situation and constraints. They suggest that this could take the form of an annual meeting of federal and provincial ministers and femocrats in conjunction with a meeting of their movement counterparts, which could be held in a different locality each year. They also note that this initiative should be supported by a website and list-serve related to the conference.

Holding meetings with individuals from a number of different sectors – government, academia, women's groups – was also offered as a suggestion by some participants in this study. One individual indicated that this type of exchange needs to be guided by principles of mutual respect, in order to avoid some of the tensions that have historically arisen between those inside and outside of government:

I think it would be important that that forum be pretty, kind of non-threatening, or non-critical, and just sort of about information sharing.

I would add that, given the important critiques that have been made suggesting that GBA needs to better address diversity, it would also seem appropriate to ensure that any such process be as inclusive as possible, representing a wide a range of voices and perspectives.

V. OVERALL POTENTIAL OF GBA

It is too early to determine definitively whether or not GBA is improving the lives of women, or is helping to actualize the broad objective of gender equality. As this

chapter has indicated, there are both strengths and achievements, and challenges and struggles associated with GBA to date. This section offers the final reflections of GBA specialists on their assessment of the overall potential of GBA. As these comments illustrate, there is, at present, room for both scepticism and optimism with regard to the potential of GBA as a state feminist initiative and as a means of achieving gender equality:

GBA looks good on the surface, not if you delve into what people are actually doing.

GBA helps to inform the design, the debate, around a policy. But...there are a lot of other mitigating factors. And, in the end, what we hope we've done is that government has taken an informed decision, and not a, "Well, whoops, we forgot about women" kind of decision.

It's not a change in culture yet. And I don't know how long that will take, but we are certainly doing our best to try to make that shift.

...You can have the best process in the world, but if it's not reflected in the decisions the government is making...Or if women are continually disadvantaged in...various ways, [GBA] is necessary, but is it sufficient?

I think GBA is one among many tools. I don't think it's the saviour. I don't think it's the end-all and be-all. There are all kinds of other tools that people use to accomplish political ends, to accomplish...equality. They protest, they write, they sing, they...take part in political organizations...They do all kinds of things.

I don't see it as the absolute...answer to inequality. No, absolutely not. But I see it as a very useful tool inside of a bureaucracy, which...is a hugely complicated machinery.

It's not the absolute answer, obviously, but I think it's a good tool, and I think it's a good start.

I don't see it being replaced in the near future, that's for sure. Call back in the year 2500. We'll have this chat again! But certainly...I don't anticipate that this is something that you should stop doing.

Challenges can both be negative and positive. Sometimes challenges are obstacles, and sometimes they are opportunities to rethink what you're doing, and do it a little bit differently. And sometimes differently can be much better.

VI. CONCLUSION

GBA in the Government of Canada is very much “a work in progress” (Ievers 2000, 3). There is no blueprint or one “right way” to institutionalize GBA. However, some key elements have been identified in this study that would facilitate implementation of GBA. These include: sex-disaggregated data and statistics; skills and opportunities to carry out GBA; a trained human resource base; effective monitoring and evaluation systems and tools; accountability; leadership and support; transparency and effective networks and linkages; engagement of other sectors; political will; a supportive political climate; a supportive bureaucratic context; and ability to learn and adapt.

It is clear that despite the great variation in the situations and mandates of different federal departments/agencies, many GBA specialists are facing similar challenges and struggles in promoting, coordinating, and implementing GBA. While some of these challenges relate to “GBA, the tool,” many of the struggles identified in this study relate to factors that interact with GBA to shape its potential. Key among these factors are the political and bureaucratic landscapes in which GBA is embedded. The latter factors give rise to the inherent contradictions of state feminism.

