

**A critical discourse analysis: Comparing how governments and non-government organizations operationalize intersectionality within Gender-Based Analysis Plus**

By

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We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Xwsep̓səm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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A critical discourse analysis: Comparing how governments and non-government organizations operationalize intersectionality within Gender-Based Analysis Plus

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## Executive Summary

Since 1995, the Canadian federal government has made commitments to gender equality and addressing issues of diversity in the policy context (WAGE, 2022). In 2015 and 2017, the federal government built upon these commitments with the launch of several initiatives to further advance gender equality, including a commitment to use Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in policymaking and programming to support equity and inclusion (Government of Canada, 2019). GBA+ incorporates an intersectional lens to assess the impacts of policies, programs, legislation, projects, and more with consideration to gender and diversity (Women and Gender Equality Canada [WAGE], 2022). Since its introduction within the federal government of Canada, challenges—mainly related to capacity and resources—have hindered the full implementation of GBA+ across federal departments and agencies (Office of the Auditor General of Canada [OAG], 2022). Other levels of government and non-government organizations within various sectors have also begun to implement GBA+. While the application of intersectionality within GBA+ has been well-studied at the federal level (e.g. Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019, Johnstone & Momani 2022; Manning & Levac, 2022; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Scala & Paterson, 2017), there remain gaps in understanding intersectionality within GBA+ among other levels of government and within NGOs. This study addresses two main research questions: how is intersectionality within GBA+ operationalized by NGOs in comparison to government organizations; and how do service providers apply GBA+ to support identifying the impacts of programs, services, policy and projects in consideration of gender and diversity in comparison to public servants?

### *Purpose and Objectives*

This study explores how intersectionality within GBA+ was operationalized among provincial and federal government organizations and NGOs, to support a better understanding of its implementation, and whether discrepancies in the aspects used to identify its various dimensions exist across sectors. Operationalization is the processes and techniques used to implement norms in ways that can be measured (Huelss, 2017; Bhandari, 2022; Newsome, 2016; Loseke, 2017). Comparing how different levels of government and NGOs prepare their staff to operationalize intersectionality can provide insight about the similarities and differences in their training and capacity building strategies.

This study uses a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine GBA+ training materials of different levels of government and NGOs to understand how institutional and sociocultural contexts, as well as power dynamics, influenced discourse on intersectionality within GBA+. The rationale for focusing on training materials is that it is a non-obtrusive approach which can reduce ethical concerns, as extracting information from governments and NGOs on organizational processes can be obtrusive. Also, training is an important part of supporting change management (Sartori, Constantini, & Tommasi, 2018), which is necessary if governments and NGOs want to facilitate transformative and social justice-oriented change. Both of these often involve systemic and structural change within organizations (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017).

This study also aimed to explore how public servants apply intersectionality within GBA+ to assess the impacts of policies, programs, and initiatives, in comparison to service providers, to make sense of the similarities and differences in their understanding and approaches. A critical

epistemology was used to identify how social and cultural ideologies, sociohistorical contexts, and subjectivity influenced knowledge construction (McGregor, 2018; Farias Laliberte Rudman, & Magalhães, 2016). A critical ontology was applied to explore how perceptions, social constructions, interconnected systems (Demirbaga, 2024), political values, and power dynamics shape reality (McGregor, 2018). This may influence the way governments and NGOs train their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+.

### *Research methods*

The methods used included a CDA of training materials and interviews. The CDA provided an opportunity to explore how governments and NGOs build capacity for the operationalization of intersectionality, as well as semi-structured interviews to understand how public servants apply GBA+ in comparison to service providers. The document analysis was used to analyze publicly available and online training materials and resources of the various levels of governments and of NGOs, such as transcripts of recorded training sessions, guidelines and online courses about GBA+. This supported the investigation of language and discourse used to describe intersectionality within GBA+. Interviews were conducted with individuals with experience as either a public servant and/or service provider, who were also trained and experienced using GBA+. The interviews provided context on how intersectionality within GBA+ is applied when considering the impacts of policies, programs and initiatives. The combination of approaches supported triangulating the findings.

### *Findings*

This study suggests that governments and NGOs' capacity building strategies to implement intersectionality within GBA+ are inconsistent. Using a revised version of Christoffersen's (2021) typology of five applied concepts of intersectionality and Cameron & Tedds' (2023) *Adapted intersectionality visual* as a conceptual framework, this study found that governments and NGOs used different applied concepts of intersectionality within GBA+ which resulted in discrepancies in the operational definition for intersectionality. For example, intersectionality was operationally defined by some governments and NGOs to include all three components of Cameron & Tedds' (2023) framework, which considered individual identities and experiences, systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, and colonialism) and sites of power (e.g., media, organizations, and government), while others included only some components, such as focusing on identity factors (e.g., race, sex, income, and gender).

In addition, the findings indicated that the analysis of power dynamics and relationships was not incorporated clearly within training materials. Discursive strategies, like euphemisms, diverted the focus from exploring power dynamics and relationships between intersectional components. This means that public servants and service providers are not being trained on key aspects of intersectionality which also contributes to its depoliticization. For instance, the limited discourse on power reinforced specific narratives and discourse which legitimized institutional power rather than confronting it. In these situations, governments and NGOs did not provide an opportunity to create transformative changes, such as paradigm shifts and cultural shifts within an organization. Additionally, the scarcity of discourse that specifically described social justice as part of intersectionality resulted in governments and NGOs focusing less on how they would support social justice-oriented change. Intersectionality was not portrayed as meeting its full potential in government and NGO training materials because it was not depicted as supporting

transformative and social justice-oriented change. Instead, governments and NGOs demonstrated the organizational benefits to implementing intersectionality. For example, GBA+ helped to look at how they could improve organizational processes and prevent misinformation and generalizations about specific identity groups.

During interviews, government and NGO participants could not provide direct examples of how they applied intersectionality within GBA+ due to their confidential work or GBA+ still being in the development stages within their sector. However, in alignment with the document analysis, both government and NGO participants indicated that analyzing power dynamics and relationships was important when applying GBA+. For instance, participants reflected on the power dynamics within and between organizations that influenced the implementation and quality of GBA+, and the types of knowledge production used for GBA+. Additionally, NGO participants highlighted how it was necessary to situate GBA+ within its context, for example, by acknowledging that it is applied through a colonial lens, to identify the existing challenges of supporting transformative and social justice-oriented change.

### *Recommendations*

1. To fully realize the potential of intersectionality within GBA+, governments and NGOs should consider utilizing Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023) as a framework. This tool can guide the application of GBA+ to ensure that training materials provide a comprehensive understanding of intersectionality.
2. More attention should be given to power dynamics and the relationships among individual identities and experiences, systems of oppression, and sites of power. This focus will also help integrate sociopolitical and historical contexts, reducing the risk of stigmatizing identity groups as having inherent deficits.
3. Finally, clarifying how governments and NGOs plan to foster social justice-oriented change through GBA+ is essential to promoting transformation that aligns with goals under gender and intersectionality mainstreaming.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Beginning in 1995, the Canadian federal government committed to promoting gender equality and incorporating diversity considerations into policy development (WAGE, 2022). These efforts were reinforced in 2015 and 2017 with the introduction of various initiatives aimed at deepening this commitment. Among them was the federal government's pledge to implement Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), a framework intended to ensure that policies and programs are inclusive and equitable for all Canadians (Government of Canada, 2019).

GBA+ is an analytical tool that uses a gender and intersectional lens to understand the multiple and overlapping identity factors of diverse groups of people, in order to create more inclusive approaches to developing, delivering, and evaluating various initiatives (Women and Gender Equality Canada [WAGE], 2022). Intersectionality is a term first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), an American civil rights advocate and leading scholar of critical race theory. It helps to examine how multiple forms of oppression, such as sexism and racism, compound to produce multidimensional experiences of inequality or disadvantages that often remain unrecognized within conventional frameworks of analysis. (Crenshaw, 1989, 1995). Since the introduction of GBA+, governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) have incorporated GBA+ into their work to enhance policies, programs, and services.

Much of the literature on GBA+ has been focused on its application in the federal government, but less is known about how intersectionality is applied in GBA+ frameworks used by other organizations and levels of government. This study examines how provincial and municipal governments and NGOs build capacity among their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+. In simple terms, operationalization refers to “the processes and techniques used in the implementation of norms” (Huelss, 2017, p. 383). In public policies and programs, operationalization can be understood as the process of defining abstract concepts (e.g., intersectionality) in measurable terms. This involves translating theoretical ideas into specific, observable, and verifiable actions and indicators that can be used to assess the implementation and impact of policies (Bhandari, 2022; Newsome, 2016, Loseke, 2017; Newsome, 2016). Comparing how different levels of government and NGOs prepare their staff can provide insight into the similarities and differences in capacity building strategies and training that organizations use to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+ frameworks.

NGOs are important to be considered in this study because they often serve diverse vulnerable populations (Cornforth, 2012; Aldashev, Marini, & Verdier, 2015), raising awareness of the impacts of policies and programs on such groups (Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Manning & Levac, 2022). Where governments may fail to work collaboratively, NGOs are increasingly engaging in more collaborations, partnerships, and alliances with other organizations (Cornforth, 2015). The unique and multilevel governing structures of NGOs—which incorporate boards, regulators, auditors, and key external stakeholders— influence practices (Cornforth, 2012) and may lead to nuances in their approach to GBA+.

This study will examine GBA+ training material developed by different levels of government and NGOs to understand what strategies help organizations in developing competencies that are necessary for effectively facilitating transformative change within organizations (Sartori,

Costantini & Tommasi, 2018), such as the integration of an intersectional analysis. For this study, training and professional development that support the operationalization of intersectionality within GBA+ include: 1) content that describes the interconnection between identities, experiences, power structures, and mutually constitutive processes, such as racialization and racism; 2) discussions on power dynamics and relationships; 3) recommended approaches that support transformative change within an organization and; 4) focus on social justice as a key objective.

Based on the premise that policies (e.g., GBA+) reveal themselves not only through constitutions, statutes, regulation, and legislation, but also “through texts, practices, symbols and discourses that define and deliver values” (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 9), a critical discourse analysis (CDA) was selected to analyze the training materials. CDA looks at institutional and sociocultural contexts, as well as power dynamics, in relation to language (Carvalho, 2008). This methodological approach helps to uncover discursive strategies and how the meaning of a concept, such as *intersectionality*, is constructed and social inequalities are legitimized through discourse (Carvalho, 2008; Mullet, 2018). The study also uses interviews with service providers and individuals with experience in public service to triangulate the findings from the CDA. Thus, this study aims to explore the benefits and challenges of various discursive strategies, narratives, and discourses used by different levels of government and NGOs to support staff professional development to support the implementation of GBA+. It will also provide recommendations to strengthen the integration of intersectionality within GBA+ across all levels of government and NGOs.

## **Background: Intersectionality and GBA+**

Intersectionality, rooted in Black feminism, Indigenous feminism, third-world feminism, queer, and postcolonial theory (Hankivsky et al., 2014), was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1995) to highlight how race and gender intersect to shape the experiences of Black women. Crenshaw (1989; 1995) emphasized the importance of exploring the compounded and multidimensional experiences of marginalized groups. Since then, intersectionality has gained widespread popularity, scholars have advocated for its application to help policymakers identify impacts of policies on diverse populations (Hankivsky et al., 2014).

Intersectionality addresses the limitations of traditional, single-issue analyses, such as focusing only on gender or race, by recognizing the complexity of individual identities and experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, 1995). Through her work, Crenshaw (1989; 1995) demonstrated the importance of considering the interconnection between systems and structures to understand the impacts of policies, and organizational processes and objectives, particularly on the subjugation as experienced by those who are marginalized and subjected to multiple forms of oppression. In other words, intersectional analysis is meant to consider more than just identity factors and experiences, but also the interaction and power dynamics between systems, structures, policy actors and other stakeholders as well.

Different levels of governments and NGOs have drawn on Crenshaw’s (1989; 1995) concept of intersectionality. For instance, similar to how Crenshaw (1989; 1995) conceptualizes intersectionality as an analytical tool that studies how oppression, such as sexism and racism, may compound to produce multidimensional experiences of inequality or disadvantages

(Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1995), the Government of BC has defined intersectionality as “an analytical approach that describes how a person’s overlapping social identities relate to social structures of racism and oppression as well as privilege” (Government of BC, 2024a). Similarly, in the settlement sector, intersectionality was conceptualized as an approach to analyze social issues in relation to the intersection of social identities and systems of oppression (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2017).

### **History of GBA Plus**

Gender-based Analysis (GBA) was implemented as part of the federal government’s commitment to gender mainstreaming after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the launch of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (United Nations, 2014). The objective of the declaration and platform for action was to advance women’s rights and gender equality by addressing 12 critical areas of concern (i.e., education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; and the girl child). Strategic objectives were developed at regional, national and international level to support gender equality and eliminate discrimination experienced by women and girls and governments focused on mainstreaming gender within legislation and all aspects of society (United Women, 2014).

In 2011 GBA was rebranded to include a “+ or Plus,” to signify the federal government’s commitment to apply intersectionality (WAGE, 2022). This approach required public servants to also consider how multiple identity factors, including sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, ethnicity, age, disability, economic status, geography, language and religion, interacted to influence how government policies and initiatives were experienced by citizens (WAGE, 2024a). All federal departments and agencies are responsible for building organizational capacity to implement GBA+. This includes a central responsibility for applying GBA+ to organizational processes, like programs, policies and legislation, monitoring and reporting (WAGE, 2022). In 2019, ministerial mandate letters, which are the accountability accords for ministers that outline government priorities, portfolio responsibilities, and personal goals for ministers (Zussman, 2018), referenced the mandatory application of GBA+ for decision-making (Department of Justice, 2022; Government of Canada, 2023). In 2021, supplementary mandate letters stated that Ministers were required to apply GBA+ for decisions and to consider public policies through an intersectional lens with the goal of addressing systemic inequities (Department of Justice, 2022; Government of Canada, 2023). All federal employees are now encouraged to incorporate GBA+ into their work (WAGE, 2024a).

The application of GBA+ is mandated through several legislative and policy frameworks in Canada, such as the *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act* (2018) and the *Impact Assessment Act* (2019) (WAGE, 2023a). The former requires the Minister of Finance to table a report about the impacts of new budget measures in terms of gender and diversity under (Section 3), while the latter mandates the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to consider sex, gender and other identity factors in impact assessments for designated projects (Section 22(1)(s)). Additionally, departments such as Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) are required under the *Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act* (2001) to include a GBA+ in their annual reports to parliament on immigration (IRCC, 2020).

Beyond legislative requirements, GBA+ is also integrated into non-legislative policy measures. It is required for establishing, implementing, and maintaining performance information profiles for programs, as well as for assessing the social and economic impacts of regulatory proposals on diverse groups of Canadians (WAGE, 2023a). Moreover, GBA+ is to be used for transfer payment programs to ensure they are gender and diversity-sensitive and respond to government policy objectives and priorities (WAGE, 2023a).

The commitments from the Beijing Declaration and federal legislation apply only to federal departments and agencies, yet similar GBA+ frameworks are being implemented in other levels of government and NGOs. Although other levels of government and NGOs replicated and adapted WAGE's (2022) GBA+ framework, there is some variation in the titles of their GBA+ frameworks. For example, the Government of British Columbia (n.d.a) employs GBA+ and an Indigenous GBA+ (Government of BC, 2024b). Similarly, some NGOs have emphasized a distinctions-based approach to GBA+ (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2020; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2022; Women of the Métis Nation, 2019). These examples imply that different ideologies and knowledge systems are being used to inform the GBA+ frameworks.

## **Problem Statement**

Since the implementation of GBA and GBA+ in the federal government, both have faced significant challenges with meeting their intended outcomes. The Office of the Auditor General (OAG, 2009) revealed that GBA was implemented inconsistently. The OAG (2022) found gaps in departmental capacity, insufficient disaggregated data, and a lack of effective monitoring and reporting. Despite WAGE (2022) has developed training materials to support a consistent implementation of intersectionality across the federal government, the OAG (2022) found inconsistency in the way federal departments were applying intersectionality within GBA+. They recommended the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board of Canada, and WAGE to take additional actions to identify and address barriers to implementing GBA+ (OAG, 2022).

Similarly, scholars have stated that the federal government has not implemented intersectionality as intended. Scholars have also criticized the federal government for missing key aspects of intersectionality within their implementation of GBA+, such as the analysis of processes and systems, including racialization and racism; power dynamics and relationships; examining social structures and challenging dominant power structures to support transformative and social justice-oriented change (Bilge, 2013; Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen, 2021; Dhamoon, 2011).

Variations in organizational structures and legal requirements between federal government departments and agencies in comparison to other governments and NGOs may affect capacity-building strategies and professional development across public and non-governmental organizations. There is, however, limited information on how municipal, provincial, and Indigenous governments, as well as NGOs, prepare their staff to implement GBA+ and whether they may be more successful with operationalizing intersectionality in their policies, programs and processes. This study aims to address this knowledge gap.

## **Goals, Scope, and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to compare how different levels of government and NGOs prepare public servants and service providers to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+, and whether there are different strategies that may strengthen its advancement. The following research questions guide this study:

- How do governments in comparison to NGOs prepare their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+?
- How do public servants, in comparison to NGO service providers apply GBA+ to identify the impacts of programs, services, policy and projects in consideration to gender and diversity?

To address these questions, this study will use a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the training materials used by federal, provincial and municipal governments, and NGOs that serve the public, including non-profit organizations, consulting firms, and service providers. The training material examined in this study are video-recorded GBA+ training sessions and GBA+ guidelines. Ultimately, this study will provide recommendations to improve professional development and training on intersectionality within GBA+ across all levels of government and NGOs. Since this study examines training materials across an extended period, it does not include the broader sociopolitical context surrounding GBA+. As a result, certain factors such as the influence of neoliberalism, the rise of far-right movements, and rhetorics opposing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) fall outside the scope of this research, although they remain important for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges impacting the implementation of GBA+ in Canada.

## **Significance of Study**

This study provides an opportunity to understand how GBA+ training is used to assist organizations with identifying and understanding the needs and interests of the diverse population they serve. First, this study explores the variability in organizational training materials which offers insight into different approaches to staff capacity development and whether other levels of government and NGOs face similar challenges as the federal government. This study may uncover new approaches and strategies to support a more successful application of intersectionality within GBA+ among federal government departments and agencies. Second, this study aims to contribute to the literature about intersectionality within GBA+. Although some studies have explored GBA+ training (Johnston & Momani, 2019; Johnstone & Momani 2022) and discourse (Scala & Paterson, 2017), no research has compared GBA+ training and discourse analysis across various organizations. The use of a CDA can reveal the several types of narratives, discourse, and discursive strategies used in training materials that hinder or support the professional development of staff to effectively implement GBA+ in their organizations.

## **Positionality Statement**

As a second-generation immigrant, racialized individual with experience in government, settlement services, and non-profit organizations, I aim to address challenges faced by diverse groups with intersecting experiences. Through my work experience, I have noticed gaps in services and inequitable access to opportunities. While my work experience provides valuable insight, I recognize the need to confront my own unconscious biases to ensure diverse perspectives are fully explored. As a non-Indigenous person on the unceded territory of the

Lekwungen Peoples, I acknowledge that I cannot speak for Indigenous experiences, but I hope to contribute to allyship by improving GBA+ training materials to better operationalize intersectionality with consideration of the needs and interests of distinct groups.

To minimize potentially negative impacts of my preconceived notions, I reflect on my personal biases as a cisgender woman raised with a Western worldview. Using a reflexive approach will help me avoid assumptions and value diverse perspectives throughout the study. I keep a journal to track my thoughts, feelings, and decisions at each stage of the research to ensure that personal biases and assumptions are addressed.

## **Structure of Thesis**

This report is divided into seven chapters. Following this introduction is chapter two, which provides a thematic literature review on the application of GBA+ within organizations and the effects of its implementation and outlines the conceptual framework for this study. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology and methods used in this report. Chapters 4 and 5 provide an analysis and interpretation of the findings, the former from the document analysis and the latter from interviews with public servants and service providers. Chapter 6 discusses how governments and NGOs prepare their staff to implement intersectionality, as well as how public servants in comparison to service providers apply GBA+ to identify the impacts of programs, policies, projects and other initiatives with consideration to gender and diversity. Last, chapter 7 provides recommendations that can support federal government departments and agencies, other levels of government, and NGOs in enhancing their capacity building strategies to successfully operationalize intersectionality within GBA+.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

It is generally recognized that two different approaches are used to apply GBA and GBA+ to support gender mainstreaming. The first is the integrationist approach, where organizations take up gender-conscious practices without creating change to the status quo (Johnstone & Momani, 2020; Teissen, 2007). Scholars have referred to this as an ‘additive’ approach, where sex and gender are prioritized, while other identity factors are considered afterward (Findlay, 2019; Mussell & Hankivsky, 2018; Hunting & Hankivsky, 2020; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022). This reduces GBA+ to a checklist of disaggregated data about identity factors, and it could be considered only the first step to an intersectional analysis (Lefroy & Stacey, 2022). The second one is a transformative agenda-setting approach that encourages changes in institutional culture, norms, and power dynamics (Johnstone & Momani, 2019). This chapter presents a thematic literature review to better understand how these approaches have been explored in the literature, and how intersectionality is effectively incorporated into GBA+ process.

### **Mapping the Process**

Business Source Complete (EBSCO), ProQuest Econ Lit, and ProQuest Worldwide Political Science Abstracts databases were used to retrieve materials from 2017 to 2022. The key terms used for the search were “Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+ or Plus),” which yielded 42 results in the first two databases. An additional term, “challenges,” was used with the ProQuest Worldwide Political Science Abstracts search engine with 184 results. The articles’ relevance was determined based on their abstract and keywords, with a particular focus on materials that analyze GBA+ in the public sector. A total of 11 articles were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research questions driving this thesis, including various types of resources such as scholarly articles and grey literature.

### **Foundational work on GBA+ in Canada**

The academic literature and research on GBA+ explore the various understandings, uses and challenges of GBA+’s application (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018), specifically in federal government organizations (Scala & Paterson, 2017; Johnstone & Momani, 2019, 2020). This includes exploring how GBA+ is used to support federal government processes, like impact assessments (Levac et al., 2021; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022). There is a consensus among scholars that there are challenges to the application of GBA+ within the federal government. Specifically, authors have pointed out how federal government organizations fail to implement intersectionality within GBA+ (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen, 2021; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Manning & Levac, 2022; Levac et al., 2021). While other levels of government and NGOs have adapted GBA+ frameworks to incorporate an Indigenous perspective, they have not been explored to the same extent as the federal government’s use of GBA+ (e.g., Ministers Advisory Council on Indigenous Women, n.d.; Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2020; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2022; Women of the Métis Nation, 2019).

The term ‘transformation’ is often brought up as an important component of intersectionality and GBA+, as it is closely associated with intersectional and gender mainstreaming which support paradigm and cultural shifts (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Levac et

al., 2021; Scala & Paterson, 2017). The implementation of intersectionality within GBA+ is perceived to fall short of its transformative potential due to federal governments adapting GBA+ to fit into organizational processes rather than to support transformative change (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Levac et al., 2021; Scala & Paterson, 2017). A term that is frequently used to describe the current application of GBA+ within the federal government is an ‘additive’ and ‘check box’ approach which prioritizes the consideration of sex and gender over other identity factors and runs counter to the intention of intersectionality (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Lefroy & Stacey, 2021; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021), which defies a single axis analysis (Crenshaw, 1989).

The literature on the challenges of GBA+ is discussed through feminist and intersectional perspectives. For instance, some scholars focus on the challenges of maintaining feminist values and perspectives while navigating bureaucracy (Scala & Paterson, 2017). Others highlight that their perspectives are informed by intersectionality and Indigenous feminism (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018). In addition to feminist and intersectional perspectives, a post-structural policy analyst perspective is also used by some scholars to provide insight into ways to amend the current GBA+ framework used by federal governments (Cameron & Tedds, 2023).

## Findings

### Theme 1: Limitations of “+” in GBA+

While intersectionality within GBA+ provides an opportunity to ensure policies and programs are inclusive and equitable, there are existing limitations to its application. Researchers find that public servants often lack an understanding of GBA+, raising concern about institutions’ abilities to effectively implement intersectionality (Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hankivsky & Mussell 2018; Johnstone & Momani, 2019). This commonly results in an *additive approach*, which reinforces discourse on deficits and risks of specific groups, and does not guarantee that the concerns of specific groups are made visible (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hunting & Hankivsky, 2020; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Scala & Paterson, 2017).

During interviews with federal government, academia, and NGO representatives, Hankivsky and Mussell (2018) found that fewer than half of interviewees (15 out of 32) can describe the differences between the Government of Canada’s GBA and GBA+. Furthermore, intersectionality is perceived as potentially undermining the focus on gender (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018). The broad misunderstanding of intersectionality results in an additive approach, where the consideration of other identities was analyzed after gender (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hunting & Hankivsky, 2020). Although a gender-first approach provides a systematic method for assessing the impacts of policies and programs, the literature suggests that this approach also results in a dichotomous analysis that views groups as homogeneous (Cameron & Tedds, 2023), and as “privileged or oppressed” (Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021, p. 526). It encourages the conceptualization of identities to be disconnected and static conditions in which individuals are categorized as ‘having’ or ‘not having’ certain attributes, rather than as dynamic and interconnected aspects of individuals’ lives which interact with systems and structures (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Manning & Levac, 2022).

Although the intention behind fostering the use of GBA+ has been to improve organizations' abilities to identify the impacts of policies and programs using an intersectional lens, specific experiences remain invisible (Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Manning & Levac, 2022). For example, Lefroy and Stacey's (2022) found in their grey literature review on GBA+ that impact assessments often fail to account for the disproportionate and exacerbated impacts on women and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, demonstrating how siloed approaches to analyzing intersectionality may not be as effective (Lefroy & Stacey, 2022, pp. 222-223).

A limited understanding of how to apply intersectionality within GBA+ among federal government organizations results in intersectionality being applied with an additive approach. In other words, the biological characteristics and socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities of women, girls, men, boys, and gender-diverse individuals are prioritized in the analysis. In contrast, other factors, such as culture and religion, are considered secondary. This additionally poses a concern that specific identity groups are labelled as being oppressed or privileged, which can result in a static representation of identities and experiences. Despite the incorporation of intersectionality within GBA+ among federal government organizations, the experiences of specific intersecting identity groups, such as older adults, people with disabilities, visible minorities, and Indigenous peoples, continue to be overlooked (OAG, 2022).

## **Theme 2: Re-defining Identity**

Intersectional analysis requires understanding the full dimensions of individuals' experiences and requires consideration of the interaction between various identity factors, power structures and systems, which cannot be examined as mutually exclusive (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Crenshaw, 1989; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018). For example, women of colour may not experience racism the same as men of colour, nor experience sexism the same as other women (Crenshaw, 1989).

Therefore, a comprehensive approach should remove focus from deficits and risks experienced by identity groups to one that seeks to understand the interaction and relationships between identities, structures and systems of power (Cameron & Tedds, 2023), and how such interaction shape and influence individual experiences and identities. By acknowledging the influence of systems and structures of power, attention should be paid to how diverse factors interact to create deficits and risks experienced by certain identity groups. For example, this would involve recognizing how racism and sexism compound and contribute to the experiences of oppression faced by women of colour, rather than simply considering women of colour to be at risk.

## **Theme 3: Limitations to the Integrationist Approach**

While GBA+ originates from gender mainstreaming and feminist principles, there is a general consensus among scholars that the application of GBA+ at the national government level drifts away from these principles and is depoliticized due to its limited analysis of power (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017). This means that rather than taking on a transformative approach, where governments assess how systems and social structures may be altered to address inequities, an integrationist approach is applied into federal government operations without necessarily creating structural or systemic change (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017). A relevant example can be

found in Johnstone & Momani's (2019) case study of the Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Mechanisms and tools were developed to support the implementation of GBA+ in these two organizations. However, public servants in DND and CAF discussed their concern that it may result in just a form of "lip service" and there may still be 'push back,' a lack of 'active engagement from people who don't get it' and 'buy-in' from those in leadership roles (Johnstone & Momani, 2019, pp. 512-514). This suggests that power structures, which may play a role in perpetuating inequities and discrimination, remain unchallenged places of power. Johnstone and Momani (2019) suggest that it is not the "tool itself, but its implementation that determines its limited influence" (p. 515), suggesting integrative approaches do not guarantee transformative change.