One participant in this study drew me a triangle. At the pinnacle, was the policy that one is trying to implement. Underneath that was corporate (or bureaucratic) culture. Finally, at the bottom tier, were attitudes and beliefs. Success at the pinnacle can only be achieved if a strong foundation can be built at the other levels. This triangle is of use in understanding GBA. However, I would argue that an additional layer needs to be added:

the political climate. All of these layers intersect and interact. As one individual explained, “*GBA in the bureaucracy is part of the process, but it can’t work without the political as well.*” In attempting to build the foundation of this triangle by working through the struggles associated with each of its tiers, state femocrats face a number of dilemmas. As long suspected by feminist theorists, certain trade-offs are made in attempting to advance state feminist initiatives, such as GBA. Does this point to co-optation on the part of femocrats? I would argue instead that it instead points to a need to recognize the limitations and contradictions of the state in which one is operating at any given time, and to be strategic within those parameters. State feminist initiatives such as GBA do hold some promise. Therefore, one cannot dismiss the value of working within the state. However, a more effective strategy is to advance state feminist initiatives through a collaboration of femocrats and feminists working outside government. It is this collaboration that holds the most promise for meaningfully advancing state feminist initiatives such as GBA.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

For feminists, the role of the state has long been a matter for dispute; some see it as a useful tool in the furthering of women's rights and quality of life, while others see it as an essential element in the development and maintenance of patriarchy and capitalism, and therefore of no use to women. Inevitably, the role of the state in shaping gender relations and the advancement of women is not so clear cut; it has both helped and hindered women in their search for social justice.

Within western feminism, arguments about the character of the state and whether feminist ideals can be realized through it continue. Feminists have persistently debated whether or not women should engage with institutionalized politics, and whether or not they should participate in state feminism. This debate will undoubtedly continue. The issue cannot be resolved simply, and is likely to resurface and be re-articulated in new political and cultural contexts. However, as noted by Vicky Randall (1998, 200) "for many feminists, that point is no longer at issue; the state *must* be engaged with and the question now is what are the most effective strategies for empowering women in this engagement." As Shirin Rai (1996, 18) concludes, the question of whether or not women should approach the state is actually a decision that most women are not in a position to make: "It is they who are approached by the state." Many would now accept the comment made by Ann Stewart (1996, 39) that women cannot give up on the state, "not least because it will not give up on women."

This study analyzed GBA through an exploration of the important debates on the state and state feminism. GBA is the most recent of a number of state feminist initiatives which successive governments have undertaken. While such initiatives have shifted over

time, there is some continuity among the struggles encountered by the state workers – the “femocrats” – working to implement state feminist initiatives of the past, and the struggles encountered by GBA specialists today. However, new challenges stemming from the current political and bureaucratic contexts, and from ideological shifts, have changed the shape of these struggles in important ways, along with the structures, mandates, and roles of state feminists today.

In the foreword to the *Federal Plan*, then Secretary of State Sheila Finestone commented that GBA:

...will change the way government looks at issues, designs programs, develops policies and enacts legislation. It will change the impact of government on the lives of women by including the perspectives of women. A relatively straightforward change in approach that promises far-reaching results. (SWC 1995a, foreword)

This paper concludes that, while it remains definitively unclear that any “far-reaching results” have stemmed from GBA, at present, there is room for both optimism and scepticism about GBA. At one end of the spectrum, GBA initiatives can be seen to amount to little more than well-meaning policy statements, while at the other end, they can provide a basis for dialogue and the introduction of genuinely transformative strategies.

Optimism is possible because, as is clear from the foregoing chapters, the concept of GBA has been seized and acted upon in many different ways and by many different actors, and positive developments have resulted from this. This finding counters the assumptions that there is always a dichotomy between what the state wants and what women want, that the state is always ‘bad’ for women, and that only those outside of, and opposed to, the state can further the cause of gender equality.

There is also clearly a need for scepticism and caution when advancing claims about the transformative potential of GBA. It is vital to be aware of the limitations of GBA as a strategy for addressing inequality, particularly within the current unpromising political and bureaucratic context. Lahey (2002, 13) notes that a simple commitment to GBA “will not, by itself, generate change” and “does not mean that all the barriers to women’s equality will automatically crumble.” GBA can become an empty promise unless challenges are overcome. In this regard, the challenges identified in this study point a need for further progress in securing adequate financial and human resources; generating political will and commitment at the highest level; developing effective leadership; increasing capacity and awareness; improving consultation, collaboration, and shared learning among various levels of government and various sectors; developing accountability; and developing short- and long-term time-bound targets and measurable goals, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess progress.

Recognizing the challenges that exist in relation to GBA and identifying the trade-offs that femocrats sometimes make to advance GBA does not undermine the utility of working to promote gender equality from within the structures of government. It merely underscores the need to be strategic, to recognize the limitations, and to foresee the possible costs in terms of, as expressed by Davina Cooper (1995, 65) “co-optation, de-radicalization, bureaucratism and political diversion.” As stated by Christine Saulnier (1999, 9),

Realizing that GBA strategies have some inherent limitations for fundamental change does not mean they are insignificant, because the state can play a potentially progressive role with the help of initiatives such as GBA.

Recognizing and reconciling the limitations of GBA also entails understanding, as noted by Baines (1996, 202), that “advancing gender equality is a difficult and non-linear process that requires ongoing vigilance and scrutiny.” There is a clear need for monitoring to ensure that the federal government’s stated commitments to GBA are translated into meaningful gains in the policy-making arena. As feminist political economists instruct us, *context matters*. It is important to analyze the strategic possibilities available for any state feminist initiative, such as GBA, at any given time. Policies depend not just on the constraints of structures but on the struggles which define and constitute particular interests and the state at any one time.

We have seen that the political environment has, in some ways, become more unfriendly to the feminist enterprise. The political spectrum has shifted to the right. In a more supportive ideological and political context, however, the constraints identified in this thesis could well diminish. The latter point speaks to the need, as identified by Saulnier (1999, 9), to match initiatives such as GBA with “strategies that force a shift in a government’s economic and social priorities that may be antithetical to women’s interests.” However, doing so will require a collaborative effort. As Sproule (1998, 7) observes, “More potential for narrowing the gap between government rhetoric and practice regarding women’s equality rests with the collaboration of grassroots feminists and femocrats, than with the isolated efforts of either.”

This paper points, above all else, to the need to explore the contradictions of the state, and the struggles that these contradictions generate for feminism. As noted by Sue Findlay (1988a, 9), “As the contradictions embedded in state policies and structures become more visible to feminists, so does the contradictory nature of our struggle for

equality.” By demystifying GBA, it becomes easier to expose these contradictions; thus, a dynamic and creative learning process can begin. While the contradictions of state are – as I have found, and as the women I interviewed for this study expressed – often frustrating, I concur with Melanie Randall’s (1988, 15) statement that, “Although fraught with complexity and contradiction, we cannot afford to ignore the state in our theoretical and practical work.” Instead, the contradictions of state must be understood, met head on, and turned on their head to our advantage. As Adamson et al. (1988, 153) conclude:

Situating our demands in the context of the contradictory nature of the government increases the possibility of making concrete gains. For the exposure of its contradictory nature is partially what motivates it to respond: the government is responsive precisely because its underbelly as patriarchal capitalist has been exposed. This responsiveness reflects the government’s need for public credibility and legitimacy, which in turn relates to the fact that its power rests, to a significant degree, on the consent of the governed...

In the final analysis, as Rai (1996, 14) reminds us, while limitations are placed upon our strategies by the state, there is also room for much optimism: “The state and civil society are both complex terrains – fractured, oppressive, threatening, while at the same time providing spaces for struggle and negotiation.”

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

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I am a student in the Master of Social Work Program at Carleton University. As part of the requirements for completion of my degree, I am undertaking a thesis project pertaining to state feminism and federal government approaches to gender-based analysis (GBA).

As part of this research, I would like to ask you to participate in a one-on-one, hour-long information gathering session at a location of your choosing. I will ask you questions about GBA in the following general areas: process; ideology; political will; resources; and overall assessment of the potential of GBA. I am approaching a maximum of 14 people from 7 selected departments to participate in this study.

By undertaking this research, I am attempting to better understand the struggles associated with state feminism and with pursuing GBA within the current political context. The sharing of your knowledge and expertise will be invaluable in illuminating the factors which inhibit and the factors which enhance gender equality policy.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may choose whether or not I will be permitted to use a micro-cassette audio recorder to tape the sessions in addition to taking handwritten notes. All records of participation will be kept strictly confidential, and only my supervisor, Dr. Therese Jennissen, and I will have access to the information. Rather than identifying you by name, all documentation of the session will use a numerical coding system. The results from this study will be reported in a written thesis.