When organizations use an integrationist approach, they often depoliticize GBA+ from its feminist origins. This is probably an effort to steer clear of negative criticism and perceptions that could arise if it were linked to feminism (Scala & Paterson, 2017). For example, there were criticisms of GBA+ threatening men (Manning & Levac, 2022), and that it competed with operational effectiveness (Johnstone & Momani, 2022). Interestingly, this provides insight into why Scala and Paterson (2017) found that interviewees who acknowledged feminist origins of gender mainstreaming downplayed feminism within their GBA+ work to avoid negative connotations associated with feminism (p. 434). In Scala and Paterson's (2017) study, interviewees described GBA+ as improving organizational performance. They also mentioned that it helps maximize efficiencies and impact. This effort aims to make GBA+ more appealing to colleagues, especially men. Additionally, interviewees suggested aligning GBA+ with broadly accepted processes and mechanisms, such as those promoted by New Public Management, a widely accepted management theory. New Public Management uses private sector ideas to improve services in public sector institutions and agencies.

#### **Theme 4: Power Analysis**

Although a key component of intersectionality is the analysis of power, researchers asserted that the current application of GBA+ at the national government level did not pay enough attention to power structures (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018). For example, Cameron and Tedds (2023) found that the Status of Women remained focused on vulnerabilities caused by identity factors, while government organizations themselves remain unanalyzed places of power (Cameron & Tedds, 2023). Hankivsky and Mussell (2018) also found that documents and training on GBA+ remained focused on single issue analysis as opposed to an intersectional approach that examines dynamic interactions between individual, systems and structures.

The analysis of power is important for creating a more accurate understanding of lived experiences. It strengthens accountability to underlying issues of inequity by looking at biases and the role of structural power and systems (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018). Incorporating power into the analysis would support an organization's ability to identify institutional systems, processes, mechanisms that perpetuate inequity and create transformative change to better meet the needs and interests of a diverse population.

## **Theme 5: Intersectionality as an Independent Framework**

Understanding and applying intersectionality as an independent framework also presents significant challenges. First, intersectional analysis is complex and may require the development of specific approaches to help it move from theory into practical understanding and practice (Hankivsky et al., 2014). For instance, intersectionality is applied and understood differently among various organizations and policymakers (Christoffersen, 2021). Many ‘intersectional’ approaches focus on the symptoms of particular identities and experiences without considering the power structures which cause inequities (Christoffersen, 2021).

Second, in attempting to make intersectionality more easily applicable, it has become oversimplified, excluding the analysis of complex and dynamic aspects of identity and experiences (Blige, 2013; Haschemi, Nowicka & Roxanne, 2022). For instance, the application of intersectionality as a universal, simplistic, and objective tool has been criticized for undermining its purpose. It requires consideration and analysis of historical contingencies, context, social locations and power structures (Blige, 2013).

Third, there is concern that intersectionality has become depoliticized (Blige, 2013). For example, in aligning intersectionality with government and organizational processes, it becomes a tool to support neoliberal agendas, where the focus is placed onto “marketable expertise” (Blige 2013, pp. 407-408; Duggan, 2003) rather than social justice-oriented change. This poses a risk for the disarticulation of intersectionality from its transformative potential (Blige, 2013).

The literature suggests that realigning intersectionality back to its political nature and social justice orientation (Blige, 2013), while providing better guidance to policy makers and other stakeholders, may help move the application of GBA+ away from single-issue analyses and support the effective operationalization of intersectionality in organizational processes (Christoffersen, 2021; Hankivsky et al., 2014).

## **Synthesis and Knowledge Gap**

The current literature on GBA+ indicates that there are limitations and areas which should be strengthened for GBA+ to reach its full potential. Despite the awareness of GBA+ among other government organizations, academics and non-government organizations (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018), there is a gap in knowledge about how public servants and service providers are prepared to implement GBA+ outside of federal government departments and agencies. This review found no case studies or literature that looks at the specific capacity building strategies and approaches of other levels of government and NGOs, and effective training approaches to address the identified practical implementation challenges.

Investigating GBA+ training materials among different levels of government and NGOs provides an opportunity to address this knowledge gap. It will provide insight about the different strategies and approaches that organizations use to prepare their staff for a comprehensive analysis of systems of power and oppression on the populations they serve. Scholars emphasize that expanding research onto organizations outside the federal government will provide an opportunity to strengthen our understanding of how diverse identities, communities and groups can be better represented in policy and program development (Lefroy & Stacey, 2022).

Through a CDA of training materials, this thesis provides an opportunity to investigate how institutional and sociocultural contexts and power dynamics influence language, such as discursive strategies used to construct meaning about intersectionality within GBA+ (Carvalho, 2008), and identify areas of improvements and recommendations.

## **Conceptual Framework**

To examine the capacity building strategies used to prepare public servants and service providers to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+, this study uses Christoffersen's (2021) typology of five applied concepts to intersectionality and Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023) to understand whether governments and NGOs fully or partially integrated an intersectional lens into the GBA+ training materials. The goal is to compare how governments and NGOs prepare their staff to implement intersectionality within GBA+, including the strategies they use to teach them about power.

Christoffersen (2021) developed an intersectionality typology based on observations of the various and often contradictory ways in which intersectionality was applied across organizations and by policymakers. Below are descriptions and examples of each intersectionality type, while Table 1 provides an outline of how they are used in this study to analyze training materials.

*Generic intersectionality:* It seeks to avoid essentialism and focuses on issues rather than identity groups (e.g., race, gender, disability). The same work is applied to address issues that affect everyone and aims to benefit everyone. There is little emphasis on targeted strategies which focus on issues that affect only the most marginalized groups. For example, this approach would look at an issue, like healthcare, and seek to increase the output of services by increasing workforce capacity, without looking at how and if different individuals and identity groups are able or unable to access services. In this situation, workforce capacity is increased to ensure more services are available to the general public.

*Pan equality:* It aims to address common issues that affect multiple identity groups. It differs from the generic approach because it focuses on issues experienced by identity groups rather than solely on issues. For example, a pan equality approach may identify hate crime as a common issue that affects multiple racial and ethnic identity groups. A solution proposed may involve creating a telephone support service for all individuals who experience racism, discrimination and a hate crime without addressing different or unique barriers experienced by individuals within these groups.

*Multi-strand:* It focuses on identity groups separately and simultaneously and emphasizes inclusion and equality for all groups with the same level of attention and resourcing. This understanding of intersectionality takes on an additive approach where identity groups are seen alongside one another but not interconnected or impacting one another. Unlike pan equality, this concept looks at identity groups and their differences rather than commonalities. For example, this could involve examining the different experiences of people of colour, people with and without disabilities, women, men, and non-binary people, and creating policies to ensure they have the same level of inclusion in professional development and career growth. In this situation, there would be no

observation of cross-over between these groups, like the intersection of disability, race and gender.

*Diversity Within:* It looks at the differences within an identity group, and the focus remains centered on the specific identity group being examined. In this case, belonging to another or multiple other identity groups is not seen as mutually constitutive but rather nominally relevant or only sometimes relevant. This implies that intersectionality is additive and not always perceived as relevant. For example, this may involve looking at different experiences of men of colour in comparison to white men. The focus remains on men, where other identity factors, like age, ability, country of origin, etc., are not seen as necessarily relevant and are seen in addition to gender.

*Intersection of Strands:* This concept often includes focusing on specific groups that share common intersecting identities, like the intersectional experience of women of colour with disabilities. A key difference to diversity is that this concept does not place more or primary focus on a specific identity group. However, the concept may be used when there is interest in addressing most marginalized groups to benefit all. For example, this approach may involve looking at the intersection of women of colour, who are transgender, living in rural communities, and their experiences with accessing legal supports and services.

*Table 1 Typology of intersectionality within GBA+. Source: own*

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Pan-equality</b>	<b>Multi-strand</b>	<b>Diversity within</b>	<b>Intersection of Strands</b>
Identity groups (i.e., individual identities and experiences)	Not present	Identity groups are presented as separate	Identity groups are presented as separate	Centred on a specific identity group. Differences within the group are presented as separate and not always portrayed as relevant	Identity groups that share common intersecting identities or focused on the most marginalized groups, and presented as mutually constitutive
Focus	Issues that affect all/majority of the population	Common issues that affect multiple identity groups	Different impacts of issues on identity groups	Specific identity group experiences and differences within the group	Addressing most marginalized groups' problems to benefit all, with no primary focus on a specific identity group

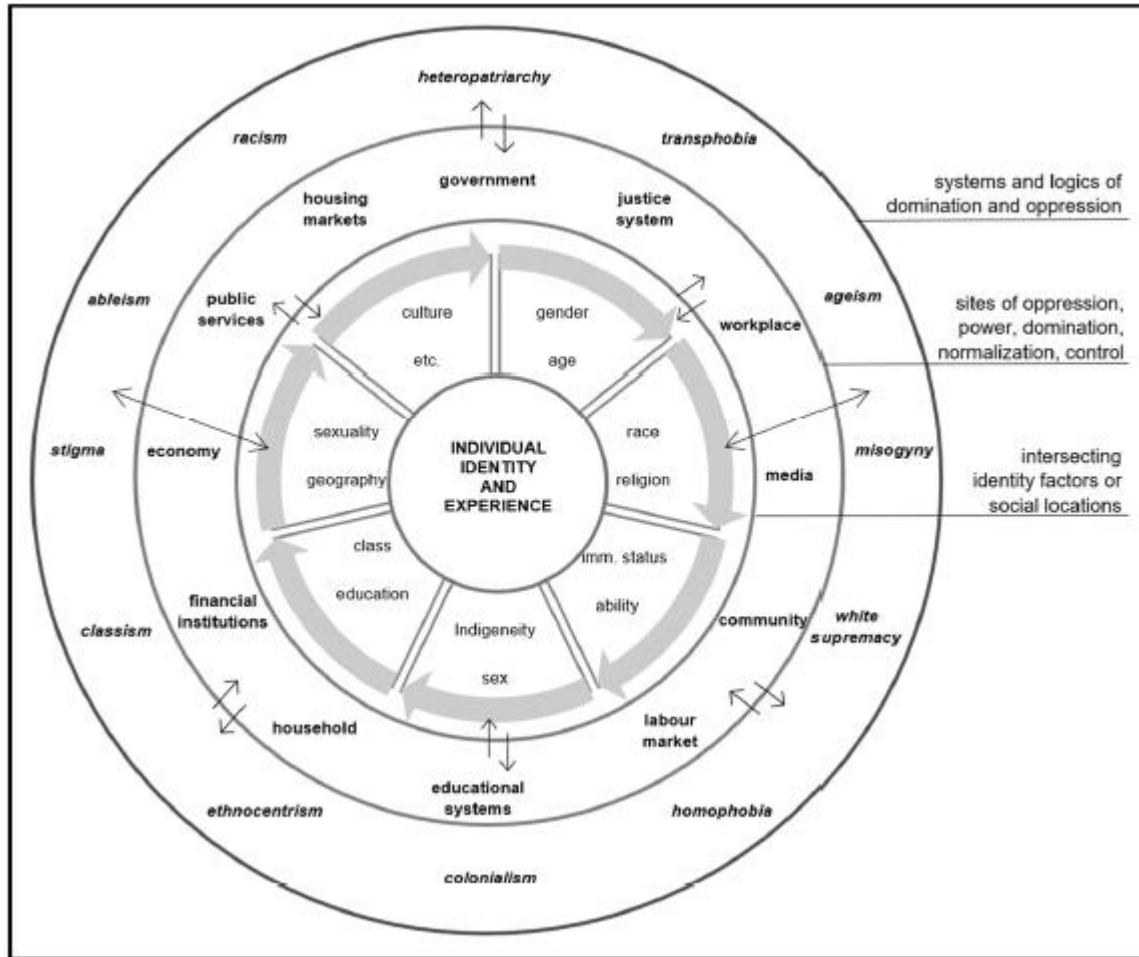
To understand how power is portrayed within the GBA+ training materials, this study drew on Cameron and Tedds' (2023) *Adapted intersectionality visual* (Figure 1 below). Their visual adds onto the existing federal government's intersectionality visual by adding two additional components. Whereas the federal government's visual portrays intersectionality to include individual identities and experiences, like race, gender, geography, etc. (WAGE, 2022), Cameron

and Tedds (2023) include three components which are depicted as interconnected. These three components include systems and logics of domination and oppression (e.g., racism, heteropatriarchy, transphobia, white supremacy, colonialism, etc.); sites of oppression, power, domination, normalization, control (e.g., workplace, community, media, public services, government, justice system, etc.); intersecting identity factors or social locations (these include a combination of sexuality, geography, indigeneity, immigration status, ability, etc.).

For this study, systems and logics of domination and oppression are referred to as *systems of oppression*, and sites of power, domination, normalization, and control are referred to as *sites of power*. Additionally, for this study the interconnection of all three components are referred to as *social location*. Therefore, this study looks at how government and NGO training materials:

- Acknowledge how organizations function as sites of power where identity is produced and experienced (e.g., workplace, media, justice system, educational systems, public services, etc.).
- Assess how systems of oppression (e.g., heteropatriarchy, colonialism) are reproduced on different levels (e.g., individual, social, institutional).
- Demonstrate how power operates through relations that are mutually constitutive and reinforcing.

Figure 1 Adapted intersectionality visual. Source: Cameron and Tedds (2023).



To conduct the CDA of training materials, this study adapted guiding questions from Cameron and Tedds intended to support policy analysis (2023, pp. 19-20). For the purpose of this study, the guiding questions were adapted to include a broader range of activities, like the facilitation of training, the development of GBA+ training materials and project management, as shown in the next chapter. The goal is to support a comparison of how government and NGOs conceptualize and use intersectionality with consideration of how power is represented in such materials.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

### Methodology

This qualitative study uses discourse analysis with a critical methodology to compare how governments prepare their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+ in comparison to NGOs. Using critical theory to guide the methodology with epistemological and ontological considerations, this study examines the similarities and differences in capacity building strategies and training used by different organizations.

A CDA was chosen to examine the training materials, based on the idea that policies like GBA+ are revealed not only through laws and regulations but also through texts, practices, symbols, and messages that communicate values (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 9). This type of analysis provides an opportunity to examine discursive processes that are influenced by power, knowledge, ideologies, and institutional and social contexts (Irving & English, 2008). This is relevant to consider given the colonial history of Canada and ongoing challenges with colonial systems and systemic oppression experienced by Indigenous people. The process and planning involved in the CDA are outlined in the *Methods* section below.

Critical theory is a philosophical framework that aims to analyze and question power relations, dominant ideologies, and social inequities through a critical examination of society, culture, and institutions (Horkheimer, 1972; Kincheloe, McLaren, Tobin, Hayes & Steinberg, 2011; Rehbein, 2018). Its purpose extends beyond traditional theories that seek to objectively understand and describe the world (Hoffman, 1987; Horkheimer, 1972; Macdonald, 2017). Instead, critical theory acknowledges the social construction of experience, in relation to social and historical context, as well as power relations that produce them (Kincheloe, McLaren, Tobin, Hayes & Steinberg, 2011). Therefore, drawing on critical theory, this study examined the way power is exercised, the types of knowledge, and discursive strategies that are used in training materials to represent identities and power, define concepts, and set policy and program implications. This type of analysis can help identify discourses that carry implicit biases, omit specific topics, or perspectives.

### Epistemology and Ontology

Critical theory places epistemological questions and their impact on society at the centre of research (Marinopoulou, 2019). This theory looks at the agent or collective in society who produces and creates meaning of knowledge (Marinopoulou, 2019). Therefore, a critical epistemology was used to identify how social and cultural ideologies influence discourse used by NGOs and governments (McGregor, 2018), which impact the professional development and training approaches used. For example, this approach emphasizes the need to look at the subjectivity of professional, disciplinary knowledge, and how it is grounded in sociohistorical context and complex social processes that are not neutral (Farias, Laliberte Rudman, & Magalhães, 2016). This epistemology also aligns with concepts related to intersectionality, in that it seeks to create transformative processes which support justice and emancipation (Farias, Laliberte Rudman, & Magalhães, 2016).

The researcher also utilized a critical ontology asserting people's perceptions and social constructions shape reality, and that complex and interconnected systems also shape it

(Demirbaga, 2024). The strategies used by governments for capacity building may be influenced by factors such as identity and lived experience, political values, and power dynamics (McGregor, 2018). Inductive logic was used to reveal power dynamics and influence which shapes GBA+ discourse in government and NGO training materials.

## **Methodology and Methods**

To explore the different capacity building strategies used by governments and NGOs, a document analysis was carried out. To understand how public servants and service providers apply GBA+, interviews were used to triangulate the findings from the document analysis to support the validity of the findings. Using multiple methods provided a deeper investigation and helped determine if the findings are consistent (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022). The following section outlines the document analysis, interview approach, the interview process and planning, how the interviews were developed, and how they were piloted and modified to ensure the data collected provided the information required to answer the research questions.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Planning and Process**

In this study, the goal of document analysis is to reveal the language and discourse used to describe intersectionality and GBA+ (Bowen, 2009). This study uses publicly available GBA+ training materials (i.e., recorded training sessions and training documents) developed by governments and NGOs, which reduces the obtrusiveness, provides broad coverage over some period of time (Bowen, 2009), and reduces ethical concerns (Morgan, 2022). Since most of the documents selected were available online there was a reduced chance that confidentiality and privacy would be an issue (Morgan, 2022).

To select documents for this study, the researcher browsed the internet looking for Canadian organizations that used GBA+ training materials, such as GBA+ guidance documents and training videos. The researcher used sources, such as organizations' webpages and YouTube channels to help to confirm authenticity of the training materials (Morgan, 2022). One Freedom of Information request was made to the Government of British Columbia. The training materials were reviewed for credibility, and to confirm reliability of the sources (Morgan, 2022). To ensure the documents represented GBA+ consistently, the researcher considered whether the documents reflected similar content (Morgan, 2022), such as similar terminology and guidance on the application of intersectionality and GBA+, including steps, guiding questions, examples and case studies. Training materials that were revised versions of GBA+ were omitted from the study because they lacked representativeness. Lastly, the documents were checked for meaning and clarity in their content (Morgan, 2022, p. 72). A total of 7 documents (i.e., 3 federal and 3 provincial government documents, and 1 NGO document), and a total of 11 recorded training sessions were selected for this study (i.e., 1 federal, 2 provincial, and 8 NGO recorded training sessions). A total of 11 organizations were included in this study (i.e., 1 federal and 3 provincial government organizations, and 5 NGOs), spanning materials from 2016 to 2024. Appendix 2 presents details about the selected materials including publication dates, authors and facilitators of the training documents and sessions, as well as descriptions of what the training included, like terminology related to intersectionality and GBA+, guidance on how to apply GBA+, its benefits, along with examples and case studies to demonstrate how GBA+ is used. The organizations whose materials were analyzed include:

Government organizations:

- Women and Gender Equality Canada
- Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
- Government of British Columbia
- Public Health Agency of Canada and Ontario Network of Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)/Community Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) projects
- Government of Alberta and Alberta Municipalities

Non-government organizations:

- Open Government Partnerships
- Canadian Equity Consulting
- Institute of Transportation
- Defense and Security Foresight Group (DFSG) at the University of Waterloo
- Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA)

To effectively apply a CDA to the selected materials, the researcher developed guiding questions drawing influence from Cameron and Tedds (2023), who applied feminist, intersectional and post-structuralist methods. In addition, this study also drew influence from Christoffersen’s (2021), typology on five applied concepts of intersectionality as explained in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3. Refer to Table 2 for the guiding questions for the CDA.

*Table 2 Critical discourse analysis guiding questions. Source: own.*

Areas of question	Questions
Language and Terminology	1. How are GBA+ and intersectionality defined, and intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status portrayed material? How are successes and outcomes in the GBA+ process defined through the material?
Power	2. How is power portrayed in the materials? Who holds power, and how is it distributed? / How is power acknowledged? 3. How are equity and social justice incorporated into material? (Cameron & Tedds, 2023) 4. How are individuals/groups represented in examples, case studies, or scenarios/ How are diverse experiences accounted for (uniformity/dynamic)?
Implicit Biases	5. Are there instances of implicit bias in the language or content or assumptions made about individuals/groups?
Policy Implications	6. How do the training materials address policy/program implications related to GBA+?
Historical Context	7. How does the historical context influence the language and perspectives presented in the materials?
Discursive Strategies	8. What discursive strategies are employed to convey certain messages about gender and intersecting factors? (examples: metaphors and symbolism,

	euphemisms/dysphemism, decontextualization/recontextualization, repetition and parallelism, etc.) 9. Are there instances of euphemism, euphemistic labelling, or other strategies to influence perception?
Omissions	10. What topics or perspectives are omitted from the training materials in relation to GBA+? 11. Are there gaps in the analysis that could be addressed for a more comprehensive understanding?

**The Interview Process**

Interviews were conducted with NGO and government employees to collect primary data which was triangulated with the primary data from the document analysis. The use of these approaches in combination supports the corroboration of the findings by reducing the potential biases that may occur through a document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit interview participants from government organizations and NGOs identified by the researcher as using GBA+. Each interview consisted of 9 questions, it was conducted via Zoom and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. A total of six participants were recruited (three service providers, a public servant, and a participant with experience in both NGOs and government).

*The Development of the Interviews*

To develop the interviews, the researcher drafted open-ended questions based on Cameron and Tedds’ (2023) principles of intersectionality. The goal was to better understand how policy tools, such as GBA+ frameworks, supported GBA+ trained employees in meeting the needs and interest of the diverse populations they served. This included formatting questions focused on participants’ conceptual understanding and perspective of the implementation of GBA+. To understand how different social and cultural backgrounds influenced participants’ perspectives, the interviewer started with introductions to get an idea of the participants’ values, education, cultural backgrounds, community affiliations. Similar to Hankivsky and Mussell’s (2018) interview guide, the questions were focused on participants’ perspectives and experiences. To develop an understanding of how the participants applied intersectionality within GBA+, the participants were asked about their thoughts and feelings regarding how their knowledge and expertise has impacted organizational services and programs. Refer to Table 3 for the interview questions.

To ensure data was captured accurately, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were shared with participants so they could see how their responses were recorded, which provided opportunity for clarity and ensured the data was not misrepresented by the researcher (McGregor, 2018). During the interview process, the interviewer observed and journaled their own thoughts and feelings to identify biases, opinions, values or personal background during data collection (McGregor, 2018).

Table 3 Interview guide. Source: own.

Interview guide
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What type of GBA+ training have you received?</li><li>2. Can you please provide an example of when you have applied/incorporated a GBA+ process to address different issues or organizational needs within your field?</li><li>3. What are the steps you took in this process?</li><li>4. How do you feel your application of GBA+ has impacted the work that you do within your field?</li><li>5. Did you experience any challenges/barriers or limitations with GBA+ to resolve existing social issues/meet organizational objectives?</li><li>6. How do you include intersectionality within your work with GBA+?</li><li>7. Do you experience any challenges or barriers to incorporating intersectionality within your work with GBA+?</li><li>8. Are there additional types of knowledge/skills/experiences you feel have helped with applying a GBA+ within your work or field?</li><li>9. Any additional issues you feel have not been raised? Any final comments you would like to make?</li></ol>

### *Interview Data Analysis*

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection to support any adjustments that were needed within the research design (McGregor, 2018). NVivo software was used to organize the data sources after they were transcribed. The researcher then read through the data and used inductive logic to identify the emerging themes (McGregor, 2018). During the data analysis, the researcher aimed to reduce biases by engaging in a reflective approach, taking and reviewing notes during data collection and analysis, and maintaining a journal to reflect on thoughts and feelings throughout the research process to identify how worldviews and prejudices may shape perspective in order to reduce assumptions and biases within the study (O’Leary, 2021).

Going through the organized data in NVivo, the researcher completed multiple reads to further categorize and subcategorize the data, and search for patterns and interconnections between the emerging themes (McGregor, 2018). This involved using open, axial and selective coding. First, an open coding strategy was used to collect and theme quotations from transcripts (McGregor, 2018). An axial coding strategy was used to cluster and label open codes (McGregor, 2018). Finally, the axial codes were connected to create tighter clusters based on concepts and theories to create selective codes (McGregor, 2018). Chapter 4 presents the findings and discussion with descriptions and segments of the data alongside an interpretative narrative (McGregor, 2018).

### **Trustworthiness, Reliability and Validity: Ensuring Data Quality**

To ensure the data was trustworthy, the researcher used multiple methods to collect data and triangulate findings, validating the authenticity of the discourse analysis. Continuous reflexivity involving self-critique and self-awareness was used to help control biases and strengthen the study’s trustworthiness. This involved creating awareness of the researcher’s subjectivities when interpreting the data (McGregor, 2018). To ensure credibility, authenticity, and dependability of the research, there were member checks conducted. Participants had the opportunity to see how their perspectives were interpreted within the research, which provided opportunity to ensure

transparency, and that their views and responses were not misinterpreted or misrepresented (McGregor, 2018). A literature comparison was conducted to identify the transferability of the study, and whether it can be applied to other contexts and settings (McGregor, 2018).

### **Ethical and/or Research Review**

The Human Research Ethics Board's review and approval was obtained for this study (University of Victoria, 2021). Refer to Appendix 1 to see the Certificate of Approval. To interview employees about their experiences and perspectives, the researcher carefully ensured informed consent, honesty, integrity, humane considerations and confidentiality, to protect the participants and prevent any harm or negative consequences (McGregor, 2018). For example, since the interview questions were centred on how participants engage within their work, measures were taken to prevent adverse impacts on their employment and relationship with their employer. Additionally, consent for interviews was also used to ensure that the interests and concerns of stakeholders and participants were respected (McGregor, 2018).

## Chapter 4: Document Analysis Findings and Interpretations

### Introduction

This study used a CDA to examine how power relations and ideologies are represented and reinforced through discourse on intersectionality within GBA+. The following sections will explore the narratives, discourses, and paradigms used in educational materials and training sessions to describe and represent the three interrelated components within intersectionality identified by Cameron and Tedds (2023). These are: 1) systems of oppression, 2) sites of power, 3) identities and experiences. The chapter starts by comparing how government and NGO training materials discussed systems of oppression to represent power relations, as well as how narratives and ideologies that reinforced institutional power. Then, it critically examines how the training materials discussed sites of power in relation to processes that contribute to social differences, and whether identity and experiences were portrayed as dynamic or static. In addition, the chapter discusses how governments and NGOs use euphemisms and positivistic and post-positivistic language when discussing power dynamics and intersectional components. Finally, it investigates how GBA+ was justified through the lens of efficiency discourse and social justice concepts.

### Systems of Oppression

This section discusses how government and NGO training sessions spoke about systems of oppression and their influence on individuals and society. It will highlight the use of similar language and explore the patterns observed in discussions that included systems of oppression compared to those that excluded them. In this regard, it is worth noticing that there were instances where similar language was used in government and NGO training materials to refer to systems of oppression—for example, one government and one NGO referred to patriarchy as “male-dominat[ion]”—but they had different perceptions of the impact of patriarchy (Defense and Security Foresight Group [DFSG], 2021b; DFSG, 2021c; Government of BC, 2020). Refer to Table 4 for examples from a provincial government and an NGO.

*Table 4 Examples of how government and NGO training sessions spoke about patriarchy. Source: own.*

Provincial Government	NGO
<p>Observed how specific identity groups, like women and people with disabilities, had inequitable access to a building because of “power structures that built [the environment] maintained [the environment], made [the environment]...” emphasizing the need to notice, call out and dismantle these “structures” (The Exchange, 2020).</p>	<p>Highlighted the challenges of “naming patriarchy and racism” within a male-dominated environment, they opened up learners’ perspectives on how organizations can begin to create internal changes to an organization’s culture (DSFG, 2021a).</p>
<p>Referred to male domination as a structure that has the power to influence the surrounding environment, they implied</p>	<p>The facilitator talked about how to introduce concepts like “patriarchy, feminism, racism and colonialism” to individuals within an organization to deepen their understanding of how to support “gender equality” and “inclusive security” (DFSG, 2021a).</p>

patriarchy contributed to the inaccessibility experienced by different identity groups.	
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Both examples in Table 4 emphasized how systems of oppression influenced organizational processes and culture, such as the considerations made when designing and constructing a building. However, the provincial government encouraged learners to think about how dismantling systems of oppression can improve the external outputs of an organization and create equity for populations being served. The NGO, on the other hand, encouraged learners to think about how organizations can begin to make internal changes to identify and dismantle systems of oppression, such as patriarchy, which suggested a more transformative approach by encouraging systemic change.

Governments and NGOs also discussed the interconnection between systems of oppression and individual perspectives and experiences. Refer to Table 5 for examples from a provincial government and three NGOs.

*Table 5 Government and NGO training materials discuss the interconnection between systems of oppression and individual perspectives and experiences. Source: own.*

<b>Provincial Government</b>	<b>NGOs</b>
The facilitator mentioned systems of oppression, like "...patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, eurocentrism..." and how they influence biases and are "deeply embedded and unconscious" (Government of BC).	<p>The facilitator directly named systems of oppression within their examples, such as patriarchy, racism, colonialism, white supremacy (Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies [ARAISA], 2024a), and settler nationalism (DFSG, 2021c).</p> <p>There was discussion about how past experiences of colonialism and patriarchy influence the "culture we live in," creating an "invisible culture" that influences the way individuals "think, behave and act," leading to people having "blind spots" (Institute of Transportation Engineers [ITE], 2022).</p>

As highlighted in Table 5, when the provincial government and the NGOs talked about how systems of oppression influence social and cultural norms, they showed how individual perspective and experiences are connected and influenced by systems of oppression. This helps to demonstrate the challenges of first identifying how such systems can indirectly influence policies, programs and initiatives. It encourages strategies, such as those used in GBA+, to identify biases and assumptions shaped by systems of oppression. However, when systems of oppression were omitted from the examples, there was a disconnect on what caused or contributed to inequities experienced by certain identity groups. For example, in an *Introduction to GBA+*, WAGE stated that Indigenous peoples "occupied some of the lowest-skilled and precarious jobs in the forest sector" and that Indigenous women "face key challenges in terms of workforce attachment." This example excluded systems of oppression (i.e., colonialism) and did

not provide context about what contributed to the inequities experienced by Indigenous people and Indigenous women. Instead, these groups were presented as having problems without identifying what causes or contributes to inequities. Furthermore, the example did not offer an opportunity to explore solutions which involved dismantling systemic structures and systems. Instead, the focus remained on external output, like adding to and enhancing existing initiatives to “better engag[e] the skills of certain groups... that have been traditionally under-represented in high-skilled and management sectors...” (WAGE, 2022).

The above example constructs a narrative that benefits the federal government. It reinforces the perception of the organization as being a neutral and objective party where it avoids discussing the colonial history of Canada and the impacts of ongoing colonization. Thus, the training material avoided discussing inequitable power dynamics and the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. For instance, “considerable opposition” was also used to describe Indigenous people’s reaction when there is no direct consultation or engagement with them about initiatives (WAGE, 2022). However, there was no mention of why there may be considerable opposition. When systems of oppression, like colonization, were excluded from the training material, the GBA+ learners missed important context about what contributed to barriers and inequalities experienced by Indigenous people in general and Indigenous women specifically.

Both provincial government and NGO training sessions provided context about how deeply engrained ideologies are within organizational culture and processes, pointing to the need to notice and dismantle these systems. However, while the former suggested it boosted the external output of an organization, the latter highlighted that it promoted cultural change within the organization. The NGO also provided tangible strategies that learners may consider and apply when trying to dismantle systems of oppression within their organizations. On the contrary, through the omission of systems of oppression, the federal government did not acknowledge the historical context, colonization, and power dynamics between Canada and Indigenous people. This created a narrative that reinforced the federal government’s institutional power and may contribute to learners having an incomplete understanding of how to apply GBA+ with consideration to the inequities and oppression experienced by Indigenous people.

## **Sites of Power**

NGO and government training materials spoke about sites of power, like media, the workplace, government and other public and private sector organizations, to provide context to the processes which give rise to social differences, such as culturalization and racialization (Dhamoon, 2011). When discussing the role of sites of power and processes, NGOs and governments provided insight into where tangible change can be made to address the inequitable experiences of intersecting identity groups. Comparing how government and NGOs discussed organizational processes, such as data collection, led to specific narratives about organizational objectivity and neutrality, which avoided addressing institutional power. Similar to systems of oppression being excluded from training sessions, when federal government training material excluded sites of power from discourse, it also removed important context about the relationship between Canada and Indigenous people. As result, this again reinforced the power of institutions, and learners were not provided training on how GBA+ could be used to support commitments under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021).

Some NGO training materials discussed sites of power by highlighting how social differences are created. They looked at how sites of power play a role in processes like culturalization and racialization, which push certain identity groups to the margins. For example, an NGO facilitator talked about the effects of ableism being embedded within culture. Their example looked how media and rights movements “underrepresented” people with disabilities while also stating how “...the world [people with disabilities] live in and the systems and structures...” are not designed to accommodate them (Springboard Services, 2021). The facilitator was able to demonstrate how actions from media and rights movements (i.e., limited discourse, considerations and accommodation of people with disabilities) reinforced ableist norms and values within societal culture through their exclusion of people with disabilities. Their example implied that increasing awareness of the experience of specific identity groups, like people with disabilities, can support culturalization that may lead to change in systems, structures, and support inclusivity of people with disabilities.

Similarly, provincial training sessions also discussed sites of power and their role in processes that contribute to the different treatment, experiences and marginalization of certain intersecting identity groups. For example one provincial government spoke about how the police provided different treatment to different intersecting identity groups, where the facilitator stated how their social position as a “...white...English-speaking...heterosexual, university educated...” matched “...societal power structures...” meant that they could “...assume that [they’ll] be treated well... seen as innocent... for the most part [they could] trust the police for help...” which was “... not the case for everyone” (The Exchange, 2020). In this example the facilitator referred to power structures, it can be implied they were speaking to systems of oppression like eurocentrism and white supremacy, which play a role in processes of racialization and culturalization that marginalize certain intersecting identity groups while benefiting others. Similar to how NGOs demonstrated the role sites of power have in culturalization and the exclusion of people with disabilities, the provincial training session demonstrated how sites of power, like the police, also play a role in processes, like racialization, which results in inequitable treatment among different intersecting identity groups.

Looking at another example from the Government of BC's training session alongside one from ARAISA (2024b) about data collection highlighted how the omission of sites of power resulted in strategies that portrayed governments as neutral and objective, thereby reinforcing institutional power. Refer to Table 6 for an example of a provincial government’s approaches to data collection in comparison to an NGO.

*Table 6 Examples of the different approaches used by governments and NGOs when discussing data collection. Source: own.*

<b>Provincial Government</b>	<b>NGO</b>
When the facilitator was asked how one could “...consolidate data... and the risk of further stigmatizing citizens or clients,” evaluative policy and program language was used. The facilitator stated that there should be consideration to what the program is “aiming” to do and a need to “...weigh those risks with	Discussed the need to be sensitive and cognizant of how organizations go about collecting data in communities due to “historical trauma” (ARAISA, 2024b).  Spoke about data management of organizations and the need to create

<p>the benefits of the program...” when considering “people’s personal information or sensitivities” (The Exchange, 2020)</p>	<p>“transparent processes and express the intent... to alleviate concerns...” of the populations being served. Additionally, the facilitator of this session highlighted how gaps may still exist with disaggregated data and despite efforts “... it may not entirely alleviate...” concerns (ARAISA, 2024b).</p>
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The examples in Table 6 demonstrate that, by excluding these sites of power from the discussion, the provincial government did not consider the role of organizations in contributing to or addressing issues. This narrative remained focused on organizational processes and did not provide learners with an opportunity to examine how the relationship between a site of power and the populations it serves may impact the data collection process. The omission of sites of power thus resulted in the reinforcement of institutional power. In contrast, facilitators in an NGO training session focused on the relationship between sites of power and the populations being served and encouraged learners to think about power dynamics between them.

In another case, federal government training material used language that excluded sites of power and their relationship to the populations being served, specifically when discussing the forest sector and communities that depend on forests. See Table 7 for an example of how sites of power were omitted from a case study in federal government training material.

*Table 7 The federal government’s forest sector case study illustrates the GBA+ process. Source: own.*

<p><b>Federal government</b></p> <p>Mentioned that forests are significant to Indigenous peoples, providing “economic survival” and “spiritual wellbeing,” and that there was a need to ensure Indigenous peoples’ “local traditions and traditional land management practices” were not jeopardized (WAGE, 2022).</p> <p>Emphasized that it would be “useful to consult those with knowledge of local ecosystems, including Indigenous forest sector organizations/representatives, community groups and other experts,” to support “issues of innovation and diversification in the forest sector” (WAGE, 2022).</p> <p>Stated that learners should “think about which stakeholders to consider, as well as what value to place on their perspectives” (WAGE, 2022).</p> <p>GBA+ can support “innovation and economic diversification efforts... support diverse needs, skills, and potential workforce of each forest-dependent community.” (WAGE, 2022)</p>
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In Table 7, when the federal government excluded itself from the examples as a site of power, it removed the opportunity to analyze institutional power. First, the training material was focused on the traditional, cultural and economic survival that forests provided to Indigenous people without addressing Indigenous peoples’ rights, and the obligation of the state to consult, cooperate and obtain consent from Indigenous people on projects related to their lands, territories

or other resources as outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2018).

Second, the role of federal government as a site of power and the relationship with Indigenous peoples was not discussed. While the example highlights the importance of building partnerships and relationships with communities to support economic diversification, it lacks context on how this should be carried out. In addition, it provided little awareness about how GBA+ users could support the federal government's commitments to upholding its commitments under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021). Lastly, the training material did not address or consider the power dynamics between governments and the populations they seek to engage with. Encouraging GBA+ users to identify which stakeholders are important and to consider their values and perspectives without acknowledging the historical and ongoing relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canada may disempower stakeholders and reinforce institutional power. When GBA+ users have the authority to decide whose voices are prioritized, it assumes that biases and assumptions can be effectively mitigated, perpetuating a narrative that portrays government processes—such as GBA+—as neutral and objective.

The exclusion and inclusion of sites of power in government and NGO training materials revealed that different strategies and focuses of organizational processes, like data collection, either served to empower or disempower external stakeholders and partners. For instance, the focus of both provincial and federal governments on organizational operations was a missed opportunity to examine the power dynamics between sites of power and the populations they served. This creates limitations in the way staff are prepared to operationalize intersectionality as they may not be informed on the importance of observing power dynamics and relationships between institutions. Without this critical observation governments remain “uninterrogated” sites of power (Cameron & Tedds, 2023, p. 15). Unless staff are properly trained to recognize institutional power and address it, organizations may unintentionally perpetuate harmful practices.

### **Representation of Intersecting Identities and Experiences**

Both governments and NGOs represented identities as static and dynamic. They depicted the static representation when illustrating intersecting identity groups as having a fixed status, attributing advantages and disadvantages to those groups (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Manning & Levac, 2022). Dynamic representation was most strongly demonstrated through training materials that drew attention to contextual environments, sites of power, and systems of oppression (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Manning & Levac, 2022), such as providing context about what contributes to food insecurity rather than labelling groups as having food insecurity. Using this type of representation provided perspective on how marginalization of identity groups was influenced by context, including sites of power and their policies and initiatives. The following paragraphs elaborate on the ways in which people's identities were represented as both static and dynamic.

## Static Representation of Identity

When governments and NGOs portrayed identities and experiences as static, they used an additive approach where gender was considered first (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Lefroy & Stacey, 2021; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021). This often occurred when training materials looked to demonstrate differences within groups, which gives staff the opportunity to understand the different considerations that are needed to provide equitable services. For instance, when GBA and GBA+ were used interchangeably by governments and NGOs, discourse encouraged a comparison of “diverse” groups of men, women and non-binary people (Alberta Municipalities, 2021; Government of BC, 2021; Government of BC, 2020; IAAC, 2021; ITE, 2022; Open Government Partnerships, 2019; WAGE, 2022). This implies that staff are trained to think about gender first and other identities and experiences are considered in addition and when relevant, which may limit the intersectional analysis to specific categories and identity groups.

Another example of governments and NGOs using an additive approach to GBA+ was to demonstrate the importance of this tool. This could be observed when one provincial government discussed the importance of addressing the intersecting inequities experienced among different intersecting identity groups. A similar pattern was also identified within an NGO training materials discussing the wage gap between men and women. Refer to Table 8 for examples of how governments and NGOs used data points when discussing intersectionality.

*Table 8 How a provincial government and NGO represented identities as static. Source: own.*

Provincial Government	NGO
<p>“Black men aged 45 and older were twice as likely to report negative financial impacts from COVID-19” (Government of BC, 2023).</p> <p>“23% of people with disabilities in Canada are low income” (Government of BC, 2023).</p> <p>No context was provided as to why these disparities existed.</p>	<p>Underscored the need to “understand these different facets,” like “white women,” “women with disabilities,” “Indigenous women,” and “women of colour” because they have different experiences of pay equity (Springboard Services, 2021).</p> <p>Expressed that understanding these differences, where women of disabilities, Indigenous women and women of colour “make significantly less,” supported the ability to more “...effectively solve a problem...” (Springboard Services, 2021).</p> <p>No context was provided as to why these disparities existed.</p>

Without providing context regarding how these data points lead to disparities, the examples in Table 8 were only able to provide GBA+ learners an introduction to the initial step of intersectionality that involves gathering information and disaggregated data about identity factors (Lefroy & Stacey, 2022). An incomplete analysis of these groups demonstrates only an additive approach, where the deficits experienced by these groups become the primary focus of GBA+, leading to a static representation of identity. In the provincial government and NGO examples,

there was no socio-cultural or historical context, nor any indication of what sites of power and systems of oppression caused or contributed to the inequities experienced by the different intersecting identity groups. Therefore, these examples unintentionally reinforce language that encourages deficits to be associated with identity groups. If the examples had explored socio-historical context, they may have provided learners a more nuanced understanding of why these statistics are relevant which would have contributed to a more dynamic representation of identity and experience.

Another NGO looked at the different experiences of women in comparison to men, examining the intersection of gender and race without fully exploring social location, like how individual identities and experiences interact with systems of oppression and sites of power. For example, an NGO discussed women's different experiences stating that "... Black women and Latino women" are "hit disproportionately," and "white women" as making "significant gains" (DFSG, 2021a), but no context was provided as to why these groups have different experiences. The example highlights the existence of economic disparities, labelling Black and Latino women as disadvantaged in terms of economic recovery while suggesting that White women possess inherent advantages. However, it does not fully explore the reasons behind these disparities or the institutions reinforcing these inequities. As a result, groups are categorized as either having advantages or deficits, which can perpetuate and reinforce stigmas (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hunting & Hankivsky, 2020; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Scala & Paterson, 2017). In both NGO cases, the focus remained on the issues or deficits faced by these identity groups. This narrow perspective led learners to concentrate on the differences and disadvantages among identity groups without considering the systems and structures that contribute to or cause these inequities.

The static representation of identities and experiences in both government and NGO training materials were associated with an additive approach to identity or were focused on specific identity groups, like Black men and people with disabilities. This type of representation provided learners an understanding of how GBA+ could be used to identify the different experiences within groups. This suggested that GBA+ helped to create more effectiveness and efficiency of organizational programs and services, aligning with an integrationist approach that focuses on the enhancement of organizational processes rather than creating systemic and structural change (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017). Without providing a reason as to why these groups experienced advantages or disadvantages, government and NGOs provided an incomplete perspective of intersecting identities and experiences. In addition, they were less focused on systems and structures. This poses risk that GBA+ is used as a band-aid solution rather than addressing the underlying factors which create these inequities.

### **Dynamic Representation of Identity**

This study also found that governments and NGOs represented identities and experiences as dynamic by exploring how certain intersecting identity groups experienced deficits due to their context (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Manning & Levac, 2022). When identities were represented as dynamic, and transformative discourse was used, it encouraged learners to think about how they could approach their work collaboratively and with communities to co-develop services and programs that are tailored to meet the needs of the populations they served. Exploring dynamic identities using integrationist discourse, some organizations were able to highlight the role of sites of power. In some cases, no

transformative or integrationist discourse was used, but dynamic representation of identities was still demonstrated when governments and NGOs introduced learners to intersectionality.

The use of integrationist and transformative discourse, and dynamic representation of identities and experiences could be observed in one federal government training session provided by PHAC to the Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects. The facilitator provided an example of how service providers could apply Sex and Gender-based Analysis Plus (SGBA+) through a case study on food insecurity (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). In the session, dynamic representation allowed learners to explore how intersecting identities were influenced by their contextual environment, such as their interaction with sites of power. The example also centered a transformative approach that encouraged learners to think about systemic change, like involving clients in decision-making processes, and an integrationist approach aimed at improving the output of organizations through the optimization of service delivery. Refer to Table 9 for an example of the statements used during the federal government training session that dynamically represented identities.

*Table 9 An example of how a federal government represented identities as dynamic using both integrationist and transformative discourse. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government</b>
<p>Looked at the access to food security of a “racialized and lesbian couple” and how their experiences of food security were influenced by sites of power, like “the local resource centre,” that may not provide services which consider their needs and local infrastructure may not provide accessible transportation which may prevent them from being able to obtain the supports that are needed (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).</p> <p>Asked learners to consider whether specific populations were “...involved in the implementation of the service...,” to consider “...develop[ing] and deliver[ing] services with clients... empower[ing] clients to access these services...,” and the need to ensure “services are co-developed with their clients... to ensure unique experiences and needs are considered and reflected in programming” (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).</p> <p>Encouraged learners to use GBA+ to provide “tailored” services (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).</p>

In the example outlined in Table 9, the barriers and challenges experienced by the couple were presented as being influenced by the sites of power that did not consider the diverse needs of different intersecting identity groups. This demonstrated to learners that service providers and infrastructure in communities can create inequitable experiences and barriers when they do not use GBA+ to consider the unique experience of those with different intersecting identities. This example demonstrates the use of an integrationist and transformative discourse through its focus on service delivery and encouraging a re-evaluation of the relationship between service providers and the populations they serve. The combination of both approaches changes how services are developed, ensuring they cater to the unique needs of individuals, with the perspectives of service users included in decision-making processes.

Some NGO training sessions used integrationist discourse to illustrate how identity and experiences intersect and are dynamic. This was demonstrated when the facilitators discussed how the disadvantages various groups face are often related to contextual factors and the impacts of power sites, such as government policies. Additionally, these structures can either reinforce existing disadvantages or help facilitate change. Refer to Table 10 for an example of how a couple of NGOs represented identity as dynamic using integrationist discourse.

*Table 10 How an NGO represented identity as dynamic using integrationist discourse. Source: own.*

NGO 1	NGO 2
<p>Stated how a policy on “conditional permanent residence” from a site of power, “IRCC [Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada],” contributed to creating a risk that “vulnerable sponsored spouses or partners” would “stay in abusive relationships, out of fear of losing their permanent residence” (ARAISA, 2024b).</p> <p>Revising policies to reduce risks experienced by vulnerable groups “...aligned with an overall government effort to support gender equality, as well as combat gender-based violence” (ARAISA, 2024b).</p>	<p>Highlighted that GBA+ supported the city with understanding how their services were accessed, like why “certain transit routes have dropped in usership,” and “how can we improve equitable access” (ITE, 2022).</p> <p>Identified that certain groups, such as women of color and young women, tended to use alternative forms of transit, like Ubers and lifts, instead of public transportation due to safety concerns when using transit routes at night (ITE, 2022).</p> <p>Changes in service delivery where individuals could request to be dropped off at undesignated stops if they feel safer being closer to their homes (ITE, 2022).</p>

The examples in Table 10 illustrated how dynamic representation of identity provided the information necessary to improve organizational processes, like policies and the delivery of services. Through these examples learners were able to see how GBA+ helps identify how organizational initiatives may adversely impact identity groups. By identifying these issues, governments and organizations may create solutions that address these barriers and challenges. In addition, these steps may align with broader government or organizational objectives.

In another NGO training session, identities and experiences were also dynamically represented. However, the focus was on the relationship between the intersectional components (i.e., identities and experiences, sites of power, and systems of oppression) rather than integrationist objectives. Refer to Table 11 for an example of how an NGO dynamically represented the identity of Muslim men through an example of intersectionality.

*Table 11 Examples of how NGOs represented identities. Source: own.*

NGO
<p>A researcher discussed how the policies and practices of sites of power, such as the “... counter-terrorism policies and practices...” of a state which “target[ed]... younger Muslim</p>

men...” were influenced by current events like “911” and the resulting “intense paranoia and fear” (DFSG, 2021c).

Emphasized how systems of oppression, like islamophobia, led to “stereotypes” and “fixed ideas of Islam,” which cast certain groups as “deviant,” where “Muslim men [were] seen as threatening to the state...” (DFSG, 2021c).

The statements outlined in Table 11 demonstrate dynamic identities and experiences through the description of identity and experiences in conjunction to socio-political context, site of power, and systems of oppression. In these examples, the facilitator showed how negative stereotyping, sentiments about religion, and public perceptions following recent and current events contributed to the deficits experienced by Muslim men. This highlights how the socio-political context and intersectional components interact to influence the disadvantages and adverse experiences faced by individuals in specific social locations.

To summarize, when one of the federal government training sessions dynamically represented identities and experiences using transformative and integrationist discourse, it provided learners concrete examples of how GBA+ could drive systemic change. By dynamically representing identities and experiences, they were able to inform learners of the value of intersectionality in better aligning an organization’s output to meet the needs of the target populations. When both government and NGOs employed integrationist discourse to discuss identities and experiences as dynamic, they highlighted the necessity of GBA+ for improving policies and services to better meet the needs of marginalized populations. This dynamic representation and integrationist discourse also created an opportunity to examine the role organizations play in either alleviating or perpetuating the disadvantages faced by certain intersecting identity groups. Socio-political context, including the impacts of policies and current events, proved an important factor to consider when addressing the disadvantages faced by intersecting identity groups.

### **Describing Intersectionality Through Euphemisms**

In government and NGO training sessions, facilitators discussed their own power and privilege but often used euphemisms when addressing power dynamics and intersectional components (e.g., “societal power structures”). This reliance on euphemisms resulted in training materials avoiding meaningful discussions about systemic and structural oppression. Consequently, learners did not receive the necessary context to understand how systemic oppression and discrimination manifest. Prior knowledge of systemic oppression was essential before the GBA+ training, as important context was absent from the sessions.

A facilitator spoke about their social location in a provincial government training session. However, they did not include a comparison to other intersecting identities and instead focused on the privileges associated with specific intersecting identity factors. Similarly, in an NGO training session, a facilitator also used euphemisms when discussing their social location to help learners understand intersectionality. Both avoided offering specific examples of how various intersecting identity groups experience inequities and barriers in these situations. Refer to Table 12 for examples of how a provincial government and NGO used euphemisms when discussing intersectionality.

Table 12 Examples of how governments and NGO used euphemisms. Source: own.

Provincial Government	NGO
<p>The facilitator spoke about their social location as a “... white... English-speaking... heterosexual, university educated.” (The Exchange, 2020)</p> <p>Remained focused on the privileges associated with specific intersecting identity factors, where the facilitator stated how they “trust the police for help” and could assume they would be “...treated well and seen as innocent...” which is “... the case for everyone...” (The Exchange, 2020).</p> <p>Systems of oppression were not named. Instead, the facilitator mentioned that their social position matched the “societal power structures.” (The Exchange, 2020).</p>	<p>Used phrases like “different entry points and experiences” and “hampered” to describe the negative experiences that individuals with different intersecting identities have when interacting with systems of oppression (ITE, 2022).</p> <p>Compared how their social positionality as a “young, white, woman...Jewish... living in South Carolina” results in a “different experiences of the world...” and a “program or policy” in comparison to “... black woman, living in South Carolina, who is 57 and has four kids...” (ITE, 2022).</p> <p>“The career of a young, white, able-bodied woman might improve with gender equality protections” (ITE, 2022).</p> <p>“An older Black, disabled, and lesbian woman may continue to be hampered by racism, ageism, ableism, and homophobia” (ITE, 2022).</p>

The provincial government example in Table 12 demonstrated how euphemisms helped to discuss systems of oppression and experiences of privilege without discussing experiences of oppression (The Exchange, 2020). Unless learners were already aware of issues like discrimination and the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the Canada’s criminal justice system (Government of Canada, 2023), they may not grasp how systems of oppression (e.g., racism and colonialism) and sites of power (e.g., the police) contribute to the inequitable experiences and systemic oppression faced by various intersecting identity groups.

Similarly, the NGO examples in Table 18 informed learners that there were differences between intersecting experiences. However, when the facilitators used euphemisms (e.g., “hampered”) and explained these differences as arising from “different entry points and different experiences,” they did not provide the context for why these differences existed or what they entailed (ITE, 2022). This meant learners were expected to have some awareness prior to the GBA+ training to understand how systems of oppression and sites of power interact to influence different intersecting identity groups’ experiences of privilege and oppression.

A federal government training session also used a euphemism to describe how different intersecting identity groups face barriers to health equity when interacting with sites of power and systems of oppression. See Table 13 for an example of how a federal government training session used a euphemism to describe the intersectional experiences of Indigenous women.

Table 13 An example of a euphemism used by a federal government. Source: own.

<b>Federal Government</b>
Used the term “impacts” to describe the interaction between systems of oppression, sites of power, and intersecting identities and experiences.
Examined health inequities during pregnancy, noting that “Indigenous women are at increased risk of preterm birth, gestational diabetes, and high blood pressure.”
Explained that these inequities were linked to “limited maternity care options available in rural and remote communities, insufficient consideration of socio-economic or lifestyle barriers by healthcare services and providers, and the impacts of colonization on interactions with healthcare providers” (CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).

The example in Table 13 illustrates to learners how health services and providers contribute to inequitable experiences when they do not consider unique needs of different intersecting identity groups, such as Indigenous women. However, describing colonization as having an “impact” on interactions between Indigenous women and healthcare providers implied that colonization was an external force rather than a system deeply embedded in societal and cultural norms, as well as organizational structures and processes (CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). This framing overlooks how it operates in relation to racism and white supremacy, contributing to health inequities (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020), and limited cultural safety and consideration for traditional health practices (Harfield et al., 2024). Simply acknowledging colonization as an external force without recognizing it as a system embedded within societal and organizational norms, structures, and processes, may hinder organizations from applying GBA+ in a transformative way. Without drawing connections between how colonization influences the perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours of health service providers, there is less consideration for the health needs of Indigenous women. Additionally, the term “impacts” (CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022) did not aid learners in understanding how a lack of trust—stemming from current and historical events—might affect the relationship between Indigenous women and service providers (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020). As mentioned above, learners would require prior knowledge about colonization, which was not addressed in this training session. While some insights were offered on how policies and services might be experienced differently by intersecting identity groups, the absence of context when describing these inequities led to fewer discussions about how sites of power perpetuate and reinforce systems of oppression.

Last, euphemisms were also employed by facilitators in NGO and government training sessions when they discussed their social positions, which resulted in negative impacts of interacting with systems of oppression going unaddressed. In some of these cases, a stronger emphasis was placed on privileges without adequately exploring the systemic discrimination and oppression experienced by different intersecting identity groups, as well as the systems of oppression that cause and contribute to these experiences. When facilitators explained intersectionality and how to apply GBA+, they also used euphemisms. This reliance on euphemisms resulted in less discussion and fewer tangible examples of how sites of power perpetuate and reinforce these systems of oppression. Learners needed some prior knowledge about systems of oppression, such

as colonization, to fully grasp the context of the examples provided during the training sessions, particularly regarding the relationship between Indigenous women and healthcare providers.