Although every effort will be made to protect your anonymity, there may be some risks involved with your participation. You are being asked to comment on federal government policy, and given the small number of research participants, it is not possible to guarantee your anonymity.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to not answer any question(s). Your participation may also be discontinued at any time for any reason, without explanation and with the option to revoke any data you have provided to that point.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope that you will agree to participate in this research.

Sincerely,

Amanda Scott

APPENDIX II: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Amanda Scott, Student
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I have been approached by Amanda Scott to participate in a Master of Social Work thesis project regarding gender-based analysis. I have read or have had the Informed Consent Form read to me, and I understand and consent to the following:

- I will be one of a maximum of 14 people interviewed and my participation is entirely voluntary;
- I have the right to not answer any questions;
- I have the right to withdraw at any time;
- If I exercise my right to withdraw, I can decide at that point whether or not to give the researcher permission to use the data I provided to that point;
- The interview will take approximately one hour;
- I do/do not consent to be tape-recorded via micro cassette audio recorder;
- I understand that, even though I will not be named in the report, my identity may become known by the details of my responses due to the small number of participants. Therefore, the guarantee of anonymity cannot be offered;
- While anonymity cannot be guaranteed for the reason stated above, the researcher will take precautions with respect to the selection of meeting place, coding of the

data, storage of the data separately from the Informed Consent Form in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home and disposal of the data at the end of the project by use of a shredding machine. If tapes are used, they will be destroyed after the research process is completed;

- All records of participation will remain confidential. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information;
- I understand that there may be some risks involved with my participation. I am being asked to comment on federal government policy, and given the small number of research participants, it is not possible for the researcher to guarantee my anonymity.
- In the event that I should I have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the project I can contact the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Therese Jennissen at 613-520-2600 ext. 4390, or Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair of the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee, by phone at: 613-520-7434 or by email at: klaus_pohle@carleton.ca.

Participant's Name (please print)

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX III: INFORMATION SESSION GUIDE

Process

- How does GBA work in your department (e.g., through a network of advisors; through a central bureau)?
- On which specific policies/programs in your department has a gender analysis been performed?
- To what extent does your department consult with external organizations (e.g., women's groups, NGOs) on GBA? How do these consultations operate, and how does the feedback from such processes get reflected in your department's GBA initiatives?
- What enforcement/accountability mechanisms are in place in your department for GBA?
- How is implementation of GBA in your department being tracked, measured, monitored, reported, and evaluated? Is this process accountable? (e.g., What happens with the reporting?)

Ideology

- What vision of gender equality does GBA work toward?
- Is there an agreed-upon ideological framework for GBA in your department? What is it?
- The term 'feminism' can conjure up different images for different people. What does 'feminism' mean to you?
- How would you describe the type of feminism informing GBA? (e.g., liberal, radical, socialist feminism)
- In your view, do people working in your group at work consider themselves feminists?
- (If self, others in group identify as feminists above) In your opinion, are there any struggles associated with being a feminist working in government on strategies such as GBA? What are they?
- Do you see GBA as being able to address the realities of all women?

- Are there any tensions between overall political priorities, or the overall political climate (in your department and overall) and working to implement and conduct GBA? How do these tensions play out?
- How do new approaches to governance (e.g., results-based management) impact GBA?

Political Will

- To what extent has GBA achieved “buy-in” within the realm of standard policy/program development in your department?
- What incentives exist for policy analysts and program developers in your department to undertake and foster GBA?
- To what extent does GBA in your department target the top? (i.e., adoption of top-down vs. bottom-up approaches). For example, to what extent is there recognition and commitment by senior management that GBA is a key component of good public policy? How does this happen?

Resources

- Is there adequate allocation of human and financial resources to GBA? (both in your department and overall)

Assessments of Overall Potential of GBA

- What has GBA achieved to date? (in your department and overall). Please name some examples.
- In your experience in your department, what are the major strengths of GBA?
- In your experience in your department, what are the major challenges or barriers associated with GBA?
- If you had to identify 3 major lessons learned about GBA, what would they be?
- Is GBA sufficient/significant as a means of working toward gender equality? Do you see it as a first step, a last step, or something in between?
- What could be done to enhance GBA?

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