### **Positivistic and Post-positivistic Paradigms to Address Personal Biases and Assumptions**

Government and NGO training materials play a crucial role in promoting self-awareness and addressing individual power and privilege to mitigate biases and assumptions in the development of programs, policies, and initiatives. The training materials attempt to support an unbiased application of GBA+, by incorporating diverse perspectives. These materials approach the topic of personal biases and assumptions through two distinct philosophical frameworks. The first, rooted in positivism, emphasizes objective, value-free research and presents government organizations as neutral entities (McGregor, 2018). The emphasis of quantitative measurement processes is thought to reinforce so-called masculine characteristics, like reasoning and logic while avoiding context, emotion and relationality (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014). The preference for this type of measurement and evidence-based approach has grown substantially among organizations (Merry, 2011). Often this approach renders invisible the judgements that inform objective measures (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014). In contrast, the second approach, grounded in post-positivism, recognizes the subjectivity of researchers and participants alike, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of the GBA+ process (McGregor, 2018). This latter framework also highlights the importance of engaging with communities and acknowledges alternative forms of knowledge beyond traditional scientific methods (McGregor, 2018). Both of these approaches aimed to enhance the effectiveness of GBA+ by fostering a deeper understanding of how biases can shape experiences and outcomes.

Government training materials used positivistic language which presented GBA+ as an objective and neutral process. Refer to Table 14 for examples of how the federal government’s training materials used positivistic language to challenge personal biases and assumptions.

*Table 14 Examples of how federal government organizations used positivistic language to address personal biases and assumptions. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government Organizations</b>
<p>Suggested to learners that they should “challenge” their assumptions to “...ensure that any potential negative impacts can be addressed” when using GBA+ (WAGE, 2022).</p> <p>Described how “GBA+ prompts practitioners to challenge assumptions” and to ask “why” disparities existed and “allow[ed]” authorities and those involved in an impact assessment to identify “evidence-based, targeted, and appropriate mitigation measures” (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada [IAAC], 2021).</p>

In Table 14, the examples illustrate how federal government organizations viewed challenging assumptions as linked to positivistic ideals. Using the word “ensure” implied that this process would mitigate the negative impacts that may be caused by assumptions (WAGE, 2022). The assumption that mitigating measures may be taken to eliminate biases, assumes the GBA+ user is detached from the GBA+ process and, therefore, can apply an objective lens, similar to how positivistic paradigms are applied within research (McGregor, 2018; Smith, 1983). While the

training materials broadly addressed assumptions and challenges to help reduce biases, the language used in the examples reinforced the narrative of government organizations and processes as neutral and objective. This framing may limit a deeper understanding of how power dynamics and biases can influence decision-making and outcomes within these organizations. For instance, personal biases and assumptions, often shaped by deeply embedded societal and cultural ideologies, may go unaddressed. This oversight could undermine the application of GBA+, as unexamined biases could lead to flawed analyses and decisions that fail to account for the diverse experiences of intersecting identity groups.

Other provincial and federal government organizations and NGOs utilized a different approach in their training materials compared to those of federal government organizations discussed above. Instead, these organizations employed post-positivistic language, emphasizing the subjectivity of GBA+ users and highlighting the challenges this subjectivity can pose in addressing biases and assumptions within the GBA+ framework. Refer to Table 15 for examples of how governments and NGOs used post-positivistic discourse when discussing personal biases and assumptions.

*Table 15 Examples of how governments and NGOs use a post-positivistic paradigm when discussing personal biases and assumptions. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government</b>	<b>Provincial Government</b>	<b>NGO</b>
<p>Stated that using “...self-reflexivity requires great practice...” (WAGE, 2023b).</p>	<p>Spoke about how the limited diversity in the workforce means projects, like the coding created for artificial intelligence, are “prone to be implanted with unexamined, undiscussed, and often unconscious assumptions and biases...” (The Exchange, 2020)</p>	<p>Emphasized how unconscious biases shape “... our behaviours and our perspectives...” and how they may be difficult to uncover as “... we don’t know what we don’t know...” suggesting to learners that identifying personal biases will not necessarily result in objectivity (ITE, 2022).</p> <p>Used a metaphor to illustrate how invisible cultural influences perspectives and experiences, making them challenging to identify, stating, “[a]sk how much a fish notices the water—it doesn’t” (DFSG, 2021d).</p> <p>Emphasized the importance of diversity of perspective was important for identifying biases by discussing how they had been presenting their work to their team, where one of their black feminist colleagues stated, “...where am I in</p>

		that chart?” which helped them to recognize their biases and to make their “research more intersectional and... less focused on white women” (DFSG, 2021d).
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As outlined in Table 15, Governments and NGOs highlighted the challenges of using an objective approach by examining how societal and cultural influences shape individual values and perspectives. The federal government example builds on this idea but acknowledges the importance of the perspective of others to help identify these biases. Similarly, the provincial government and NGO examples also illustrate a similar theme, raising concerns about the difficulty of separating oneself from the societal context being analyzed due to the inherently subjective nature of human perspective and the importance of diversity of perspective in helping to identify implicit biases. Moreover, the NGO’s metaphor underscored the often-unnoticed nature of cultural conditioning in shaping individual understanding that makes it difficult to engage in effective self-reflexivity.

In conclusion, the differing approaches to addressing personal biases and assumptions within GBA+ training reflect the complexities of achieving objectivity in a socially and culturally influenced landscape. While positivistic perspectives promote the idea of neutrality in government processes, they may overlook the deeply embedded ideologies that shape individual understanding. In contrast, post-positivistic frameworks highlight the importance of acknowledging subjectivity and the need for diverse perspectives. By fostering a more inclusive environment that values varied viewpoints, organizations can better identify and address unconscious biases, ultimately enhancing the application of GBA+. Emphasizing this diversity enriches the analysis and supports more equitable and informed outcomes in policy and program development.

**Justifying the Application of GBA+ in Training Materials and Sessions**

The application of GBA+ was primarily justified through two distinct types of discourse found in the training materials and sessions. The first method employed by government and NGOs was efficiency discourse, which highlighted how GBA+ contributes to more ‘efficient’ and ‘effective’ organizational processes. The second method involved social justice discourse, encompassing various concepts such as distributive justice, capabilities approach, human rights, and recognition justice. The following sections will expand on each of these concepts and the ideologies associated with social justice, examining how both frameworks justify the application of GBA+.

**Efficiency Discourse**

This study found that when government and NGOs employed efficiency discourse, using terms like “efficiency” and “effectiveness” to describe the benefits of GBA+, they could justify its application. Fu and Kendall (2021) define efficiency discourse in public policy as a means of achieving the most output for a given input (p. 206). Initially introduced by the federal government as an analytical tool to create responsive and inclusive policies, programs, and initiatives (WAGE, 2022), it is not surprising that GBA+ incorporates policy analysis terminology that reflects efficiency discourse, such as “cost-effectiveness” (Siu, 2020, p. 76).

Analyzing the use of efficiency discourse in government and NGO training materials reveals that it serves to legitimize the application of GBA+.

Governments used efficiency discourse to provide learners with an understanding of the benefits of using GBA+ and helped to connect it to existing priorities and work within organizations. This included describing GBA+ as an informative tool that could improve organizations' outcomes and actions. Refer to Table 16 for examples of how provincial governments used efficiency discourse.

*Table 16 Examples of how provincial governments used efficiency discourse. Source: own.*

<b>Provincial Governments</b>
<p>Shared how GBA+ supported “... decision-making to design more effective programs and that delivery more responsive services...” (The Exchange, 2020).</p> <p>Described as a tool to "identify if additional steps [were] needed... it provide[d] an opportunity to revise policies that might have unintended or negative effects” as well as a tool that could support “fiscally and socially responsible governance” (Alberta Municipalities, 2021).</p>

In Table 16, the use of efficiency discourse in the examples highlights its impact on organizational output. In this context, government training materials effectively justified the application of GBA+ by framing it as a tool for enhancing organizational performance and productivity. This alignment positioned GBA+ within an integrationist approach, emphasizing its role in creating more responsive and effective policies and programs (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017).

Some NGO training sessions also employed efficiency discourse to describe the benefits of GBA+. Refer to Table 17 for examples of how NGOs used efficiency discourse to justify the application of GBA+.

*Table 17 Examples of how NGOs used efficiency discourse to justify the application of GBA Plus. Source: own.*

<b>NGOs</b>
<p>“...enhanced decision making, improved data... communication” created “...greater effectiveness... greater empathy and staff engagement...” and was “cost-effective” (Canadian Equity Consulting, 2022).</p> <p>It could support more equitable workplaces, resulting in an “increased efficiency of the operation that they were doing” (DFSG, 2021a).</p> <p>Described how the participation and inclusion of women within their sector increased the efficiency of operations (DFSG, 2021a).</p> <p>“Operational efficiency as a hook” and as a “concrete link” to support buy-in for GBA+ (DFSG, 2021a)</p>

The examples in Table 17 underscored the practical benefits of GBA+ but also positioned it as a crucial tool for achieving greater organizational efficiency (DFSG, 2021a). By using “operational efficiency as a hook,” the facilitator supported buy-in for GBA+ (DFSG, 2021a). They emphasized that connecting GBA+ to familiar terminology created a “concrete link” that helped colleagues understand the relationship between GBA+ and organizational processes. The facilitator suggested “branching out from there” (DFSG, 2021a). This implies that utilizing efficiency discourse to describe the benefits of applying GBA+ is particularly effective in organizations already familiar with and engaged in efficiency discourse.

Through the use of efficiency discourse, government training materials justified the application of GBA+ by framing it as a tool for improving the effectiveness of organizational processes. Similarly, NGOs utilized efficiency discourse to secure buy-in from colleagues, reinforcing the legitimacy of GBA+ as a relevant and useful tool. This process suggests that framing GBA+ in terms of organizational efficiency was an intentional strategy that both government and NGOs employed to align the tool with their operational agendas and objectives. As a result, GBA+ was presented not only as a means for redistributive organizations to better serve marginalized populations but also as a resource that could benefit all organizations by improving internal processes. This approach encouraged a broader application of GBA+ across various sectors, promoting its integration into diverse organizational contexts.

### **Discourse of Social Justice within GBA+**

This study found that various forms of justification were employed to legitimize the application of GBA+ among governments and NGOs. Notably, social justice language was utilized by both entities to highlight the importance of GBA+ within organizations, including terms such as “equality,” “rights” (ARAISA, 2024; Canadian Equity Consulting, 2021; DFSG, 2021abc; WAGE, 2022), and “fair” (ARAISA, 2024), “equality of opportunity” (Canadian Equity Consulting, 2021). However, the term ‘social justice’ was rarely mentioned, and when the term “justice” was used, it lacked a clear definition, or examples of what justice entailed. Despite the absence of explicit references to social justice, ideologies surrounding it still emerged in discussions about the application and benefits of GBA+. Whether intentional or unintentional, these ideologies became apparent as governments and NGOs articulated the relevance of GBA+. Given the complexity of social justice and its varied interpretations, it is unsurprising that its representation in government and NGO sessions was often divided and unclear.

The term ‘social justice’ was not explicitly mentioned, but ‘justice’ was brought up in government and NGO training materials. Refer to Table 18 for how justice was brought up in training materials and sessions by governments and NGOs.

*Table 18 Examples of how governments and NGOs discussed justice. Source: own.*

<b>Provincial Government</b>	<b>NGO</b>
Mentioned justice in relation to legal processes and how limited acknowledgement of intersectional identities “...left [individuals] out of justice...” (The Exchange, 2020).	Stated the need to “...have a focus on racial justice...,” and how there was a social demand for “racial and gender justice” (DFSG, 2021a).

	<p>Discussed the need to "... forward social justice domestically and internationally..." but did not describe what that would entail (DFSG, 2021a).</p> <p>Emphasized the need to look at "ethics as well as justice" without further detail about what it means to look at 'justice' in relation to data collection (ARAISA, 2024b).</p>
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In Table 18, the examples show how the government and NGOs did not provide a clear definition of justice. In some cases justice was related to legal processes, race and gender issues, and in some cases it was associated with terms like 'ethics' and 'equality.' This reflects a similar divide in how social justice is defined and understood within political philosophy.

Among political philosophers who have strived to provide organizations and societies with guidance on social justice, there are disagreements and competing ideas of social justice (Fraser, 1999; Jost, 2020; Kymlicka, 2008; Lister, 2008; Wolff, 2008; Young, 2008). Political philosopher John Rawls conceptualized social justice as the allocation of resources and materials to create equal distribution of benefits and burden within a society (1971), also known as distributive justice. Rawls' ideas have since been challenged by political philosophers who have proposed their own conceptualizations of social justice (Wolff, 2008). For instance, Amartya Sen (2005) and Martha Nussbaum (2003) criticized that this egalitarian approach did not consider the different resources that may be required for diverse groups, like women, to achieve equality and suggested that the evaluation of whether a society is 'just' should be based on whether individuals have entitlements to certain capabilities. In other words, what a "person can 'do or be'," rather than the resources they have (Wolff, 2008, p. 23). The capabilities approach emphasizes the distribution of equitable resources to ensure that individuals and groups have equal opportunities to participate in society (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 2005). This approach differs from a human rights approach, but they can be considered in conjunction with each other (Sen, 2006), and are often presented alongside social justice movements, like international feminism (Nussbaum, 2003). Sen (2006) considers human rights to be entitlements to basic capabilities. In this sense, capabilities refer to the rights to certain and specific freedoms, such as whether a person is capable of and has the means to pursue opportunities that they value (Sen, 2006).

Another conception of social justice, which has been associated with identity politics, is recognition justice or politics of difference, which emphasizes how equal treatment within a society may require different treatment of groups because of differences (Fraser, 1999). Recognition justice was further broken down into politics of positional difference and politics of cultural difference (Young, 2008). Despite how social justice was not explicitly defined in the application of GBA+, the government and NGO training sessions incorporated different social justice ideologies to establish the importance of GBA+ and to legitimize its application within governments and NGOs.

*Distributive Justice*

There were only a few instances where distributive justice values could be observed in the GBA+ training materials. This is likely because distributive justice is primarily an egalitarian approach that does not consider how individuals and groups may require different levels of resources to obtain equal benefits within a society (Nussbaum, 2003). On the contrary, GBA+ uses an approach that identifies how an initiative can "... be tailored to meet the diverse needs of people most impacted; and anticipating and mitigating any barriers to accessing or benefiting from the initiative" (WAGE, 2022). Refer to Table 19 for examples of how distributive justice was reflected within government and NGO training materials and sessions.

*Table 19 Examples of how distributive justice was used by a provincial government and an NGO. Source: own.*

<b>Provincial Government</b>	<b>NGO</b>
Emphasized the importance of "underst[anding] who benefits from experiencing public policy and who may be excluded from that" (Alberta Municipalities, 2021).	Justified the application of GBA+ by stating that it would support the "...design... initiatives that benefit all citizens..." and "minimize negative impacts" (Open Government Partnerships [OGP], 2019).  GBA+ was an analytical tool which could "... help [an individual] understand who benefits from [their] work and who may be unintentionally excluded" (Springboard Services, 2021).

The examples in Table 19 closely resemble some aspects of distributive justice outlined by Rawls (1971). A provincial government and NGO session associated the distribution of benefits and burdens with initiatives and policies using a dichotomous perspective, where they saw individuals as benefiting or being excluded. These two examples illustrated dichotomous categories reminiscent of Rawls's (1971) difference principle, justifying how organizations can utilize GBA+ to assess who benefits from initiatives and who is excluded so that organizations can better understand the implications of their actions on different communities.

Distributive justice was also noticeable when one NGO justified the application of GBA+ by emphasizing the importance of initiatives benefiting all individuals within a society and minimizing negative impacts. The statements aligned with aspects of the principles of justice discussed by Rawls (1971), which state that the distribution of social and economic resources, like income and wealth, needs to be arranged to benefit all.

Distributive justice was also noticeable when one NGO justified the application of GBA+ by emphasizing the importance of initiatives benefiting all individuals within a society and minimizing negative impacts. The principles of justice outlined by Rawls (1971) assert that the distribution of social and economic resources, including income and wealth, should be organized to benefit everyone. This principle suggests that while complete equality in distribution may not

be achievable, it is acceptable if both the advantaged and disadvantaged groups derive some benefits, even if this arrangement is not optimal. This indicates that while an entirely fair and equal distribution of benefits may be unattainable, the government will strive to use Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to create the best possible outcomes for all, given the specific circumstances being addressed.

### *Capabilities Approach and Human Rights*

Government and NGO training materials incorporated language related to the capabilities approach, which was different from distributive justice proposed by Rawls (1971) as the capabilities approach which acknowledges how different groups may require different levels of resources to achieve the same level of capability (Nussbaum, 2003). This was evident when government and NGO training materials discussed equity and focused on enhancing access and participation for various groups in different initiatives. Although human rights language often aligns with the capabilities approach and is viewed as a part of entitlements to basic capabilities, it was notably absent in justifying the application of GBA+. Instead, the training materials referenced existing commitments and legislation related to human rights as a means to validate the use of GBA+.

Governments and NGOs used visuals to depict how GBA+ was a tool to help identify different needs of diverse groups in order to support the ability to live a quality of life, obtain sustenance to maintain health, protection, and participate within broader society and community. These are components of central human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 41-42). For example, the idea of different individuals and groups requiring different levels of resources was depicted through visuals about equity from a provincial government and an NGO. The former demonstrated capabilities approach through two images presented in Figures 2 and 3. The first image depicts various individuals riding bicycles, where equitable participation necessitated different types of bicycles to ensure that everyone could engage in cycling. The second image depicts a similar scenario, where individuals attempt to see over a fence, illustrating that each person requires different amounts of resources, such as boxes or a ramp, to achieve this. Figure 4 presents a third image from an NGO that depicts a scenario similar to the second image provided by a provincial government, demonstrating how different types of resources may be needed.

Figure 2 An example of the central capability, Affiliations. Source: Government of BC (2023).



Equitable Access =  
Equitable Outcomes

Equal Access can  
lead to inequitable  
outcomes

Figure 3 An example of the central capability, Affiliations. Source: Government of BC (2020)

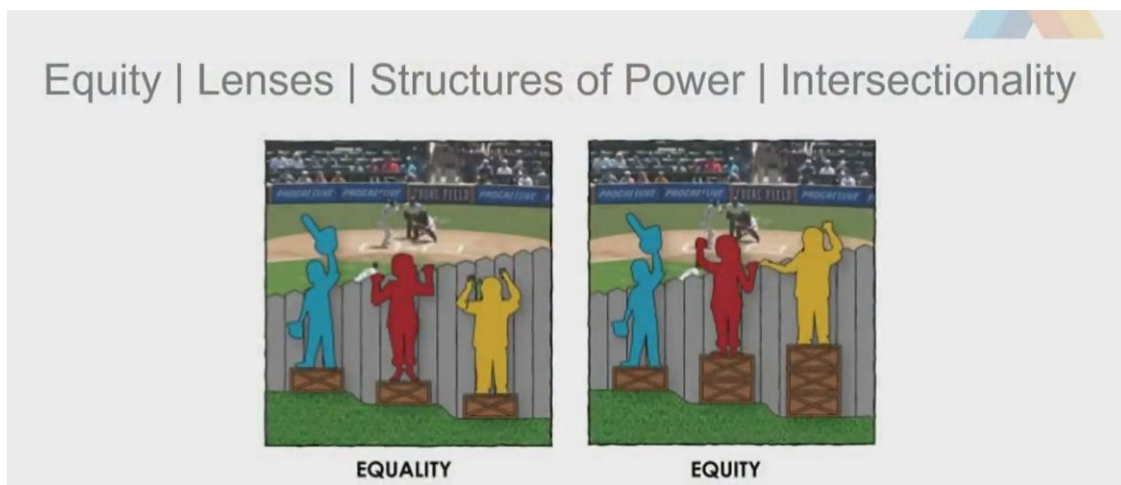
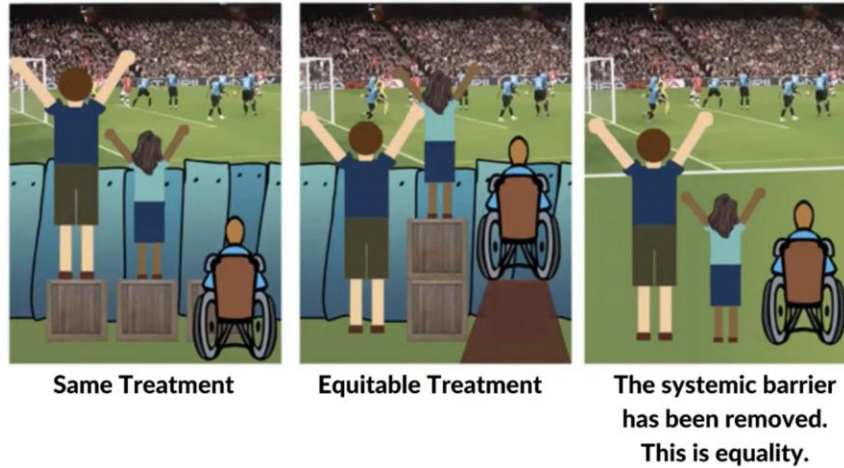


Figure 4 An example of the central capability, Affiliations. Source: Canadian Equity Consulting (2021).

## EQUITY VS EQUALITY



All of the examples illustrate the central capability of "affiliations," which emphasizes the importance of enabling individuals to engage in social interactions and participate within their society. (Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 41-42). Furthermore, the NGO example in Figure 4 also highlights the importance of considering the different types of resources that may be needed as well. The examples remove GBA+ from the egalitarian structure of distributive justice because it requires thinking about differences in needs and how resources are used to support individuals to participate equitably within society with the overall objective to create equality (Nussbaum, 2003).

A capabilities approach was also observed when governments and NGOs spoke about how GBA+ helped identify different groups' needs to create equitable levels of capabilities. Refer to Table 20 for an example of a capabilities approach in government and NGO training sessions.

Table 20 Examples of a capabilities approach from a provincial government and an NGO. Source: own.

Provincial Government	NGO
Looked at the importance of using GBA+ to identify different needs of groups, like "youth or folks with mobility aids", to ensure all individuals had equal access to a building (The Exchange, 2020).	It is necessary to look at the needs of different populations, like the "elderly people, concentrations of people with disabilities or mobility issues, pregnant women" in comparison to "people who were much more mobile" to understand how they could

	provide equal access to disaster relief (DFSG, 2021a).
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In Table 20, the provincial government suggested looking at how each of these groups may require different considerations to create equal levels of access to a building. The NGO emphasized a similar idea that groups may require different resources to have the same level of needs met. This resulted in them identifying that more disaster relief centres were needed in areas with higher populations of individuals, such as elderly people, and people with disabilities or mobility issues, who might face travel barriers and less in areas where more mobile individuals reside (DFSG, 2021a). Again, both of these examples touch on themes within human capabilities, like “Affiliation” and “Life”, suggesting individuals should be provided with resources to not have a premature death and are able to participate within broader society (Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 41-42). This differentiates these examples from distributive justice because there is a focus on how different groups may require different levels of resources.

Rights language is often closely associated with the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 2006). However, human rights language was not used to support the justifications for applying GBA+. The GBA+ training materials and sessions mentioned human rights through government commitments and legislation related to human rights were brought up instead. For instance, the Government of BC (2023) stated their commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry and Calls to Justice, *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2019) in their GBA+ training materials. Similarly, an NGO also mentioned the need to create policies that “... adhere to applicable human rights legislation” (ARISA, 2024a). By referencing existing commitments and legislation that defined human rights, governments and NGOs effectively justified the application of GBA+ as a means to uphold these rights within their established priorities. Consequently, these training sessions successfully validated the use of GBA+ in supporting human rights and organizational objectives.

Government and NGO training materials integrated the capabilities approach by emphasizing equity and equitable access to resources, such as disaster relief, tailored to the needs of diverse populations. Moreover, these examples illustrated that applying GBA+ contributed to a more just society, where different types and amounts of resources facilitated equitable participation— whether in accessing a building, receiving disaster relief, or engaging in cycling within communities. This approach aligns with the central human capabilities that Nussbaum outlined in 2003. Although human rights language typically complements the capabilities approach, it was largely absent in these materials. However, government commitments and legislation related to human rights were brought up in some government training materials, which helped legitimize GBA+ as a means to support human rights and align with organizational objectives.

*Recognition Justice*

Government and NGO training materials predominantly utilized values rooted in recognition justice, which is not surprising given its close association with identity politics (Fraser, 1999). Recognition justice moves away from distribution justice’s economic focus. It looks at cultural

and symbolic justice, how people are represented and treated by sites of power, and whether their voice is politically represented (Lister, 2007; Young, 2008). These themes which were touched upon in government and NGO training materials when speaking about maintaining societal well-being, repercussions of underrepresentation, assumptions and biases, as well as how collaborative and inclusive processes in GBA+ helped to create more responsive policies and programs. The use of recognition justice ideologies justified the importance of GBA+ in ensuring organizations could deliver programs, policies and initiatives that met the needs and interests of marginalized groups, who historically have been excluded from initiatives.

Government used recognition justice to highlight how the well-being of individuals in society requires different treatment. In this case, government training material incorporated the concept of ‘politics of cultural difference,’ where the focus was on the freedom of cultural identity groups, like Indigenous People, to express themselves, cultural values, and way of life (Young, 2008), which would require specific and unique treatment to achieve an equitable level of wellbeing as others within a society. Refer to Table 21 for examples of how federal government organizations and NGOs used recognition justice within their training materials.

*Table 21 Examples of how Federal government organizations and NGOs used recognition justice concepts. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government Organizations</b>	<b>NGOs</b>
<p>There are unique considerations that need to be made for initiatives in the forest sector, like “Indigenous people have a special cultural and spiritual link to the forest...” and “Forests are considered homes, hunting grounds, and ceremonial lands” (WAGE, 2022).</p> <p>Differences in “socio-economic or lifestyle barriers” and “colonization” required different considerations to ensure Indigenous women had equitable access to healthcare and to support their well-being within society (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).</p>	<p>Spoke about how the invisibility of the disability community through the underrepresentation in “media” and “rights movements” resulted in the invisibility of different abilities and experiences of individuals, which reinforced ableism and resulted in societal structures that created inequities within society (Springboard Services, 2021).</p> <p>Looked at how assumptions and biases in perception and thinking resulted in different treatment of Muslim men due to public discourse and Islamophobia. Thus, leading to discrimination and racial injustices experienced by Muslim men after 911 (DFSG, 2021c).</p>

In Table 21, concepts of recognition justice have been used to justify the application of GBA+. Governments incorporated ideas such as politics of cultural difference, emphasizing how specific needs and considerations are required for equitable and appropriate initiatives that support the well-being of different identity groups. This involves considering an individual or group's unique cultural and spiritual practices, values, and lifestyles. The use of recognition justice by NGOs has also helped legitimize the application of GBA+ to enhance the visibility and recognition of diverse and marginalized groups. By applying recognition ideologies, such as human dignity and

decency (Lister, 2007), NGOs have analyzed the effects of various treatments experienced by these marginalized groups. This approach has highlighted the importance of using GBA+ to identify unjust and differential treatment faced by specific identity groups or intersecting identity groups.

Another way recognition of justice showed up in Government and NGO training materials was when they emphasized collaborative practices as an important part of creating equitable and responsive policies, programs and initiatives. This included encouraging a range of practices and strategies to create inclusive decision-making practices in GBA+, like “community-driven” (IAAC, 2021), “cross-community collaboration” (WAGE, 2023b), and community-based practices,” “co-create” (Springboard Services, 2021), “co-design and co-create,” and “relational processes” (ITE, 2022). These strategies facilitated a shift in how public and economic issues were addressed by promoting changes in decision-making processes, a fundamental aspect of recognition justice (Fraser, 1999). For example an NGO used recognition justice to encourage transformative practices, stating how there was a need to “equalize the power and balance in our communities,” look at “structural, systemic barriers... and how [they] can challenge and overcome those,” and “changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes so that power is redistributed and shared equitably” (ARAISA, 2024a). By incorporating recognition justice ideologies into training materials, the NGOs were able to justify the use of GBA+ to support transformation and address power imbalances between organizations and the populations they serve.

Governments and NGOs employed similar metaphors to illustrate inclusivity in the GBA+ process, incorporating recognition justice ideologies and emphasizing the representation of diverse voices in decision-making. Governments and NGOs referred to inclusive consultation metaphorically as who or what identity groups were present at ‘the table’ or ‘in the room.’ This inclusive approach addressed some aspects of recognition justice, which Young (2008) refers to as ‘politics of positional difference,’ where the focus is on addressing structural inequalities arising from social processes that position individuals differently. In this context, factors like status, power, and opportunity shape the advantages and disadvantages people experience, potentially preventing some from holding decision-making power (Young, 2008). Including greater diversity and perspectives was seen as a way to enhance an organization’s understanding of specific issues affecting different populations and address power imbalances by empowering and recognizing the voices of marginalized groups. See Table 22 for an example of how recognition of justice was reflected in discussions about inclusivity.

*Table 22 Examples of how NGOs discussed inclusivity using recognition justice concepts.  
Source: own.*

<b>NGOs</b>
Asked learners to consider who “...ha[s] a seat at the table... not just in the room...” and if “their voices are being heard.... their voices and experiences are informing decision” (ITE, 2022).
Mentioned the importance of “tak[ing] measurable action to invite, include and centre the voices and work of marginalized individuals” (ITE, 2022).

Encouraged using frameworks like Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and GBA+ together to “... promote the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially populations that have been historically underrepresented... subject to discrimination...” where “the goal [wa]s not to have those in power remain at the centre and welcome those who have been previously excluded” (ARAISA, 2024a).

Table 22 provides examples that incorporate values from the recognition of justice, highlighting the importance of addressing issues related to domination and the power held by privileged groups. (Lister, 2007). This approach emphasized the importance of inclusivity in applying GBA+ to empower groups that have been marginalized, tackle power imbalances in society, and foster systemic change within organizational processes and structures.

Recognition justice enabled governments and NGOs to justify the application of GBA+ beyond economic arguments, urging organizations to consider non-material justice (Lister, 2007). This included addressing the repercussions of underrepresentation, such as the invisibility of disabilities in media and the treatment of groups like Muslim men by sites of power, which led to marginalization. Concepts from recognition justice, like the politics of cultural difference, highlighted the need for tailored approaches to support specific populations, such as Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, emphasizing the politics of positional difference and representation encouraged GBA+ to reshape decision-making processes, address power dynamics, empower communities, and drive transformation.

## Summary

This study conducted a document analysis to explore how intersectionality is represented and reinforced in GBA+ training materials from government and NGO sources. By employing a CDA, the research aimed to examine how governments prepare their staff to operationalization intersectionality within GBA+ in in comparison to NGOs, revealing both shared strategies and distinct differences in approach.

- Both government and NGO training materials spoke about systems of oppression and sites of power, illustrating how ingrained ideologies within organizations shaped their external outputs and affected diverse populations differently.
- The omission of power dynamics in specific government examples obscured crucial socio-political contexts, especially concerning Indigenous Peoples, and reduced accountability in the GBA+ process. This reinforced the institutional power of governments by promoting a narrative that depicted them as neutral and objective which helped them remain “uninterrogated” sites of power (Cameron & Tedds, 2023, p. 15).
- Both governments and NGOs used disaggregated data to highlight differences between groups. However, when they did not provide context for the existing disparities, identities and experiences were portrayed as static. This approach risks reinforcing stereotypes and overlooks the complexity of intersectional identities and experiences.
- Government and NGOs represented identities and experiences as dynamic through socio-political context when discussing the disadvantages faced by marginalized populations.

Learners were provided opportunities to explore the roles and responsibilities of organizations in alleviating or perpetuating the disadvantages faced by some intersecting identity groups.

- The study identified how the use of euphemisms to discuss systems of oppression in government and NGO training materials limited discussions on systemic inequality and oppression and the role of sites of power in reducing or reinforcing inequities and oppression. Learners need to have prior knowledge of systems of oppression to understand the context of the examples provided by governments and NGOs.
- Government and NGOs' approaches to GBA+ incorporated different paradigms. When governments incorporated a positivistic paradigm they were presented as neutral and objective, which posed a risk for deeply embedded ideologies to be overlooked. When governments and NGOs encouraged a post-positivistic perspective, it encouraged an internal paradigm shift.
- There was no consensus on GBA+'s purpose, with government and NGO training materials oscillating between using efficiency discourse and various social justice frameworks to justify the application of GBA+. This means that GBA+ is interpreted for very different uses where it may align with an integrationist approach in one case, and it may support a more transformative approach in other cases.

## Chapter 5: Interview Findings and Interpretations

### Introduction

This study interviewed a total of six participants employed in government and NGOs with training and experience applying GBA+. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how NGO service providers apply GBA+ in comparison to public servants, and to triangulate the data from the document analysis. Recruitment letters were distributed to and within 17 NGOs and five government organizations. When contact information was made publicly available, employees were directly contacted, or organizations were contacted and requested to distribute recruitment letters to their employees. Of the six participants recruited and interviewed, four were employed in NGOs and one spoke about their past experience working in federal government organizations and an NGO. Four of the participants in the study worked within the settlement sector. One federal government employee was interviewed for this study.

All participants shared that their formal training included the online GBA+ training and resources available through WAGE, had post-secondary education, but other knowledge and lived experience also informed their understanding of intersectionality and GBA+. Four participants were employed in positions where they were supporting the development of GBA+ training materials for their sector and spoke about this experience as well as their personal experience with applying GBA+. During the interviews, participants were asked questions related to their experience with applying GBA+ and intersectionality, as well as the type of training they received that supported them with applying GBA+.

This chapter starts by exploring how service providers and public servants discussed power, focusing on systems of oppression and power dynamics within sites of power. It will examine how identities and experiences were portrayed, and how integrationist and transformative language was used in these discussions. Additionally, the chapter will analyze how GBA+ was described through both positivistic and post-positivistic paradigms. Finally, it will consider how efficiency discourse and social justice concepts were employed to justify the use of GBA+.

### How Service Providers and Public Servants Spoke About Power

During the interviews, all participants were asked about what types of knowledge and experience contributed to their understanding of GBA+, how they applied GBA+ within their work, as well as existing challenges and benefits to their work with GBA+, to gather an understanding of how participants understood and addressed power. Participants from government and NGOs faced confidentiality restrictions and were in various stages of developing GBA+ implementation, limiting their ability to share direct experiences and insights on the application process. Recognizing this was not something all participants could answer, the interview guide was modified to include two additional questions that spoke more directly to the application of intersectionality. Refer to the *Modified interview guide* in the *Methods* section.

This section looks at how participants discussed intersectional components, including systems of oppression, sites of power, identities and experiences. It also looks at how integrationist and transformative language was used, whether participants applied a positivistic and post-positivistic paradigms, and how they justified the application of GBA+.

## Discussing Systems of Oppression

Although systems of oppression were not mentioned by participants with public service experience and minimally discussed by NGO participants, the way NGO participants spoke about how GBA+ was being implemented within their sectors. Similarly, when participants spoke about their personal knowledge and lived experience, they indicated there were different perspectives on GBA+ in relation to systems of oppression. In some cases, it was perceived as a tool to address issues related to systems of oppression. In another case, GBA+ was perceived as a product of systems of oppression, such as colonization, which did not consider other types of knowledge creation.

Some NGO participants perceived GBA+ as a tool that worked alongside other equity frameworks, where one NGO participant described GBA+ as a “toolbox” which could be used to be “connected from an intersectional perspective or ... from just an anti-racism perspective.” (Participant 5). Participants from the same sector discussed how they also saw GBA+ to be related to other equity frameworks, where GBA+ was described as “one of many” concepts related to equity, like anti-racism and anti-oppression (Participant 6), and seen as something that could be integrated alongside these frameworks which were already being applied within the sector (Participant 4). This was similar to provincial government and NGOs training materials that also spoke about anti-racism in relation to GBA+. One participant from the NGO shared their personal experiences, highlighting how these experiences deepened their understanding of GBA+ and its connection to power dynamics. This discussion illustrated that GBA+ is viewed as a tool for comprehending the effects of systems of oppression. For an example this NGO participant discussed lived experience as enhancing their understanding of GBA+. The participant shared how their ethnic background supported their understanding of how “...race and systemic racism ties into GBA+...” where they spoke about how “[i]ts all a system that is rooted in the oppression and marginalization of folks and GBA+ is just one of the many of the plethora of frameworks that we can use to help us get a better understanding of that.” (Participant 6).

Systems of oppression, their impacts and interconnection to sites of power and individual identities and experiences were not discussed by participants. However, NGO participants associated GBA+ to other equity frameworks implying that GBA+ was used in NGOs to address issues related to systems of oppression, like racism and oppression.

However, not all NGO participants saw GBA+ as a framework that could address issues related to systems of oppression. In contrast, one NGO participant described intersectionality and GBA+ to be a product of and influenced by systems of oppression, like colonization. For example, one NGO participant discussed how colonization influenced the application of GBA+, stating “...it’s like from a place of colonization that we love to distance and like very cerebral and like not feel in our body, and like listen with our body and so I feel like when we talk about GBA+ or like, the acronym is PSA, so it’s a little bit easier. Like prevention and sexual abuse and exploitation, we talk about it very removed” (Participant 2). This underscores how GBA+ was seen as being implemented with unexamined assumptions and biases rooted in a narrow paradigm shaped by colonization and raises concern about the issues of researchers being detached from the research process through positivistic practices (McGregor, 2018).

Although discussed minimally, the way NGO participants associated GBA+ with other equity frameworks indicated that some NGOs apply GBA+ to address and understand issues related to systems of oppression. However, GBA+ was also perceived as limited because it placed too much value on a “cerebral” process and is applied through a colonial lens (Participant 2). These findings suggest that while applying GBA+ can help address and understand issues related to systems of oppression, it may also inadvertently perpetuate implicit biases and reinforce oppressive systems, such as colonization, through its implementation.

### Power Dynamics within Sites of Power

When government and NGO participants discussed the challenges of applying GBA+, they predominantly highlighted power dynamics within organizations and their effects on the integration and quality of GBA+. This perspective contrasted with how sites of power were presented in training materials, which often focused on the benefits of including previously excluded voices in decision-making and acknowledged the power dynamics between organizations and the populations they serve. Instead, participants stressed how leadership roles significantly influence the application and effectiveness of GBA+. Additionally, they noted that broader government agendas and funding often dictate how GBA+ is implemented across various sectors.

The quality of GBA+ was brought up by government and NGO participants, where those within leadership positions were perceived as influencing the integration and quality of GBA+. Both participants with experience applying GBA+ within government organizations spoke about the impact of leadership on the quality of a GBA+. One participant emphasized the importance of "leadership buy-in," using symbolism to illustrate that leadership had "teeth," signifying their power to ensure the quality of GBA+ implementation. In contrast, individuals in lower positions lacked the same level of influence. Refer to Table 23 for an example of how government and NGO participants discussed leadership’s role in the implementation of GBA+.

*Table 23 Government and NGO participants discussing the role of leadership in the implementation of GBA+. Source: own.*

Federal Government Participants	NGO Participant
<p>“...I have no teeth; I can’t force people...” (Participant 3).</p> <p>“...some people might not feel they can push, and then you get a mediocre analysis, or it goes to central agencies, and they have teeth” (Participant 3).</p> <p>“... if [GBA+] uncovers something that senior management isn’t willing to address then there’s challenges” (Participant 1).</p>	<p>“[Executive directors] ... have a lot of influence and you know, they need to be the ones who are willing to be flexible and sort of, I guess, mavericks of change if you want to see these things happen.... There has to be the... strategic and operational will from [executive directors] to be willing to implement GBA+” (Participant 6).</p>

In Table 23, the examples suggest that while leadership can support the application of GBA+, it can also impede its application and change within an organization. For instance, one participant

with government experience highlighted how they relied on leadership to support them in completing their GBA+ work. Without “teeth” (i.e., power of leadership behind their work) they felt the quality of their GBA+ work would be mediocre. To create meaningful change and implement GBA+, an NGO participant shared similar sentiments about the need for change and the implementation of GBA+ to be led by management. The government participant also highlighted how leadership can impede the potential of GBA+ as well

Additionally, funding was also perceived as influencing the application of GBA+ across sectors, where some NGO participants raised concern about the intention organizations held when integrating GBA+ into their work, stating “...is it because of the funding or because you actually care about it...?” (Participant 6). Another participant who worked in the same sector also highlighted how the application of GBA+ directly affected the scores of funding applications and “had folks scrambling” because they had so little time to submit their analysis alongside their proposals (Participant 3). This same participant also spoke about their experience in government and how creating thorough GBA+ applications only “increas[ed] chances of departments getting money because central agencies “...take GBA+ very seriously...” Discussing how funding was an incentive for the integration and application of GBA+ helped to provide context on how the application of GBA+ is influenced by the relationship between sites of power and their specific agendas.

When speaking about the challenges of applying GBA+, government and NGO participants highlighted different aspects of sites of power. For instance, rather than looking at the relationship to the populations they served, or systems of oppression, government and NGO participants spoke about the power dynamics within organizations, highlighting the need for leaderships to support the integration and application of GBA+. They also highlighted how sites of power interact with each other and the influence of organizational agendas, as well as funding, on the integration and application of GBA+. The participants’ perspectives of sites of power give insight onto how it is necessary to understand how power dynamics function on different levels, such as between leadership and individuals within an organization, when organizations interact with each other, as they influence the integration and quality of GBA+ within organizations and governments.

When discussing the challenges of applying GBA+, government and NGO participants focused on various aspects of power dynamics. Instead of examining the relationship between sites of power and the populations they served or systems of oppression, they emphasized the internal power dynamics within organizations. Specifically, how leadership plays a role in either enhancing the quality and integration of GBA+ or limiting its application and equality. Participants noted how funding impacts the quality and application of GBA+. Their insights highlighted the importance of understanding power dynamics at multiple levels—between leadership and staff, as well as among organizations—since these dynamics particularly influence the integration and quality of GBA+ initiatives.

### **Context of Identities and Experiences**

When government and NGO participants were asked about their application of GBA+, they could not provide examples, citing the confidentiality of their work and the fact that their organizations were still in the development stages of GBA+ guidance. As a result, not all participants could share how they applied intersectionality within GBA+. However, both

government and NGO participants still discussed individual identities and experiences. Often, these identities were portrayed as static, lacking context regarding their interconnections with systems and sites of power. Participants sometimes represented identities as dynamic by drawing on socio-political and historical contexts.

When government and NGOs represented identities as static, they often used integrationist discourse, where the focus was on improving organizational processes or services. For instance, when one government participant was asked how they applied GBA+ to address certain issues or organizational needs within their field, they spoke about how GBA+ supported them with gathering data to explain the impacts of a government’s budget or policy proposal on “different groups of people in community or in the region or in the country” (Participant 1). This participant also shared the how the scarcity of available disaggregated data created limitations, where there’s not always the time and resources to do a full and meaningful GBA+” (Participant 1). Similarly, a couple of NGO participants also discussed identities and experiences as static and out of context. These participants spoke about the specific identity factors that may impact the experiences and needs of the populations they served. Refer to Table 24 for an example of how a government participant and NGO participants statically represented identities and experiences.

*Table 24 NGO Participants represented identities and experiences as static. Source: own.*

<b>Government Participant</b>	<b>NGO Participant</b>
<p>Impacts of a government organization’s “budget proposal” or “policy proposal” on “different groups of people in community or in the region or in the country” (Participant 1).</p> <p>Shared the how the scarcity of available disaggregated data created limitations, where “... you get information about women, but you don’t necessarily get information about racialized women or women with disabilities” (Participant 1).</p> <p>Expressed how “you [have to] do these checkboxes. So, there’s not always the time and resources to do a full and meaningful GBA+” (Participant 1).</p>	<p>“...sex and age, and marital status, what else can we look at that implicates or has an impact on people’s experiences... it could be... education,... survival jobs, ... or access to resources” (Participant 5)</p> <p>“...immigration status and language ... and gender...” (Participant 4).</p>

The examples in Table 24 helped identify potential factors that needed to be considered when looking to create more responsive policies, programs, services or initiatives, However, this static representation of identities and experiences prevented the opportunity to explore the context which creates those risks and barriers, such as the interaction with sites of power and systems of oppression.

*Table 25 An NGO participant describes how their work experience helped them to understand intersectionality and GBA+. Source: own.*

<b>NGO Participant</b>
<p>Helped them to understand “power relations and intersectionality” and the context of “who is struggling and who is running into discrimination” (Participant 4).</p> <p>“... nuance to seeing how the experiences of homelessness is different for a young black man versus a married couple with three children” (Participant 4).</p> <p>“A huge percentage of homeless young adults like youth and young adults are queer or/trans, it’s like 40% of youth and young adults who are homeless [who] identify as non-cis or not heterosexual” (Participant 4).</p>

The examples in Table 25 show that identity and experience were discussed without reference to systems of oppression and sites of power. This resulted in static representation of groups, where deficits were associated to youth, young adults and queer and trans individuals. Participant 4 was also able to demonstrate the necessity of understanding context which affected individuals and groups differently, thus recognizing how context shapes the experiences of certain intersecting identity groups.

As discussed in the previous section, another NGO participant also spoke about how their social location supported their understanding of issues of “race and systemic racism” which also helped them understand power, privilege, and how to apply intersectionality (Participant 6). In this scenario, identity and experience were represented as being interconnected to systems of oppression which contributed to experiences of “oppression and marginalization” that individuals experienced, providing a more dynamic representation of identity and experience.

Similar to government and NGO training materials, government and NGO participants represented intersecting identities and experiences as static and dynamic. In the interviews, static representation resulted from limited context around identities and experiences, where sites of power and systems of oppression were not discussed. Dynamic representation was best demonstrated when NGO participants spoke about their lived experiences which supported their learning of intersectionality and GBA+. For instance, in these scenarios, both NGO participants demonstrated how through lived experience, they could develop an understanding of intersectionality and the contexts which create different lived experiences.

### **Integrationist and Transformative Language**

Similar to government and NGO training materials, there was use of integrationist language that emphasizes enhancing existing organizational structures and transformative language which encouraged systemic and structural change through paradigm shifts (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Levac et al., 2021; Scala & Paterson, 2017). Participants from both sectors described GBA+ as a tool that aligned with established processes, often focusing on improving accessibility and addressing gaps in service delivery. For instance, government representatives discussed the necessity of adhering to mandates and guidelines from higher authorities, while NGO participants reflected on how GBA+ can enhance their current organizational processes. This focus on integration over transformation suggested an inclination

of governments and NGOs to work within existing frameworks when using GBA+. However, transformative discourse was observed during one interview but it was not associated to GBA+.

Integrationist language was used to describe how GBA+ supported existing organizational structures and processes by government and NGO participants. See Table 26 for examples of integrationist language used to describe GBA+ during interviews.

*Table 26 A Government and an NGO participant discussed GBA+ using Integrationist Language. Source: own.*

<b>Government Participant</b>	<b>NGO Participant</b>
<p>Stated how organizations “have to still operate within [their] mandate” and a need to “... follow the rules and guidelines set out by the Treasury Board and Department of Finance or what the Privy Council Office is sort of telling you to do...” (Participant 1).</p> <p>“...consider the impacts [of GBA+] at the beginning of the policy development cycle” and consider “who is going to be accessing a particular program... what are their needs... are there any gaps?” (Participant 1).</p> <p>“There’s a lot of [training] available, but from where [they] sit and the best use of time and resources and budget, is usually internal training offerings” (Participant 1).</p>	<p>“What is already in the system...and how can we enhance it? ... Are we looking to make services more accessible? Are we going to increase the number of services? Cause that is all part of that idea of capacity” (Participant 5).</p>

The examples in Table 26 highlight how GBA+ is perceived to be a tool that works alongside and within existing structures rather than creating systemic and structural change. Furthermore, the government participant suggested that the GBA+ training should be aligned with what is considered most applicable and relevant to the organization they are within in order to ensure the best use of organizational resources. Other NGO participants also used integrationist language where they described intersectionality within GBA+ to be a tool that supports service providers with reflecting how they can enhance organizational processes. In this case, the focus remained on looking at services and programs and where they could be improved to better meet the needs of the populations served. Integrationist language, similar to training materials, emphasized how governments and NGOs apply GBA+ to align with organizational priorities.

While transformative discourse was less present in interviews with government and NGO participants, one NGO participant described how their organizations sought to create systemic and structural change within organizational structures and processes. However, this was not necessarily a result of or in relation to GBA+. Refer to Table 27 for examples of how one participant used transformative language during interviews.

*Table 27 Examples of how one NGO participant used transformative language. Source: own.*

NGO Participant
<p>Mentioned how their organization was on a “decolonial journey and... part of [their] strategic plan and strategic plan building has to be incorporate[ing] a call or two from [Reclaiming Power and Place]... and... Truth and Reconciliation Commission[’s Calls to Action]” and also embodied its label as a “feminist” organization (Participant 2).</p> <p>Focused on protecting and centring “...voice for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people” (Participant 2).</p> <p>Worked with their colleagues to disrupt norms around what is perceived as ‘valuable’ work, where childcare at the workplace was seen as “equal and like contributing to the organization...” which “would not be the same in other organizations.” (Participant 2).</p>

Although the quotes in Table 27 are not explicitly linked to GBA+, they highlight how this participant engages in transformative change through other means, such as decolonial practices and centering voices of the populations they serve. While not related to intersectionality or GBA+, the incorporation of meaningful equity frameworks supported the transformative approach of this participant’s organization, where they could disrupt norms and instill new types of approaches into their organization. While transformative change was often mentioned in government and NGO training materials, this participant offered a concrete example of what transformative change looks like within organizations rather than simply discussing the various approaches that could be used to facilitate such change.

While the presence of transformative discourse was limited among government and NGO participants, some articulated efforts toward structural change, often linking it to other equity frameworks rather than directly to GBA+. One participant exemplified this by discussing their organization’s decolonial journey and alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action, illustrating a commitment to disrupt normative organizational practices. This case underscores the potential for GBA+ to be part of broader transformative efforts, although such discussions were less frequent in both training materials and participant interviews. Ultimately, while GBA+ was seen as a means to refine existing processes, its potential to facilitate deeper structural change remains underexplored, indicating a need for more emphasis on transformative approaches within governmental and NGO contexts.

### **Positivistic and Post-positivistic Paradigms**

Similar to government and NGO training material, GBA+ process was described with positivistic and post-positivistic paradigms. The positivistic paradigms encouraged objective, value-free research and organizations as neutral users of GBA+, whereas the latter encouraged subjectivity and more inclusive processes (McGregor, 2018). When government and NGO participants spoke about the GBA+ process, positivistic and post-positivistic paradigms were observed. The first approach, grounded in positivism, stresses objective, value-free research and portrays government organizations as neutral entities (McGregor, 2018). Quantitative measurement processes are thought to emphasize characteristics often linked to masculinity, such as logic and

reasoning, while neglecting elements like context, emotion, and relationality (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014). The preference for this type of measurement and evidence-based approach has significantly increased among organizations (Merry, 2011). However, this approach often obscures the judgments that shape objective measures (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014). In contrast, the second approach, based on post-positivism, acknowledges the subjectivity of both researchers and participants, promoting a more inclusive perspective on the GBA+ process (McGregor, 2018). This latter framework also highlights the importance of engaging with communities and acknowledges alternative forms of knowledge beyond traditional scientific methods (McGregor, 2018). Both of these approaches aimed to enhance the effectiveness of GBA+ by fostering a deeper understanding of how biases can shape experiences and outcomes.

Participants from both sectors highlighted the necessity of strong research skills to ensure the reliability and validity of data in the GBA+ process. For instance, government representatives noted the challenges of analyzing qualitative data, stressing that not all organizations are equipped to handle such complexities effectively. Similarly, NGO participants emphasized the importance of data to support decision-making. However, governments and NGOs also highlighted the importance of intersubjectivity —i.e., shared knowledge and understanding of individuals in a social context (McGregor, 2018)—to support knowledge creation and identify biases and assumptions. These insights reveal how entrenched positivistic paradigms shape the application of GBA+. However, post-positivistic paradigms also were also portrayed as having an essential role in applying GBA+.

Government and NGO participants emphasized the value of scientific methods in applying GBA+. See Table 28 for examples of how the importance of research was emphasized.

*Table 28 Examples of how government and NGO participants discussed GBA+ using a positivistic paradigm. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government Participants</b>	<b>NGO Participant</b>
<p>Highlighted how there were challenges with the application of GBA+ and limited capacity of organizations’ abilities to analyze qualitative data, where not all government organizations were appropriately equipped to “make sure [data] is valid and reliable” (Participant 1).</p> <p>Mentioned the value of “evidence-based analysis” and how they felt their “research skills” supported their application of GBA+ because “[research is] a big component to GBA+... [it] informs what you produce in... that analysis” (Participant 3).</p>	<p>Stated, “data is how you support and provide evidence to the things that you’re seeing...” and it supports “... a more compelling story to a lot of the folks who make the decisions” (Participant 4).</p>

In Table 28, government and NGO participants emphasized the need for strong research skills and available data and, additionally, the need for enhancing qualitative research capacity among governments to ensure validity and reliability. These examples underscore the significant influence of positivistic paradigms on applying GBA+ in government and NGOs, as both prioritize knowledge grounded in scientific methods and positive verification (McGregor, 2018), which were described as essential for persuading decision-makers.

Government and NGO participants also described GBA+ and organizational processes using a post-positivistic lens, using inductive reasoning and an attempt to understand the relationships between factors and identify patterns (McGregor, 2018). The emphasis on diverse perspectives and inclusion was particularly evident in government and NGO training sessions, as outlined in Table 29.

*Table 29 Examples of how government and NGO participants discussed GBA+ using a post-positivistic paradigm. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government Participant</b>	<b>NGO Participant</b>
<p>Events like “commemorative days, and months... like... Indigenous history month...” provided opportunity to listen to “guest speakers who often come to speak about their lived experience...” (Participant 1).</p> <p>“hearing their lived experience [wa]s really helpful because it open[ed] up avenues of different types of thinking... that help you inform your policy making” (Participant 1).</p>	<p>Diversity of perspective supported a “...collective understanding of GBA+...” where “... people bring their culture and traditions into their own understanding of gender and are so willing to like share...” (Participant 2).</p>

The examples in Table 29 aligned with a post-positivistic paradigm where intersubjectivity of knowledge is encouraged (McGregor, 2018). The government participant demonstrated how understanding lived experience provided a way to identify relationships and patterns which could inform policymaking (McGregor, 2018). The interviews with participants echoed the insights found in government and NGO training materials, illustrating the advantages of post-positivistic paradigms. For example, this approach helped identify and address unconscious biases and assumptions and was described as fostering new understandings and methods for applying GBA+.

Government and NGO representatives emphasized the significance of a post-positivistic approach in applying GBA+, highlighting inductive reasoning and the importance of diverse perspectives. By incorporating lived experiences and acknowledging cultural contexts, participants illustrated how these elements can reveal relationships and patterns that inform policymaking. This emphasis on inclusivity aligns with post-positivistic principles, which advocate for intersubjectivity and collaborative knowledge-building (McGregor, 2018). Overall, the findings suggest that while positivistic paradigms dominate the application of GBA+,

embracing post-positivistic approaches can enhance understanding, address biases, and foster innovative strategies for applying GBA+.

### **Justification of GBA+**

Similar to the government and NGO training materials, efficiency-oriented discourse was observed in an interview with one participant. However, social justice was not explicitly defined during interviews with government and NGO participants. Other interviews with NGO participants identified concepts related to social justice, such as a capabilities approach, human rights and recognition justice. In these scenarios, the participants used efficiency discourse and ideas related to social justice concepts to justify the application of GBA+ but also highlighted specific areas which needed to be improved upon for GBA+ to be successful.

Similar to how government and NGO training material justified the application of GBA+ with efficiency discourse and social justice discourse, one government participant spoke about how GBA+ was a tool that could assess “value for money... to make sure that a program is as effective as it can be” (Participant 1). However, NGO participants focused on social justice related concepts when speaking about the application of GBA+. Participants from both government and NGOs referenced ideas related to a capabilities approach and recognition justice. Refer to Table 30 for examples of how government and NGO participants justified GBA+ through a capabilities approach, where the focus was on what populations were ‘able to’ access specific services and programs, and whether there was equitable accessibility to them (Wolff, 2008, p. 23).

*Table 30 Examples of how a government participant and NGO participant justified the application of GBA+ using a capabilities approach. Source: own.*

<b>Federal Government Participant</b>	<b>NGO Participant</b>
Emphasized the need to look at the specific barriers experienced by “...particular populations...” and look for ways to “reduce them if and where possible...” (Participant 1).	Stated, “...if you provide [services], what are the implications?...do they have access to it?” and “... are we going to consider making the services more accessible?” (Participant 5).

The examples in Table 30 align with a capabilities approach, where there is a need to examine how individuals and groups require differing resources and support to have the same level of entitlements and capabilities as others within a society (Nussbaum, 2003).

Some NGO participants emphasized the need for recognition justice by increasing the recognition and representation of specific populations. They also raised concerns about the limitations of GBA+ in supporting recognition justice. These concerns are outlined in Table 31.

*Table 31 Excerpts from interviews with NGO participants expressing concerns about GBA+'s capacity to support recognition justice. Source: own.*

<b>NGO Participants</b>
<p>“... it has to come from spaces in which you know Indigenous knowledge is being put at the forefront... the government can’t just be like, ‘we’ll GBA+ Indigenous relations.’ I don’t see [GBA+] as being necessarily helpful unless it’s done so with Indigenous leaders and educators being the ones creating that sort of work...” (Participant 6).</p> <p>“centre more protection and voice for Indigenous women and girls and gender diverse people” but had also raised concern about the understanding of GBA+ being rooted within “white feminism... even though we claim intersectionality... it’s still very much... from a white feminist perspective” (Participant 2).</p>

The interviews with NGO participants, as outlined in Table 31, indicate their concern that GBA+ may fail to support recognition justice if certain populations and perspectives are not better incorporated into GBA+ frameworks. This was counter to government and NGO training materials that emphasized GBA+ could support recognition justice.

The interview with government and NGO participants reaffirmed themes in government and NGO training materials, where efficiency discourse and values linked to social justice concepts were used to justify the application of GBA+. However, efficiency discourse was not mentioned among NGO participants. Instead, more focus was placed on social justice. In these cases, GBA+ was perceived as a tool that supported a capabilities approach. However, NGO participants also raised concern as to whether GBA+ could support recognition justice as they found the current application to be limited to a “government” perspective and “white feminism.” Therefore, better clarity on how governments and NGOs align GBA+ with social justice may help them better align with the interest and needs of the populations they serve.

## **Summary**

This study interviewed government and NGO participants about how they understand and apply intersectionality within GBA+ in their work. Government and NGO participants talked about intersectionality and GBA+ in slightly different ways than government and NGO training materials. The confidential nature of some participants' work and that certain organizations and sectors are still in the development phase of GBA+ guidance contributed to this difference. The findings indicated similarities between the training materials and how government and NGO participants spoke about intersectionality within GBA+, but there were also differences.

- GBA+ was perceived by NGO participants as a tool that could support addressing issues related to systems of oppression. In contrast, it was also viewed by one NGO participant as a tool that upheld systems of oppression by favouring certain types of knowledge creation.
- Government and NGO participants saw power dynamics within organizations (i.e., sites of power), where leadership, as well as funding structures between organizations, were perceived as impacting the quality and integration of GBA+.

- Government and NGO participants represented identities as static and dynamic. NGO participants shared how lived experience contributed to their understanding of the influence of context on social locations, which supported a dynamic representation of identities and experiences.
- Most government and NGO participants used integrationist discourse which aligned GBA+ to existing organizational processes. Transformative discourse was limited among government and NGO participants. However, one participant exemplified this by discussing tangible examples of how organizations can use practical approaches to align with equity frameworks and commitments.
- Government and NGO participants articulated the importance of post-positivistic approaches, such as the value of intersubjectivity, suggesting innovative strategies for implementing GBA+. The importance of using positivistic approaches to ensure GBA+ was evidence-based and could support decision-making was also highlighted.
- Efficiency discourse and ideas from social justice concepts were used to justify the application of GBA+ by both government and NGO participants. Additionally, NGO participants raised concern as to whether GBA+ could support social justice if it was limited in perspective and did not consider other perspectives and forms of knowledge in its framework and application

## Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter compares how governments and NGOs prepare their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+, as well as how service providers applied GBA+ in comparison to public servants. This discussion is guided by the conceptual framework, that is, typology of intersectionality within GBA+ adapted from Christoffersen (2021) and Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2022). Accordingly, the chapter examines the various intersectional approaches used in training materials, such as the pan-equality, multi-strand, diversity within, and intersection of strands approaches. It also explores how organizations can improve their training materials to enhance their staff's understanding and ability to operationalize intersectionality. It further discusses how public servants and service providers apply intersectionality within GBA+ and examines how power is represented in both training materials and by public servants and service providers. This includes assessing how deficits are linked to power dynamics and the relationships between the intersectional components (i.e., individual identity and experiences, sites of power, and systems of oppression), as well as how intersectionality is depoliticized through unacknowledged institutional power, euphemisms, paradigms, efficiency discourse, and the absence of social justice discourse. Ultimately, this chapter explicitly addresses the research questions guiding this study.

### **Pan-equality Approach**

Pan-equality approaches were present in government and NGO training materials. This occurred when individual identity and experiences were discussed without the intersectional components and when the objective was to address a common issue affecting multiple identity groups (Christoffersen, 2021). When governments and NGOs used this approach, they missed the core purpose of intersectionality and simplified social location to fixed identity factors, like gender and race. Thus, identities and experiences were portrayed as having deficits. The training material did not encourage understanding experiences of systems of oppression, like racism and sexism, providing an incomplete understanding of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 360).

This approach can be identified in a federal government and an NGO examples which examined food insecurity and disaster relief initiatives. Each identified the how the common issues may impact or put different identity groups at risk, but they did not explore all of the intersectional components. For example, the federal government organization mentioned how sex, income, racial and cultural backgrounds, newcomer status, etc., can impact rates of food insecurity (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). Similarly, the NGO's example identified where there were concentrations of certain identity groups, like the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant women at risk, to set up disaster relief near areas which they are populate (DFSG, 2021a). Neither of these examples mentioned the interconnection between individual identities and experiences, systems of oppression or sites of power. This led to both the federal government and the NGO session to recognize identity groups as separate rather than interconnected, viewing them as having deficits.

Scholars have suggested that a dichotomous and static analysis of individual identities and experiences results in language which assumes groups to be homogenous and often as either privileged or oppressed (Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021, p. 526). Thus, the examples which included a multi-strand approach, also reinforced practices in GBA+ that may perpetuate stigmas, biases and assumptions about specific identity groups. This raises concerns about how

GBA+ is applied by governments and NGOs, as the way lived experiences are communicated can either empower or disempower individuals and communities (Crenshaw, 1995). When Crenshaw (1995) examined how feminist agendas portrayed and included the experiences of minority women in discussions about domestic violence, she discovered that the experiences of minority women were not represented with the same level of humanizing elements as those of other women in a news program. She noted that “tokenism, objectifying, voyeuristic inclusion is as disempowering as exclusion” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 364).

Both examples should examine how power dynamics influence the specific issues these groups face to avoid reinforcing stigmas, biases, and assumptions about identity groups as having deficits. For instance, analyzing how factors such as newcomer status, racial and cultural background, income, and gender interconnect, and how they interact with sites of power and systems of oppression, could illuminate the challenges in accessing food security. This approach would align with Crenshaw's (1989) concept of "multidimensionality," where identities and experiences are seen as mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive (p. 157).

### **Multi-strand Approach**

A multi-strand approach can effectively illustrate how power creates inequities and barriers for various identity groups, such as youth and individuals with disabilities. However, this method has limitations in how it represents identities and experiences, often encouraging an additive approach that analyzes identity groups separately or simultaneously without fully exploring their intersections. While government and NGO training sessions highlight the utility of this approach in identifying issues and barriers faced by different groups, Crenshaw (1989) cautioned against using a single-axis framework, underscoring the importance of a more nuanced analysis that recognizes the interconnectedness of identities and their experiences within systemic contexts.

In one of the provincial government training sessions, they used a multi-strand approach, where they discussed how accessibility to a building impacted diverse groups, like those with disabilities, youth, parents, etc. in diverse ways (The Exchange, 2020). However, their approach also incorporated components of a pan-equality approach because they were looking at the common issue of inaccessibility experienced by different identity groups. Their example suggested that the same level and attention must be paid to each group to ensure equitable access. Despite how the provincial training session demonstrated a multi-strand approach, they managed to represent power dynamics within their example. For instance, systems of oppression, “male-dominated environment,” were seen as influencing sites of power (i.e., those involved in the design and construction of a building), which resulted in inequitable access for different identity groups.

This multi-strand approach supported learners in understanding how one project can have different impacts on different identity groups, where they identified how the design of the building, like “heavy doors... baby change tables often only in women’s washrooms...light switches high up on walls...” impact access for different identity groups, like “some youth... folks with mobility aids...” in different ways (The Exchange, 2020). However, these identity groups were presented as separate and not overlapping with other identity factors. For instance, other identity factors, like gender-diverse parents, fathers, were not mentioned when discussing the challenges of having limited access to baby change tables in washrooms other than the women’s washrooms. Although the interconnection between systems of oppression and identity

and experience was demonstrated, the provincial government's example did not explore the overlap between identity groups. Instead, they encouraged learners to consider how separate groups may be adversely impacted by initiatives, falling short of a comprehensive intersectional approach.

A multi-strand approach was also observed within other government and NGO training material. For instance, discourse in these situations emphasized how GBA+ helped to identify how “diverse” groups of men, women and non-binary people may experience policies, programs, initiatives, services, etc. differently (Alberta Municipalities, 2021; Government of BC, 2021; Government of BC, 2020; IAAC, 2021; ITE, 2022; Open Government Partnerships, 2019; WAGE, 2022). This replicates what Crenshaw (1989) referred to as a “singular-axis framework,” where experiences of patriarchy were seen solely from the perspective of hegemonic feminism without looking at how it intersects with other systems of oppression, like racism, to create different experiences of subordination (pp. 139-140). Certain intersectional experiences are not considered or made visible without exploring the social locations. This may result in ineffective solutions that do not meet the needs of individuals and groups with various social locations (Crenshaw, 1995). The training session could have better incorporated an intersectional approach by demonstrating how sites of power and systems of oppression, like building developers and patriarchy, interacted and influenced the experiences of individuals with intersecting identities.

Although a multi-strand approach can be used to demonstrate how power creates inequities and barriers for different identity groups, like youth and people with disabilities, there are limitations in the way identities and experiences are presented. For instance, one challenge is that it encourages an additive or check-box approach where identity groups are perceived as separate rather than interconnected. Although not necessarily gender-focused, this approach did encourage looking at identify groups separate and simultaneously to identify those that may be marginalized or negatively impacted by an initiative. While the training sessions demonstrate how a multi-strand approach can help to identify issues and barriers of an initiative on different identify groups, they reinforced the status quo, where issues and identity groups are looked at separately rather than in relation to each other (Christoffersen, 2021; Crenshaw, 1989; Hankivsky et al., 2014). Crenshaw (1989) cautioned against using a single-axis framework to analyze identities and experiences because it can result in a distorted understanding of the multidimensional experiences of individuals.

### **Diversity within Approach**

The government and NGO training materials exhibited a *diversity within* approach by focusing on differences within broader groups, such as women, men, and non-binary people. For example, both sectors encouraged a comparison of “diverse” groups of men, women and non-binary people, where other identities and experiences were portrayed in addition when relevant (Alberta Municipalities, 2021; Government of BC, 2021; Government of BC, 2020; IAAC, 2021; ITE, 2022; Open Government Partnerships, 2019; WAGE, 2022). In these instances, other identity factors were examined simultaneously and separately within the larger group to highlight differences, rather than delving into the interconnectedness of these identity factors in relation to other intersectional components, resulting in an additive approach to intersectionality within GBA+. One detailed example of a diversity within approach was identified. The approach was used to help prevent misinformation about the experiences of individuals from different social locations.

There was a similar pattern among NGOs, with one NGO providing a more detailed example of a diversity within approach when they demonstrated how GBA+ could help mitigate misinformation and generalizations about broader identity groups. For instance, they spoke about how a news outlet stated that over 140,000 US jobs women held were lost. However, they emphasized that looking at the different experiences of Black, Latino, and White women indicated that this headline was misleading, as White women made “significant gains” in the labour market. In contrast, Black and Latino women were “hit disproportionately” (DFSG, 2021a). Similarly, the government training material also identified how “... women who experience disability, who are poor, who are from ethnic and racial minorities” experience a higher amount of “... issues with sexual harassment...” (Alberta Municipalities, 2016). In this case, the emphasis was placed on certain subgroups being at greater risk than others. The examples acknowledged intragroup differences such as the distinctions between Black and Latino women compared to white women. The focus remained on highlighting differences among women without exploring the unique social locations of women who may identify with these groups.

While it is recognized that there was importance in identifying differences within groups to ensure problems could be addressed effectively to meet the needs of women at different intersectional locations, Crenshaw (1995) stated there is a need to understand “...the ways in which the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender makes our actual experience... qualitatively different...” (p. 358). This means there is a need to understand difference within groups and how different identity factors interact and converge with systems of power and site of power to create these different experiences. The “scientific gaze” results in the categorization which reduces experiences to simplified intersectional categories, which seeks to explain experiences of difference which increases the risk of the complexity and dynamic components of relationships between groups and differences within being overlooked (Haschemi, Nowicka & Roxanne, 2022, p. 39). There is a need for change in scientific culture to enable an intersectional lens to be better integrated into research (Haschemi, Nowicka & Roxanne, 2022).

Analyzing a specific example of diversity in an NGO training session illustrated how GBA+ is considered important for diminishing misinformation and generalizations about larger identity groups, such as women. However, through a scientific gaze, they may also oversimplify the experiences of individuals when other intersectional components are not considered. This may result in specific needs or interest of individuals and groups in different social locations remaining invisible.

### **Intersections of Strands Approach**

This study found that both government and NGO training materials included examples of intersectionality which incorporated all three components of Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2022) in their examples (i.e., systems of oppression, sites of power, identities and experiences). Though, the indirect language used to describe some of the interconnections between these components resulted in power issues/imbances not being fully explored. While all the intersectional components were present, the examples did not fully explore of power dynamics and relationships.

PHAC's example was a case study which looked at Indigenous women's experiences with health inequity (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). At first glance, their example may have looked like a diversity within approach because of its focus on pregnant women as the broader group. However, it is an example of an intersections of strands approach because the central focus was on addressing barriers experienced by the most marginalized groups, one of which was identified as Indigenous women with various identity factors, such as those living in rural and remote areas. All three intersectional components were presented as interconnected, and the facilitator described how they each influenced each other. For instance, they stated how "...impacts of colonization on the interactions with healthcare providers..." and how "...limited considerations..." of healthcare providers contributed to Indigenous women's low access to healthcare resources (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). While some qualities of an intersection of strands approach were evident, the language used to describe colonization was indirect. It was portrayed as a past event, separate from the current dynamics of power and intersecting identities. It did not address how colonization is an ongoing issue deeply embedded within systems of oppression that continue to influence and shape organizational and societal norms, values, and systems.

This resulted in the application of an intersectional approach to GBA+ that is short of its transformative potential. For instance, when Hankivsky et al. (2014) examined a case study on how ineffective the BC Child and Youth Mental Health Plan was at addressing the intersectional location of Indigenous girls, they concluded that to understand the violence faced by Indigenous girls today, it was essential to situate their structural violence within the context of colonial policies, such as the *Indian Act*, and federal and provincial policies related to child welfare and youth justice. Additionally, this brings into question whether intersectionality can address the challenges experienced by Indigenous communities because of its own colonial history and inability to support Indigenous sovereignty (Hankivsky et al., 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to consider how intersectionality in GBA+ can be applied with a decolonial perspective. While adapted frameworks like Métis-specific GBA+ Tool and Culturally Relevant GBA exist to align with Indigenous perspectives (Women of the Métis Nation, 2019; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2020), none were mentioned by interview participants.

An NGO training session resembled a mix of diversity within and an intersection of strands approach where they included an example with all three components of intersectionality. The focus remained on demonstrating difference, where power relations and dynamics were not explored in-depth. In this example, the NGO training session suggested that "gender equality protections" may improve for women who are young, white and able-bodied within the work place. At the same time, it may have different impacts for older, black, disabled, lesbian women (i.e., intersecting identities and experiences) who may be "hampered" by racism, ableism, homophobia, etc. (i.e., systems of oppression) within the workplace (i.e., site of power) (ITE, 2022). Despite the focus being on common intersecting identities, like Black women, women with disabilities, and older women and their experiences of gender equality protection in the workplace, this approach falls in between a diversity within and intersections of strands approach.

Unlike PHAC's example, which discussed the experiences of the most marginalized group accessing healthcare services, this example drew on individual identities and experiences to

demonstrate differences in women’s experiences at the workplace, resembling aspects of diversity within approach (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). Other scholars have found using an intersectional approach important for understanding the diverse needs and experiences within a group (Crenshaw, 1989; 1995; Nelson & Piatak, 2021; Olsen, 2018). For instance, Nelson and Piatak (2021) emphasized that the individual, organizational, and structural racism may overlap and compound with gender biases. In their study, they found that racialized women were less likely to be in leadership positions and perceived lower levels of fairness, openness and support in the federal government, in comparison to White women. As discussed earlier, Crenshaw (1995) provided an example of how limited attention to the multidimensional aspects of experiences, such as those of immigrant women experiencing domestic violence, can result in ineffective policy changes, which can further disempower these women.

The NGO’s use of the term “hampered” also functioned as a euphemism, which shifted the discourse away from discussing the potential or , oppressive and discriminatory experiences that individuals may face when interacting with these systems of oppression at the workplace (ITE, 2022). Understanding how systems of oppression compound to “hamper” the experiences of intersecting identity groups within a site of power may better support organizations with using GBA+ to understand how organizational culture, processes and structures affect diverse employees. Moreover, an intersectional approach calls for understanding how systems of oppression, like racism and sexism, interact and create differences in experiences (Crenshaw; 1995). For instance, when Nelson and Piatak (2021) looked at different experiences of women, they also highlighted how these differences manifested, stating how the inclusion of all women in the workplace would be improved by examining specific experiences of racialized women, like their perception of cooperation and empowerment, which was higher than white women.

PHAC presented a slightly more detailed discussion on power than the NGO training session because they spoke about how there are challenging power dynamics between sites of power and individual identities and experiences. Refer to Table 32 for an example of an intersections of strands approach by PHAC.

*Table 32 Excerpts from PHAC demonstrating intersections of strands approach. Source: own.*

<b>PHAC</b>
<p>“...limited consideration on socio-economic or lifestyle barriers to health by healthcare services and providers, and the impact of colonization on interactions with health care providers...” (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).</p> <p>Provided specific examples of how different forms of power influence Indigenous women’s access to healthcare, like their “low[er] access to healthcare” and “risk of preterm gestational diabetes and high blood pressure” (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022).</p>

In this case, healthcare services and providers could be seen as working within certain parameters that did not meet the health needs of Indigenous women. At the same time, the NGO training session provided fewer details about how power specifically impacts individual experiences. Instead, the facilitator in the NGO session used the term “hampered” which avoided

discussion about systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by individuals and did not include any examples of specific interactions between the intersectional components.

The examples from the federal government and NGO demonstrated that focus needs to be placed on the relationship between individual identities and experiences, systems of oppression, and sites of power as outlined in Cameron & Tedds' (2022) to provide a comprehensive analysis of power. Crenshaw (1995) emphasized that intersectionality was a framework to “unveil the process” in which systems of oppression are experienced by those who are subordinated by them and those who are privileged by them (p. 375).

*Figures 5-8* were generated by analyzing the discourse in two examples discussed in this section, both of which aligned with an intersections of strands approach. Each figure shows the language used in the examples to depict the three intersectional components and their interconnection. *Figure 5 and 6* included all three intersectional components. The language used to describe these components resulted in an incomplete depiction of the relationship between these components. Looking at these two figures provides insight into how power dynamics and relationships between intersectional components are not depicted accurately or clearly.

*Figure 5* shows PHAC's example and how the phrase “...impacts of colonization on the interaction...” between Indigenous women and service providers did not reveal the dynamics of the relationship between colonization and service providers (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). For instance, the example did not look at how colonization may influence perspectives, ideologies, and practices used by service providers. This example also did not show the relationship between Indigenous women and colonization, such as how Indigenous women may hold certain priorities, and value specific types of approaches that may address injustices experienced by their communities (National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls [NIMMIWG], 2019). Additionally, the example provided a one-sided perspective on the relationship between service providers and Indigenous women, where service providers actions were depicted as not responsive to the needs of Indigenous women. The example did not provide insight onto Indigenous women's expectations or perspectives of the interaction with healthcare providers and their services.

*Figure 6* shows how the language used in an NGO example of an intersection of strands approach presented an incomplete perspective on the relationships between the intersectional components. In this example, the relationships were not depicted as interconnected but as one affecting the other. For instance, systems of oppression were described as "hampering" Black, lesbian, and disabled women, and workplace gender equality protections were deemed insufficient to meet their needs (ITE, 2022). *Figure 6* illustrates a disconnect between systems of oppression and the workplace, which remained an unexplored site of power. In this example, the challenges that women may experience when interacting with multiple systems of oppression were not explored. Without discussing how multiple forms of oppression may overlap and impact individual experiences, the example did not explore how and why gender equality protections were not meeting the needs of women within certain social locations.

Figure 5 Intersection of strands approach used for a case study from PHAC training material. Source: own.

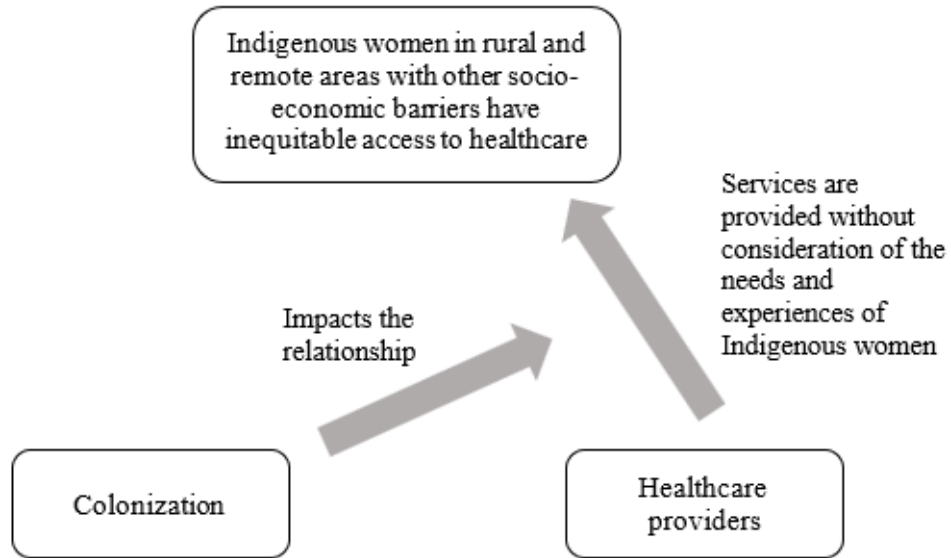
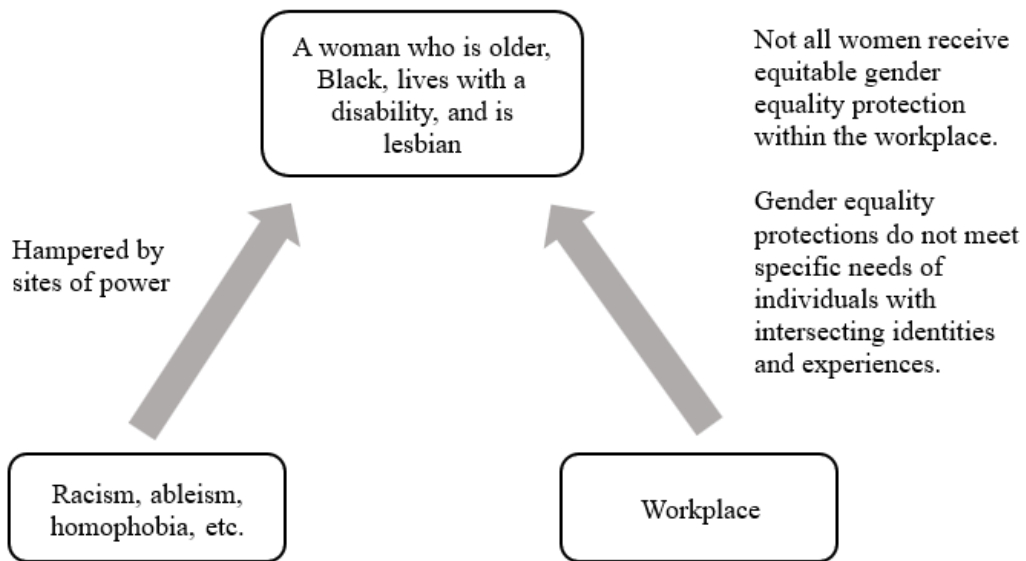


Figure 6 Intersection of strands approach in an example from ITE's training material. Source: own.



Figures 7 and 8 offer revised versions of Figures 5 and 6, respectively, to give an idea of what a complete and comprehensive intersectional approach would include, which would strengthen the analysis of power. This involved expanding on the interactive aspects of the relationships, which were not represented in Figures 5 and 6, by using arrows to connect each intersectional

component. This approach helps to illustrate how these examples could more accurately reflect Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023).

Figure 7 A revised version of the intersection of strands approach used in a federal government case study example. Source: own.

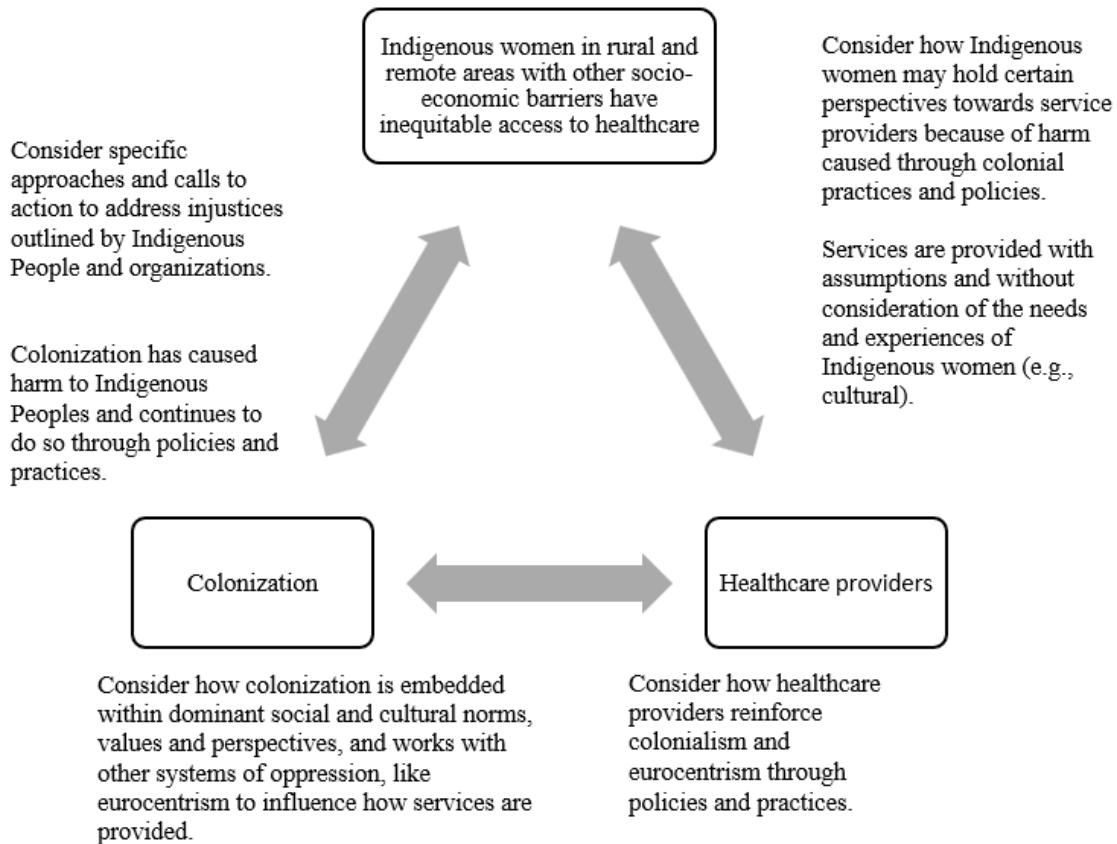


Figure 7 analyzes the relationship between colonization and healthcare providers, exploring how systems of oppression may influence sites of power, and how sites of power may reinforce systems of oppression through their policies and practices. This dynamic then feeds into how services are provided through a colonial lens which may be harmful and unresponsive to the needs and experiences of Indigenous women. When considering the relationship between colonization and Indigenous women, this revised example attempts to incorporate considerations into how colonization has caused and continues to perpetuate harmful practices through systems and structures of society (NIMMIWG, 2019a, p. 233). This provides insight into how colonization has led to certain approaches and calls to action aimed at addressing injustices (NIMMIWG, 2019a), while also influencing the expectations and perspectives that Indigenous women may have towards healthcare service providers. For instance, the process of colonization by Canadian institutions has fostered a lasting sense of distrust among Indigenous peoples toward them (NIMMIWG, 2019a).

Figure 8 A revised version of the intersection of strands approach used in an NGO example. Source: own.

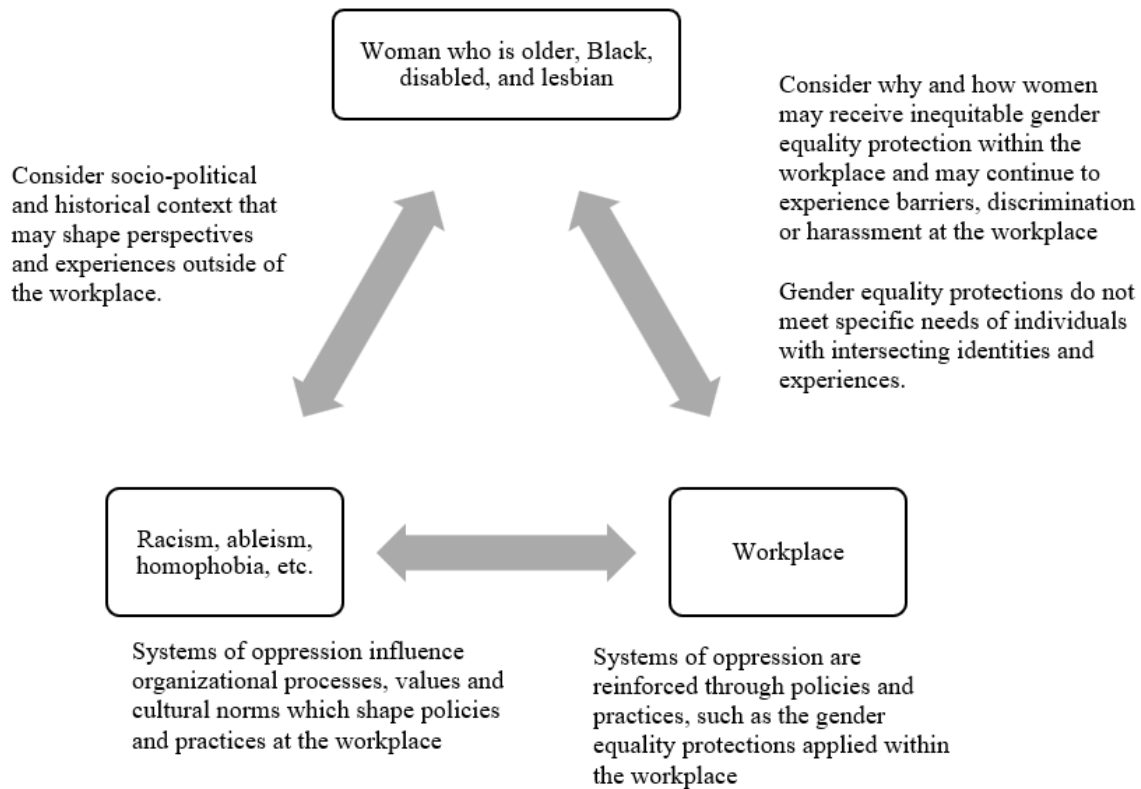


Figure 8 analyzes the relationship between the workplace and multiple systems of oppression. The illustration shows arrows connecting systems of oppression to the workplace, emphasizing how factors like racism, ableism, and homophobia can influence organizational processes, values, and cultural norms, which then shape policies and practices. It also illustrates how these policies and practices can perpetuate systems of oppression, including through gender equality protections, which may not fully address the needs of individuals with intersecting identities, such as Black, disabled, and lesbian women. This emphasizes the need for organizations to acknowledge and address systems of oppression internal and embedded within organizational processes rather than presenting these issues as external. Instead of stating that individuals may be “hampered” by systems of oppression, incorporating socio-political and historical context that shapes diverse perspectives and experiences would support a deeper understanding of why gender equality protections in the workplace may fail to meet these women’s needs. Providing more context about social locations can help provide more tangible examples of how organizations can design more responsive programs and services, such as gender equality protections because it provides more context to specific and unique experiences. For example, examining systems of oppression, such as sexism and racism, as mutually constitutive ensures that the experiences of individuals with intersecting identities are fully recognized and addressed (Crenshaw, 1995).

Figures 5-8 show that it is important to analyze the interconnection between each of the intersectional components of Cameron and Tedds’ *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023) to

develop an understanding of the power dynamics that shape inequitable experiences. In providing a visual of how relationships were depicted in the government and NGO training examples, Figures 5 and 6 were able to illustrate how there was missing context which prevented learners from obtaining a complete understanding of the issues being discussed, such as the experiences of Indigenous women and women with multiple intersecting identities in the workplace. Figures 7 and 8 offered a more in-depth exploration of the relationships between the intersectional components in an attempt to address gaps of information and provide a more complete intersectional analysis.

### **How Public Servants and Service Providers Apply Intersectionality within GBA+**

Government and NGO participants did not provide direct examples of how they applied an intersections of strands approach within GBA+ to their work. However, there were instances where certain approaches could be discerned within participants' responses, particularly the use of multi-strand and diversity within approaches in their answers. This occurred when NGO participants spoke about the types of skills and lived experiences which contributed to their understanding of how to apply intersectionality within GBA+, as well as when one government participant discussed challenges with applying GBA+.

Some NGO participants demonstrated a multi-strand approach to GBA+ in their comments. For instance, when one of these participants shared how their knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research strengthened their ability to apply GBA+, they focused on identity factors as separate rather than overlapping and interconnected. For example, this participant mentioned how they were able to identify the multiple factors, such as “sex and age and marital status... language... education... survival jobs...” and how they may impact people's experiences (Participant 5). In this scenario, each factor was presented through an additive approach, where certain factors were listed as relevant whereas others may not be named if they are perceived as less relevant (Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Manning & Levac, 2022).

This was similar to how a multi-strand approach was applied through government training materials. While this may be seen as a less-than-ideal approach to intersectionality because it does not address or consider power, this participant demonstrated how a multi-strand approach can be helpful. For example, when thinking about “access to resources” (Participant 5), this approach may be an appropriate step to ensure a broader range of individuals and groups are considered within policy development and have access to a program or service. Another NGO participant used a similar approach to describe how they learned about intersectionality and GBA+. They described identity factors that created different experiences of homelessness for individuals, like a “young Black man versus a married couple with three children” (Participant 4).

There is a risk of oversimplification if this is the only step taken to apply an intersectionality because it may result in a continued additive or checklist approach and assumption about certain identity factors as having deficits (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hunting & Hankivsky, 2020; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Scala & Paterson, 2017). The latter participant did emphasize how they were able to learn about “intersectionality and power relations” as well as “who is struggling and who is running into discrimination” which suggests that had they provided further context they would have been able to expand from a multi-strand approach to an intersectional one which looks at power through the analysis of the relationship between intersectional components (Participant 4).

A diversity within approach could be discerned in a response from one of the government participants when they were asked if there were any challenges with applying GBA+ within their organization. In their response, they spoke about how there was not always enough time and resources to implement intersectionality within GBA+. In their example, they used a diversity within approach to highlight how there was missing information and data about specific populations with groups, where there was data about “women” but not “racialized women or women with disabilities” (Participant 1). Just as this study noted that NGO training materials employed a diversity within approach to avoid misinformation and generalization, this participant illustrated that such approaches help organizations identify the necessary data and information to consider the diverse experiences of individuals when developing responsive policies, programs, or initiatives.

Multi-strand and diversity within approaches were demonstrated as useful in enhancing organization’s ability to create more responsive policies, programs and services by providing information on a range of identity groups which largely reflected an additive approach. There were no instances of an intersections of strands approach being discussed in the interviews because the way power was discussed among government and NGO participants was not centered on the relationship between the intersectional components. Instead, when power was discussed all participants were predominately focused on organizations as sites of power, the power dynamics within them and in relation to other organizations, which will be discussed in the following section.

### **The Representation of Power Through Intersectionality within GBA+**

As discussed in the previous section, the inclusion of all three components of intersectionality in examples within government and NGO training materials supported an intersection of strands approach to GBA+. The specific discourse used in the examples of both government and NGO training sessions demonstrated that there are challenges with fully incorporating power into intersectionality and GBA+. This section will explore how the narratives and discourse used by government and NGOs regarding systems of oppression and sites of power sometimes facilitated discussions about transformative change, while at other times reinforcing the authority of the organizations delivering GBA+ training. Additionally, this section will explore how interview participants represented power.

### **Associating Deficits to Power Dynamics and Relationships Between Intersectional Components**

Government and NGO training materials demonstrated that describing identities as dynamic rather than static led to a more complete understanding of intersectional experiences, providing context on how intersectional identity and experiences are socially constructed (Cameron & Tedds, 2023). Naming systems of oppression and including sites of power in the examples used in government and NGO training materials supported a dynamic representation of intersecting identity groups, where learners were provided context onto why these groups experience barriers and inequities, and how deeply embedded systems of oppression are within societal culture and norms. This helped to shift the focus of problems into looking at the interaction between components rather than problems being associated with identity groups.

When one provincial government training session named systems of oppression like, “male-dominated built environment” as influencing the design and construction of a building, they provided context onto why certain groups experience barriers, such as “heavy doors” preventing youth and people with mobility aids from accessing a building (The Exchange, 2020). The discourse used in NGO training sessions, like “invisible norm,” “deeply ingrained” (DFSG, 2021a) and “invisible culture,” and “blind spots” (ITE, 2022) helped to emphasize the influence of deeply embedded systems of oppression, like patriarchy, ableism and colonialism within societal and cultural norms.

The inclusion of sites of power also provided some context to GBA+ learners on the institutions and organizations have in creating and reinforcing ideologies stemming from systems of oppression. For instance, when one NGO session was sharing information about disabilities and ableism, they used an example which looked at “media,” “rights movements,” and “underrepresentation” of people with disabilities (Springboard Services, 2021). This helped to demonstrate how sites of power and their discourse can influence who is included and excluded within broader society. Incorporating systems of oppression and sites of power helped learners understand that certain identity groups do not have inherent deficits. Instead, their experiences of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination arise from interactions with these systems. For instance, in the NGO training session, they showed how media and rights movements reinforced ableism through the exclusion of people with disabilities in discourse. Other scholars have also argued that there is a need to look at power disparities between organizations and the populations they serve (Hankivsky et al., 2014; Philips-Beck et al., 2020). For instance, systemic racism implies that laws, customs, and practices that are implemented through organizations are established through systems of oppression, like racism and colonialism, which contributes to reinforcing the institutional power of some identity groups, where systems and structures are designed to benefit white people, while creating racial inequities for people of colour (Phillips-Beck et al. 2020).

When the two intersectional components (i.e., sites of power and systems of oppression) were included in government and NGO training examples, it shifted how issues and problems were associated with intersecting identity groups. Comparing NGO and provincial government examples that included or excluded intersectional components highlighted how incorporating intersectional elements can change the conversation. Specifically, it can help move away from labelling groups as having deficits. The former discussed the experiences of Muslim men, and the latter discussed the experiences of Black men and people with disabilities. In both examples, the intersecting identities groups were presented as having inequitable treatment, Muslim men being labelled as deviant and Black men experiencing negative financial impacts during COVID-19. Although the first example indirectly speaks to racism, it provided context, where Muslim men were described as being “stereotyped,” because of “the fixed idea of Islam” within the state after 9/11, which resulted in Muslim men being labelled as “deviant,” (DFSG, 2021c). The second example, associated “Black men... aged 45+” to “negative financial impact[s]” and “23% of people with disabilities” with “low income” but the training material did not mention why these identity groups experienced negative financial impacts or low income (Government of BC, 2023).

As mentioned previously, static representation leads to assumptions of identity groups as inherently having deficits rather than deficits being a result of the interaction between systems of oppression and sites of power. This difference in analyzing power may result from individuals and organizations being accustomed to dominant western knowledge systems, where it is encouraged to look at problems objectively and value quantitative data and linear thinking (Datta & Starlight, 2024; Kovach, 2021). Researchers examining the application of intersectionality in empirical social work research found parallels between intersectional approaches and corresponding research designs (Matsuzaka, Hudson & Ross, 2021). For instance, researchers found that quantitative researchers favoured research approaches that examined differences in outcomes among sub-populations, which they suggested may be due to researchers' inclinations to use 'traditional quantitative designs for between-group comparisons' (Matsuzaka, Hudson, Ross, 2021, p. 165). Whereas qualitative researchers were inclined to use research designs which looked to understand intersectional and lived experiences (Matsuzaka, Hudson, Ross, 2021, p. 165).

Both government and NGO training materials that incorporated systems of oppression and sites of power from Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023) into their examples demonstrates how GBA+ can be used to look at intersecting identity groups as dynamic, thus reducing the potential of stigmatizing or labelling them as deficient.. Instead, the problems were associated with the power dynamics and relationship between the intersectional components. These training materials provided a more complete understanding of intersectional locations and experiences by discussing systems of power and sites of oppression. This supported a more comprehensive understanding of GBA+, thus reducing the stigmatization of certain identity groups as having deficits.

### **Depoliticizing Intersectionality within GBA+**

Intersectionality within GBA+ was depoliticized in government and NGO training material in several ways. First, when provincial and federal government training materials omitted themselves as sites of oppression when discussing the GBA+ process, like the collection of disaggregated data and how to apply GBA+. For instance, discourse focused on organizational processes and benefits to the organization resulted in intersectionality being removed from social justice-oriented change. Second, when NGO and provincial government training material avoided discourse about how deeply entrenched systems of oppression were within organizations when they used euphemisms, like "hampered" (ITE, 2022) and "impact" (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022) when discussing systems of oppression. This supported organizations with using intersectionality without necessarily needing to discuss how to address underlying systems of oppression within organizations, thus depoliticizing intersectionality within GBA+. Third, the use of positivistic language supported further depoliticization of intersectionality within GBA+ as it reinforced government processes as 'neutral' and 'objective' and failed to consider how underlying systems of oppression are embedded within organizations. Lastly, by not defining social justice there was less clarity on how intersectionality within GBA+ supports social justice.

### *Unacknowledged Institutional Power*

Governments avoided discussing and addressing their institutional power when they omitted themselves as sites of power. This omission, evident in one of the training sessions, resulted in

the depoliticization of intersectionality within GBA+ because there was no acknowledgement of the historical and socio-political context influencing the relationship between citizens, communities, and government organizations. Instead, the training session remained focused on the organizational process, "...weigh those risks with the benefits of the program" (The Exchange, 2020). To avoid applying intersectionality with knowledge production that fits a scientific lens rather than creating change in these processes, practitioners must consider the historical contingencies, structural locations, and power differentials (Bilge, 2013). This would involve considering the historical context, current organizational processes, structures, practices, and the power dynamics between organizations and the populations they serve that contribute to feelings of mistrust around data collection.

Similarly, when a federal government training document also omitted themselves as a site of power when providing examples of how GBA+ can be applied, they removed important historical and current socio-political context of the relationship between themselves and Indigenous people. For instance, WAGE (2022) emphasized the significance of forests as supporting "economic survival" and "spiritual wellbeing." Though, they did not mention Indigenous people's rights, and obligations of the state to consult, cooperate and obtain consent from Indigenous people. Additionally, the example suggested that engaging with Indigenous people was for the organization's benefit, stating, "useful to consult..." which encourages using GBA+ to serve the organization's interests (WAGE, 2022). The term "useful" emphasized how the approach is focused on benefits to organizations rather than transformative, counter-hegemonic knowledge production, and social justice, which are seen as necessary components to politicizing intersectionality (Bilge, 2013). Thus, intersectionality in GBA+ was depoliticized, as the federal government training avoided discourse on their responsibilities that are outlined in various calls to action and reports, like those from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2012) and the Nation Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), policies and legislation like the *Constitution Act, 1982* (1982-1982) and *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021).

#### *Avoidance of Politicized Topics Using Euphemisms*

The use of euphemisms in both government and NGO training sessions to describe systems of oppression also contributed to the depoliticization of intersectionality within GBA+. For instance, using phrases like "entry points and different experiences" or the use of words like "impact" (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022) and "hampered" (ITE, 2022) when speaking about different identity groups and their experiences interacting with sites of power, like the police, resulted in a limited discussion on how systems of oppression create systemic inequalities and contribute to discrimination and oppression experienced by individuals and groups. For instance, by using terms like "hampered" and different "entry points and different experiences" rather than speaking about specific experiences or theoretical examples, the facilitators avoided discourse about the current socio-political context and the experiences of the Black community (ITE, 2022). For instance, by describing differences in experience interacting with the police as "entry points and different experiences," the facilitator of one NGO session avoided discussing police brutality and the social movement, Black Lives Matter (BLM) which advocates against racism and police brutality after George Zimmerman was found not guilty and acquitted of his charges for shooting Trayvon Martin, a black teenager who was unarmed (BBC, 2020; Alexander, 2022).

The use of euphemisms encouraged learners to think about systems of oppression as removed and external from sites of power. For instance, using the term “impact” to describe colonization and the relationship between service providers and Indigenous women, implied that colonization was an external force (Ontario Network of CAPC/CPNP Projects, 2022). This perspective, which omits discourse on social justice, means that organizations apply intersectionality without addressing underlying systems of oppression that produce and maintain social injustice, and overlooking how organizational structures produce and sustain social inequalities (Bilge, 2013). Describing colonization as an external force contributed to the depoliticization of intersectionality because it played into what some scholars refer to as “political myths of ‘posts’ (post-raciality, post-feminism)” (Bilge, 2013, p. 407). This framing minimized discussion about how colonization continues to affect the relationship between service providers and Indigenous women, allowing organizations to avoid addressing power dynamics and the ongoing presence and impact of deeply entrenched inequalities perpetuated by various systems of oppression (Bilge, 2013).

For instance, scholars emphasize that understanding health inequities and distrust that First Nations have towards Canadian organizations requires understanding systemic racism and its connection to colonialism and white supremacy and the ways in which these systems were used to gain power and used to subjugate Indigenous people (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020).

### *Paradigms*

The different paradigms, positivistic and post-positivistic, reflected within the training material demonstrated the variability in how GBA+ has been applied across different governments and NGOs. Specifically, when the topic of identifying personal biases and assumptions surfaced, these paradigms served different purposes. In placing value onto scientific methods and processes, positivistic paradigms within some of the federal government training material encouraged a narrative of governments being neutral and objective. For instance, they proposed that one could challenge their assumptions and “ensure” that potential adverse impacts could be addressed and “mitigation measures” could be taken (IAAC, 2021). This removed analysis of the subjectivity within research and policy processes the government engages in and organizational power remains unchallenged. This can be problematic as other scholars have shared concern about how the preference for objectivity often renders invisible the subjective judgements that inform objective measures leading to inadequate assessments of social realities (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014). While post-positivistic paradigms used in other federal, provincial government and NGO training material aligned more with intersectionality because they encouraged learners to consider how processes and systems, such as culturalization, influenced their understanding and perspective about social problems (Dhamoon, 2011). For example, one provincial government emphasized the need for a diverse workforce; otherwise, projects can be “prone to be implanted with unexamined, undiscussed, and often unconscious assumptions and biases...” (Government of BC, 2023). This encouraged learners to think about noticing how deeply embedded systems of oppression are and dismantling them through inclusivity and diversity. At the same time, some of the federal government training material did not explore how underlying systems of oppression influence perspectives, organizational structures and processes, which resulted in the depoliticization of intersectionality in GBA+.

### *Efficiency Discourse and Social Justice*

The rationale for applying GBA+ encompassed both efficiency discourse and social justice discourse, highlighting the responsibilities of governments and NGOs in serving their populations. The former justified the application of GBA+ by speaking about how GBA+ increased efficiency of operations which meant organizations could better serve the population. The use of efficiency discourse encouraged learners to consider integrative approaches, which do not rethink the status-quo (Johnstone & Momani, 2022), thus power, a key component of intersectionality (Dhamoon, 2011), remained unacknowledged. For example, the use of integrative language that emphasizes how GBA+ is ‘cost-effective’ or ‘efficient’ reinforced existing organizational structures and processes, rather than challenging them and creating new processes (Canadian Equity Consulting, 2021; DSFG, 2021ab; Government of BC, 2021; Government of BC, 2023; WAGE 2022). The latter emphasized equity, fairness, equality of opportunity, and rights.

The use of concepts related to social justice in government and NGO training material aligned intersectionality to its origins within critical race theory and civil rights (Crenshaw, 1995), particularly when a capabilities approach was used in the training material. This included government and NGO training sessions discussing different intersecting identity groups’ abilities to access resources, like healthcare, transportation, and physical spaces like buildings. Additionally, there was some politicization of GBA+ using recognition justice and advocating for change in decision-making processes when developing programs, policies and initiatives that meet the needs of a diverse population and various communities.

However, social justice was not clearly defined within government and NGO training materials. At most, justice was defined as racial, gender or legal justice without context onto what each entailed. This highlighted issues around how the term social justice is often used vaguely, where the meaning behind the words is often lost (Miller, 1979). However, it continues to be used to persuade public opinion and solicit electoral support (Piachaud, 2008). This vagueness may be a result of a general disagreement on the term social justice that can be found within political philosophy (Fraser, 1999; Jost, 2020; Kymlicka, 2008; Lister, 2008; Wolff, 2008; Young, 2008), but it also provides perspective onto the multiple aspects related to social justice.

The fact that government and NGO training materials reflected the capabilities approach, distribution and recognition justice suggests that social justice may have multiple components and requires an integrative understanding of social justice (Fraser, 1999) when applying GBA+. Fraser (1999) went on to suggest that to view distributive justice strictly as class politics and recognition justice as identity politics to be oversimplified, suggesting a more integrative understanding of social justice is needed, which incorporates both approaches. For example, Fraser (1999) suggested that the components of identity, like gender, race, sexuality and class need to be considered as mutually intersecting rather than singular to provide justice, which is similar to ideas related to intersectionality and the need to consider the relationship between identities. Fraser (1995) provides an example of this by mentioning how the socio-economic experiences of an individual who is gay and working class may need both redistributive and recognition justice. Attempts to provide integrative justice can be found within government and NGO training sessions emphasizing the need to create more equitable benefits across society by identifying the specific needs of intersecting identity groups.

The different concepts of social justice within government and NGO training materials may also reflect of the need for several types of social justice depending on the population in consideration. For instance, whether intentional or unintentional, provincial and federal government training material, highlighted how social justice is different for Indigenous people by mentioning various reports and calls to action, like the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action*. Kymlika (2008) proposed that as western societies become more diverse there is a need for social justice that accommodates these diverse groups. Specifically, Kymlika (2008) emphasized how social justice will look different for different populations within western societies and the need to recognize distinctive identities, such as Indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In these cases, Kymlika (2008) states how social justice for Indigenous people would include considering land claims, cultural rights, self-government rights. While government training material mentioned these reports, none of the specific rights outlined in the reports were discussed in the training materials.

Social justice remains an undefined aspect of GBA Plus (GBA+). While GBA+ serves as a valuable tool for developing more effective policies, programs, and initiatives, it does not adequately address the current needs for social justice within a diverse population. For instance, government and NGO training material incorporated some aspects of a capabilities approach, distributive and recognition justice. Government training material did not discuss rights or social justice specific to certain populations, like Indigenous People. Abstract meanings within social justice need to be translated into tangible and concrete terms (Sui, 2020). Otherwise, intersectionality within GBA+ remains a tool to support government agendas and reinforce their institutional power rather than confronting it. This means that the current application of intersectionality within GBA+ may not meet the needs or interests of Indigenous people. This is also implied with the adapted GBA+ frameworks with Indigenous perspectives (Ministers Advisory Council on Indigenous Women, n.d.; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2020; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2022; Women of the Métis Nation, 2019).

Intersectionality within GBA+ was depoliticized within government and NGO training material. By omitting themselves as sites of power, some government organizations were able to avoid transformative discourse and did not incorporate social justice within their training. The use of euphemisms in some of the federal government and NGO training material when speaking about systems of oppression led to limited discourse about underlying and deeply embedded systems of oppression within organizations. The use of positivistic language by the federal government meant there was less observation of subjectivity in the GBA+ process, which meant underlying systems of oppression that influence the perspective of individuals, like GBA+ users, was not addressed. The influence of positivism and efficiency discourse in training materials may be due to the principles of non-partisanship and merit that guide government operations. These principles require public servants to remain politically neutral due to the permanent nature of their roles (Wesley & Marland, 2019). Their positions are meant to be earned based on merit, free from political influence (Copus, Wingfield, Steyvers, & Reynaert, 2012; Wesley & Marland, 2019). Lastly, ambiguous social justice-oriented goals within the government and NGO training sessions and avoidance of certain types of social justice discourse, particularly around social justice for Indigenous peoples, reinforces institutional power. All of these contributed to the

depoliticizing of GBA+ as they did not explore systemic and structural change within governments and NGOs.

### **How is Power Represented by Public Servants and Service Providers**

When government and NGO participants discussed power, they focused on the power dynamics within organizations, such as the influence exerted by individuals in higher positions and how they have the influence, power or “teeth” to support the integration and quality of GBA+ (Participant 3). Furthermore, the power dynamics between organizations were also discussed as influencing the integration and quality of GBA+ through the distribution of funding and authority of certain organizations, like central agencies, over other government organizations. The focus on sites of power demonstrated how paradigms are reinforced through sites of power, where a more positivistic paradigm was seen as an important approach to influencing decision-makers. For example, one participant shared how “data” provided “evidence” by providing a more “compelling story” (Participant 4). This suggested that positivistic paradigms are reinforced through organizational leadership and decision-making processes. This resembles findings from Scala and Paterson (2017), who interviewed GBA+ analysts and found that management played an important role in determining the level importance of given to GBA+.

### **The Politicization of GBA+ by Service Providers**

Similar to the training materials used by government and NGOs, social justice was not clearly defined in the interviews with participants discussing intersectionality and GBA+. However, government and NGO participants incorporated ideas related to social justice concepts where they directly advocated for the politicization of intersectionality within GBA+. For example, ideas related to recognition justice, such as the political representation of specific populations’ voices (Lister, 2007; Young, 2008), were seen as necessary in the application of GBA+. For instance, one participant raised concern about how GBA+ needed to consider the perspectives and interests outside of government agendas and how they did not see GBA+ as being “... helpful unless it’s done so with Indigenous leaders and educators being the ones creating that sort of work...” (Participant 6). This resembled government and NGO training materials that used recognition justice to encourage transformative change to meet the needs of a diverse population, suggesting that the incorporation of recognition justice is an important factor in supporting the politicization of GBA+.

## **Answering the Research Questions**

### **How Governments and NGOs Prepare Their Staff to Operationalize Intersectionality within GBA+**

This study compared how governments and NGOs prepare their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+ using a revised version of Christoffersen’s (2021) five applied concepts of intersectionality and Cameron and Tedds’ *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023). The findings indicated that governments and NGOs GBA+ provided training on intersectionality that was inconsistent with how it was intended in the literature (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1995; Dahmoon, 2011). Specifically, power was not fully incorporated into government and NGOs’ operational definitions of intersectionality, despite it being described as a core component within the literature (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1995; Dahmoon, 2011). The discrepancies analyzed within this study are a

concern because there is inconsistency in the way staff are being prepared to implement intersectionality and it does not align with the intended outcomes, such as creating transformative and social justice-oriented change, which has resulted in its depoliticization (Blige, 2013). This study found that the depoliticization of intersectionality has different consequences in governments in comparison to NGOs.

### *Power*

Governments and NGOs did not fully incorporate power into their GBA+ training materials. For instance, when governments and NGOs used a pan-equality or a multi-strand approach, the training materials encouraged staff to operationalize intersectionality with a single-axis framework. This does not consider how identities and experiences overlap and interact to create advantages or disadvantages in relation to power (Crenshaw, 1989; Christoffersen, 2021; Cameron & Tedds, 2023). For example, this involved identifying groups, such as youth, individuals with disabilities without looking at the interconnection between these identities and experiences. Additionally, when a pan-equality approach was observed in governments and NGOs they did not identify sites of power, systems of oppression, or power dynamics and relationships between these intersectional components as aspects of intersectionality, which resulted the analysis of individual identities and experiences, such as sex, income, racial and cultural backgrounds, becoming the main aspect of intersectionality. While governments and NGOs attempted to incorporate power into their operational definitions of intersectionality through use of an intersection of strands approach, the analysis of power was not clearly demonstrated, as seen in Figures 2 and 3, which resulted in the operationalization of intersectionality without analysis of power dynamics and relationships.

### *Depoliticizing of GBA+ in government and NGO training materials*

The limited discourse about power in government and NGO training materials resulted in the depoliticization of intersectionality within GBA+. For example, government and NGO training materials depoliticized intersectionality using specific narratives, discourse and discursive strategies which often mitigated discussion around power dynamics and relationships, as well as socio-cultural and historical context. Through the depoliticization of intersectionality governments and NGOs were able to avoid discussing how sites of power may be implicated in processes of discrimination or oppression, such as racism. This further reinforced institutional power and the status quo rather than providing opportunities for transformative and social justice-oriented change.

- GBA+ was depoliticized in the training materials due to a limited power analysis. This was evident when provincial and federal governments failed to recognize themselves as sites of power, promoting narratives that positioned the government as neutral and objective, thereby reinforcing institutional power in the process.
- Euphemisms supported government and NGOs to avoid discourse on deeply entrenched systems of oppression within organizations. This resulted in less examination of the underlying influences of ideologies and discourse, thus creating a missed opportunity to explore paradigm or cultural shifts within organizations.

- The use of positivistic language in government training materials reinforced government processes as ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’ without consideration to underlying systems of oppression embedded within organizations.
- Post-positivistic language used by governments and NGOs highlighted specific approaches, like co-creation and co-development, which involve changing decision-making processes, that could support a transformative approach.
- Lastly, the purpose of GBA+ was not clearly defined in training materials or interviews, in some cases it was justified through efficiency discourse, and in other cases through ideas related to social justice although social justice was not clearly defined. Clearly defining how GBA+ supports social justice may better align intersectionality within GBA+ to its transformative potential.

### *Benefits and Limitations*

The absence of power in training materials has led to the depoliticization of intersectionality in practice. This study also identified benefits and limitations of the government and NGO approaches to building capacity of their staff to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+ . The benefits and limitations are outlined below:

- An intersection of strands approach demonstrated there was an interconnection between the intersectional components. However, euphemisms like, “impacts” and “hampered,” limited the investigation of the relationships between the intersectional components. Learners had to hold prior knowledge about socio-political and historical contexts to be able to understand the examples used in the GBA+ training.
- Diversity within approach was demonstrated as helpful in reducing generalizations and misinformation about broader identity groups by analyzing within-group differences. There was some analysis of power to demonstrate difference. However, fixation on specific identity categories, like gender, in addition to other identity factors, may result in the oversimplification of identity and result in other aspects of identity being deprioritized (Haschemi, Nowicka, & Roxanne, 2022).
- A multi-strand approach was perceived as helpful for looking at specific issues, policies, and programs and how they adversely affected diverse groups, but resembled an integrative approach, where the focus was on achieving organizational objectives rather than creating systemic and structural change (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017), and identities were observed separately rather than interconnected, resulting in an oversimplification of social locations and experiences (Haschemi, Nowicka, & Roxanne, 2022).
- A pan-equality approach was used to look at common issues that affected multiple identity groups in similar ways and resembled an integrative approach because of the focus on enhancing existing organizational processes (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Johnstone & Momani, 2019; Scala & Paterson, 2017). Identities were seen as separate and labelled dichotomously as either advantageous or disadvantaged.

To ensure public servants and service providers are adequately prepared to operationalize intersectionality, a more thorough analysis of power and the relationships among the three intersectional components is needed, along with an examination of intersecting identities and experiences. Although this study revealed that other intersectional approaches, such as diversity within, multi-strand, and pan-equality, can help governments and organizations identify challenges and barriers to creating equitable policies and practices, these approaches have limitations. Specifically, there are limitations in their analysis of power, which may lead to disempowerment of individuals and groups (Crenshaw, 1995). The practical benefits and challenges to applying each approach within GBA+ are included within Table 33.

*Table 33 Benefits and disadvantages of the intersectional approaches used within GBA+.*

*Source: own.*

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Intersection of Strands	Opportunity to deeply analyze power dynamics and the relationship between and within intersectional components that contribute to experiences of problems, policies, programs or initiatives.	Requires extensive knowledge of socio-political and historical contexts.
Diversity Within	Identifying differences within groups to help prevent misinformation and generalizations about broader populations and groups of people. There may be some analysis of power to demonstrate difference.	Poses a risk for oversimplification of intersectional experiences and may deprioritize other identity factors.
Multi-strand	Identifying how the experience a problem, policy or initiative is different among diverse identity groups.	Remains a single-axis of analysis. Provides an oversimplification of intersecting identities and experiences.
Pan-equality	Identifying multiple groups that are affected by an issue in a similar way.	Remains a single-axis of analysis. Provides an oversimplification of intersecting identities and experiences.

### **How Service Providers and Public Servants Apply Intersectionality within GBA+**

The participants of this study could not provide direct examples of how they applied intersectionality within GBA+. Therefore, it was not possible to fully explore this aspect in relation to the revised version of Christoffersen’s (2021) applied concepts of intersectionality.

However, interviews with both public servants and service revealed a different perspective that should be considered when using Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023). Whereas the document analysis revealed a limited analysis of the relationship between intersectional components, the interviews with participants highlighted the need to consider power dynamics and relationships. For example, by focusing more on the relationships between and within sites of power, service providers and those with experience as public servants were able to identify how sites of power also play a significant role in integration and quality of GBA+ within an organization. This included looking at how funding structures between sites of power determine if GBA+ is a priority, as well as how leadership holds the power to determine the quality of a GBA+, the level of implementation within an organization, as well as the types of knowledge production that should be used to support a GBA+. Exploring how the application of GBA+ is influenced by power, NGO participants raised concerns about whether GBA+ was transformative and if it aligned with social justice-oriented change. For instance, two NGO participants spoke about how the framework for GBA+ was colonial and may not support the needs and interest of all groups, such as Indigenous Peoples. This finding suggests that looking at how intersectionality within GBA+ is applied among governments and NGOs should also consider the context that shapes the GBA+ analysis itself. It may reveal additional challenges and potential biases in identifying and addressing social issues and experiences.

## Summary

This study aligns with the findings of other scholars who have provided insights onto the challenges of applying intersectionality within GBA+ (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Christoffersen, 2021; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Manning & Levac, 2022; Levac et al., 2021). This study highlights the effectiveness of Cameron and Tedds' *Adapted Intersectionality Visual* (2023) in illustrating an intersectional approach within GBA+. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating all three intersectional components to prevent labeling groups as merely advantaged or disadvantaged and to hold organizations accountable for addressing systems of oppression. The study also reveals that the depoliticization of GBA+ extends beyond the federal government to other levels of government and NGOs, driven by factors such as the prioritization of specific paradigms, euphemisms, and ambiguity about intersectionality's purpose. Aligning GBA+ with intersectionality's transformative potential requires training approaches that foster paradigm shifts and clearly define how organizations contribute to social justice.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion & Recommendations

This study has employed a critical discourse analysis of training materials and interviews to examine how public servants and NGO service providers are prepared to operationalize intersectionality within GBA+. Key findings highlight a limited focus on power dynamics and relationships, leading to the depoliticization of intersectionality. While some training materials incorporate all three intersectional components—identities and experiences, systems of oppression, and sites of power—there is a need for deeper exploration of their interconnections. The study suggests that the inclusion of these components, particularly within a socio-historical context, is crucial for avoiding stigmatization of marginalized groups and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of intersectionality. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of a post-positivistic paradigm to align GBA+ with its transformative potential, driving systemic change. Through these insights, the study offers recommendations for improving training materials and enhancing the application of GBA+ across government and NGO sectors.

First, this study demonstrated that there is inconsistency in the way public servants and NGO service providers are prepared to operationalize intersectionality. One of the key findings was a scarcity of discourse on power dynamics and relationships, which results in the intersectionality being depoliticized. Although some government and NGO training materials did include all three intersectional components which strengthened the analysis of power within GBA+, there needs to be more focus on the relationships between these components. This suggested that intersectionality has not been fully incorporated, as analysis of power (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Crenshaw, 1995; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018).

One reason for the limited analysis of power may be related to the principles of non-partisanship and merit in government. This means, that public servants are expected to remain politically neutral because of their permanent position in government (Wesley & Marland, 2019). Also, public servants are expected to hold their positions based on merit and free of political influence (Copus, Wingfield, Steyvers & Reynaert, 2012; Wesley & Marland, 2019). Recent pushback on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the political climate of North America may contribute to the further depoliticization of intersectionality. For example, in the United States (US), President Donald Trump signed an executive order to terminate DEI stating it contribute to discrimination in the federal workforce (United States Federal Government, 2025). Following suit, similar anti-DEI sentiments have surfaced in Canadian politics (e.g., People's Party of Canada, 2024; Public Service Alliance of Canada, 2025), and there are a number of organizations in the US and Canada eliminating DEI initiatives (Williams, 2025).

Intersectionality is complex, requiring a vast amount of knowledge on current and historical socio-political context for each issue explored, making it challenging to incorporate into training materials and sessions which may be limited to time and other constraints. The political climate and pushback on DEI creates new challenges with the operationalization of intersectionality, specifically its connection to social justice-oriented goals. However, there is an opportunity to improve how it is understood across governments and NGOs which can still support efficient and responsive programs, policies and initiatives. For instance, organizations can use the findings of this study to inform the creation of well thought-out examples or case study scenarios for future training material. This would ensure that individuals with less knowledge about sociopolitical and historical contexts can also develop a more comprehensive understanding of how an

intersectional lens can enhance their understanding of issues which affect the diverse populations they serve and develop solutions that may help to address root problems. .

Second, this study found that the inclusion of systems of oppression and sites of power alongside identities and experiences was important for providing a more comprehensive understanding of intersectionality. Inclusion of these components helped to provide to context to reduce stigmatizing certain identity groups as having deficits, which has been a concern raised by multiple scholars (Cameron & Tedds, 2023; Crenshaw 1995; Hankivsky & Mussell, 2018; Christoffersen & Hankivsky, 2021; Hunting & Hankivsky, 2020; Lefroy & Stacey, 2022; Scala & Paterson, 2017). At times this resulted in unacknowledged institutional power and may be one reason why other organizations have adapted GBA+ to have more focus on the cultural and historical perspectives, and impacts of colonization (Government of BC, 2024b; Native Women's Association of Canada 2020; Women of the Métis Nation, 2019). Scholars and Indigenous organizations, like the Native Women's Association of Canada (2020) have also suggested that intersectionality and GBA+ may not be able to address the interests of Indigenous populations (Hankivsky et al., 2014). Specifically, the Native Women's Association of Canada (2020) stated that GBA does not meaningfully address the social, political and cultural realities of Indigenous women (p. 4).

Third, the depoliticization of intersectionality within GBA+ is a concern that extends beyond federal government organizations to include other levels of government and NGOs. This study identified several contributing factors, including unacknowledged institutional power; positivistic language that portrayed institutions as neutral and objective; avoidance of discussions about the experiences of injustice; efficiency discourse that reinforced an integrative approach; and the ambiguity of GBA+ purpose as a tool for efficiency and to support social justice-oriented change. However, government and NGO training materials demonstrated how a post-positivistic paradigm helps to align GBA+ to intersectionality's transformative potential. Using this paradigm, governments and NGOs were able to encourage practical approaches to support paradigm shifts and systemic change.

Lastly, interviews with service providers and individuals with experience as public servants revealed how the application of GBA+ among governments and NGOs is shaped by socio-historical context. For example, the interviews with participants revealed that sites of power influence priorities. This happens through funding structures and leadership, both of which play a significant role in influencing the integration and quality of GBA+. This means careful consideration needs to be made in how GBA+ is applied, such as how leadership reinforces colonial systems and specific forms of knowledge production.

#### Recommendations:

1. To enhance the application of intersectionality within GBA+, this study suggests that government and NGOs consider using Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023) as a guide for applying GBA+ which is included above in P #. Specifically, more focus should be placed on the power dynamics and relationships between and within intersectional components in order to strengthen the analysis of power. This can enhance the accountability of public servants and service providers by helping them

understand their own role, as well as their organization's role, in either perpetuating or addressing systemic and structural inequities. This is also important for ensuring socio-political context is better incorporated, which can help to reduce risk of stigmatizing individuals and groups as having deficits.

2. To foster a more transformative approach to intersectionality within GBA+, it is essential to provide training on the context in which GBA+ is being applied. There should be greater encouragement of a post-positivistic paradigm that promotes innovative methods of knowledge production, which can help facilitate paradigm shifts and drive systemic and structural change.
3. Finally, clearly defining the intended outcomes of GBA+ and how these outcomes contribute to social justice-oriented change is crucial for ensuring that intersectionality within GBA+ is transformative. This would help align GBA+ to intersectionality's transformative potential. This approach will help to better address the diverse interests and needs of Canada's population and it would support the principles of good public policy that require careful consideration of justice (Siu, 2020, p. 76).

### **Limitations of Analysis and Areas of Further Research**

- External validity was limited due to the sample size not being statistically representative, and characteristics of the sample prevent transferability (McGregor, 2018). For instance, participants shared similar roles, and most had non-government experience with GBA+. Future research may want to expand their research to include participants from different levels of government, sectors and positions, like individuals within leadership positions.
- While the study sought to compare differences between governments and NGOs, many of the training materials included a mix of government and NGO participants. For instance, governments facilitated GBA+ training sessions for NGOs and vice versa.
- This study aimed to use primary data from interviews, but self-reported biases may have been present when employees spoke about their work during the interview process. For instance, there may be performance objectives employees were expected to achieve, or organizational expectations that influenced what they chose to share. Additionally, external validity was limited due to the sample size (six participants, and 11 documents) not being statistically representative, and characteristics of sample prevent transferability of findings (McGregor, 2018).
- Interview participants could not provide examples of how they applied intersectionality within GBA+. Some participants stated this was because of confidentiality restrictions and the ongoing development of tools and resources in their organizations and sectors. This limited the analysis of the intersectional approaches used by governments and NGOs. Future research should explore specific scenarios with participants to better understand their direct applications of intersectionality.

- It should be noted that some organizations and participants emphasized that intersectionality was applied separately and prior to GBA+. This study did not explore how intersectionality is applied independently of GBA+. Future studies may want to explore the difference between the application of intersectionality and intersectionality within GBA+.
- The sociopolitical context surrounding GBA+ was excluded from this study's scope because the training materials examined were produced over a broad span of time. Future studies may want to explore how GBA+ is applied within different sociopolitical contexts, such as within a neoliberal context, during the rise of far-right movements, and anti-DEI rhetoric.
- Mostly public resources were used, with one freedom of information request made to a provincial government, therefore the sample size was small. Future research could request information from governments and NGOs to develop a study which can be generalizable.
- Adapted GBA+ frameworks, such as those with a distinction-based approach, were not included in this study. Further research on how GBA+ has been adapted to meet the needs and interests of diverse populations can provide important insights into how GBA+ can be enhanced to address the needs and interests of specific and diverse populations within Canada.

## Final Reflections

The current capacity building strategies used in governments and NGOs reveals inconsistency in the way staff are prepared to operationalization intersectionality within GBA+. This study found the training approaches created limitations on the potential of transformative and social justice-oriented change. Government and NGOs did not provide comprehensive guidance on the analysis of power dynamics and resulting in the depoliticization of intersectionality. To maximize the potential of intersectionality within GBA+ as a transformative tool, governments and non-government organizations should utilize Cameron & Tedds' *Adapted intersectionality visual* (2023). This would help to centre the analysis of power dynamics and relationships in GBA+ training materials. Additionally, there is a need to clearly define social justice and specify how intersectionality within GBA+ supports social justice-oriented change.

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# Appendix 1: Ethics certificate of approval



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## Certificate of Approval - Annual Renewal

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <b>Walter Lepore (Supervisor)</b>	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER: <b>23-0380</b> Expedited review - delegated
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: <b>Stephanie Tang</b> <b>Master's student</b>	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: <b>19-Oct-2023</b>
UVIC DEPARTMENT: <b>Public Administration PADM</b>	APPROVED ON: <b>11-Oct-2024</b>
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: <b>18-Oct-2025</b>
PROJECT TITLE: <b>Gender- Based Analysis Plus: Intersectional approach to representative bureaucracy</b>	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: <b>None</b>	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: <b>None</b>	
DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL: Tang, S._TCPS2 CORE Tutorial Certificate.pdf - 07-Aug-2023 Appendix 3 - Recruitment Letter.docx - 04-Oct-2023 Appendix 1 - Consent form (reviewed) (3).docx - 18-Oct-2023 Appendix 2 - Letter of Information (reviewed) (2).docx - 18-Oct-2023 Interview guide (reviewed).docx - 18-Oct-2023	
<b>Conditions of approval</b>	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.	
<b>Amendments</b> To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.	
<b>Renewals</b> Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.	
<b>Project Closures</b> When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.	
<b>Certification</b>	
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants.	
Dr. Sandra Gibbons Chair, Human Research Ethics Board	Dr. Cindy Holder Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate issued On: 11-Oct-2024

## Appendix 2: Selected training materials

Table 34 Description of the selected text used for the document analysis. Source: information pulled from organizations' websites.

Training materials	Authors	Description
Introduction to GBA+ (2022)	WAGE	WAGE developed a course for public servants that was also publicly available to provide an introduction to GBA+ and intersectionality. The course covers key terms related to GBA+, like sex, gender, equity, equality, and personal biases. The course introduces to intersectionality and identity factors and goes over the benefits and how to apply GBA+ with examples and a case study.
Intersectionality Job Aid: A Guide to Applying an Intersectional Lens/Mindset to your Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) (2023)	WAGE	The Government of Canada created a training document to provide guidance on how to apply intersectional lens to GBA+ to compliment a step-by-step guide and the online GBA+ course. In the training material, they provide information on social positionality and reflexivity, intersectionality and what it looks like in practice, inclusive and collaborative practices, action-oriented approaches which included terminology related to equality, and power, and evidence based information for equality data.
Guidance: Gender-based Analysis Plus in Impact Assessment (2021)	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada	<p>Conducting GBA+ is a legislative requirement for impact assessments under the <i>Impact Assessment Act</i>. Therefore, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada created a document with guidance on how to use GBA+ in impact assessments.</p> <p>The training material included information about the benefits of using GBA+ in impact assessments, approaches that can be used to apply GBA+, the process of applying GBA+ with examples, and best practices, how GBA+ affects decision-making, and the follow-up on programs.</p>
Gender-based Analysis Plus: Introduction to Intersectional Analysis (2023)	Government of BC	The Government of BC provides a GBA+ course introducing intersectionality to public servants. In this course, public servants were provided the opportunity to learn the importance and benefits of intersectional analysis and GBA+, cross-government linkages, expectations for implementation and how to apply an intersectional analysis and how it is incorporated into decision-making. There was also an introduction of other types of GBA+, like Indigenous GBA+, and a review of concepts like disability, anti-racism, diversity and inclusion, equity, equality, gender, sex, systemic barriers and power structures.

Guidance for GBA+ in Cabinet and Treasury Board Submissions (2023)	Government of BC	The Government of BC created a training document to provide guidance on how to use GBA+ in Cabinet and Treasury Board Submissions, which is a mandatory component in each. The training document includes information on GBA+ and its importance, and questions that practitioners may want to use to guide draft cabinet and treasury board submissions.
Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+): Program Review Guide  Publication date: N/A	Government of BC	The Government of BC created a program review guide to support public servants with being able to apply GBA+ when reviewing and implementing programs and services. This included providing information on how to use six GBA+ steps for program review and implementation, an initial framework to determine whether a full review is needed for existing programs and services, as well as how to use GBA+ for new programs and services. Additionally, terms of reference were included, like gender, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2S+ and race, ethnicity, and country of origin, and guiding questions along with charts and tables for public servants to fill out for their assessments using GBA+.
Guide to Gender-based Analysis Plus (GB+) and Inclusive Open Government  Publication date: 2019	Open Government Partnerships is an organization of reformers inside and outside of government working to transform how government serves its citizens.	Guide to GBA+ and inclusive, open government, introducing governments to new tools and concepts to help make government more inclusive. This includes an overview of GBA+, how to use GBA+, its importance, case studies, and consideration for co-creation processes.
<b>Training sessions</b>	<b>Facilitators</b>	<b>Description</b>
Public Health Agency of Canada  Number of sessions: 1  Length of time: 45 minutes and 34 seconds  Publication Date: March 4, 2022	Senior policy analyst from the Health Equity and Integration team (HEIT) at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the focal point supporting the integration of Sex and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+) into PHAC policies, programs, and initiatives.	PHAC provided an overview of SGBA+ to advance health equity, diversity and inclusion, and to provide relevant training and tools to the Ontario Network of Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)/Community Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) projects, which are community-based programs delivered through and funded by PHAC. The network encourages communication, collaboration on projects and community building among its network members.  In the training session, members of the network were provided an overview of SGBA+ process and health inequities are using case studies, as well as an introduction to terminology like intersectionality, power, privilege, equity, diversity and inclusion, health equity, and other ways of using SGBA+ with a

		culturally responsive approach. A slide deck accompanied the information shared with the group.
Government of BC  Number of sessions: 1  Length of time: 1 hour 2 minutes 38 seconds Publication date: 2020	Academic and senior policy legislation analyst and gender equity advisor with the Government of BC	The speaker provided public servants training on GBA+ in relation to digital government. This included providing an introduction to intersectionality and GBA+, looking at the GBA+ process, core concepts, like equity, lenses, structures of power, and examples of applying GBA+ related to digital governance.
Government of Alberta  Length of time: 1 hour 10 minutes 21 seconds  Publication date: June 29, 2016	Gender specialist with the Ministry of Status of Women, Government of Alberta	The specialist provided information to Alberta Municipalities, which acts as representations for Albertans, working with elected and administrative leaders on municipal issues such as economic, environment, governance, infrastructure or social issues, and support communities by identifying and providing services that help.  In the session, members of Alberta Municipalities were provided an introduction to terminology, such as sex, gender and gender concepts, equity and equality, . They were also provided an introduction on intersectionality and a background on GBA+, its benefits for government, policy, programs and evaluation, challenges with its implementation, and how to apply GBA+ with examples of how it has been applied by municipalities in Canada.
Canadian Equity Consulting (ECE)  Number of sessions: 1  Length of time: 28 minutes and 47 seconds  Publication date: 2021	A diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) consulting firm that provides workshops on GBA+; baseline assessments, strategies, training and implementation support for DEI.	CEC delivered a training session on GBA+ to employees of Springboard Services, an organization that supports diverse people, like people with developmental disabilities, and youth and adults who are not in education, employment or training, to develop skills and knowledge, connect them to resources and supports, through developmental and employment services, adult and youth justice services. Their goal is to empower individuals to reach their personal goals.  In the training session, employees of Springboard Services were provided an introduction to GBA+, the goals and benefits of using it, and the process and core concepts related to GBA+. The session included an overview of intersectionality, diversity of identity, and terminology, like gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities, power, privilege, unconscious biases, equity, and equality, and case studies of GBA+. A slide deck accompanied the information shared with the group.

<p>Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) cu7</p> <p>Number of sessions: 1</p> <p>Length of time: 1 hour 1 minute and 51 seconds</p> <p>Publication date: 2022</p>	<p>Consultant that provides services, like co-creation, implementation, assessments, training and support with intersectional gender-based analysis, supporting a range of organizations, like associations, foundations, multi-service non-profits and academic institutions</p> <p>Intersectional gender equity specialist with experience applying GBA+ in private, public and non-profit sectors to support its integration into work, practices and services.</p>	<p>Two speakers were invited to provide to provide training on how to apply and integrate GBA+ to members of Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers, an organization made up of transportation professionals and provides professional development and community building across Canada through conferences, training, publications, and building knowledge in the industry.</p> <p>In the training session, transportation professionals had the opportunity to learn about terminology like, equity, diversity, inclusion, equality, and intersectionality. They were also provided an introduction to GBA+ background and process, its relevance, its benefits, critical questions related to GBA+. A case study was used to show how GBA+ can be applied to transportation related issues.</p>
<p>Defense and Security Foresight Group (DFSG)</p> <p>Number of sessions: 4</p> <p>Total length of time: 5 hours 54 minutes 52 seconds</p> <p>Publication date: May 2024</p>	<p>A network of academics across Canada and abroad who provide foresight on pivotal defence and security issues made up of five thematic teams and one GBA+ team. DFSG is funded through Department of National Defense's Mobilizing Insights in Defense and Security (MINDS), which looks to address MINDS policy challenges, which are key issues where external experts can enable defence policy-making</p>	<p>DSFG collaborated with Centre for Social Innovation and Community Engagement in Military Affairs, North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, and Women in International Security Canada to provide a GBA+ series which looks at why intersectionality and GBA+ is important in research.</p> <p>In the series, experts were invited to share their experience with applying intersectionality and GBA+ in their research related to topics like, intersectionality in research and policy making; gender indigeneity and intersectionality in the arctic; applying GBA+ to emerging security threats facing Canada; using SGBA+ to address data biases from initial research designs. The sessions involved looking at importance and origins of GBA+, why and how to use it, challenges and recommendations for future use, gendered and Indigenous perspectives in the Arctic, examples of how researchers have applied GBA+ to their work and addressing biases and under and over representation of diverse and intersecting identity groups. No slide decks were used for this series.</p>
<p>Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA)</p> <p>Number of sessions: 2</p>	<p>An umbrella group for organizations providing immigrant settlement services in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. The group facilitates information exchange processes, acts as a collective voice to represent interests of immigrants, refugees, service providers</p>	<p>ARAISA provide two sessions about how to integrate GBA+ into a funding application and into settlement services organizations because GBA+ was introduced as a new component and requirement in IRCC's call for GBA+ in proposals to ensure clients' diverse needs are fully accounted for.</p> <p>In these sessions, settlement service agencies were introduced to intersectionality and GBA+, and reviewed concepts related to GBA+, like equity, diversity and inclusion, anti-racism and anti-oppression, and policies within organizations. The</p>

<p>Total length of time: 2 hours 1 minute 37 seconds</p> <p>Publication date: 2023, 2024</p>	<p>and service organizations, encourages settlement staff training and professional development, and assist the government in formulation and implementation of policies and programs. In partnership with six other settlement service organizations and with funding from Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), ARAISA has committed to develop skills, tools and resources in the settlement sector on GA Plus using a collective impact framework.</p>	<p>sessions include small group discussions on how organizations can and do apply intersectionality and GBA+, federal government examples and videos were used to demonstrate how GBA+ can be applied and the facilitator went over questions to consider when using GBA+ when analyzing the programs and services for the populations being served by the agencies.</p>
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