

4/19/2011

NHWI

Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP):
Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Session Report
for Women Members of the NH Bar Association

New Hampshire Bar Association Bar Center, Concord, NH
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About the New Hampshire's Women's Initiative (NHWI):

The New Hampshire Women's Initiative (NHWI) is a new non-profit organization dedicated to continuing the legacy of success of our merging partners: the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's Lobby and Alliance, and the Women's Policy Institute. The NHWI mission is to advance social, economic, and political opportunity and equality for women in New Hampshire.

The NHWI has a unique governance structure. Its board is supported by both a Founding Mothers' Panel, comprised of the founders of the merging partners, and a Gender Ambassadors Panel, a group of young women leaders who are interested in better understanding and re-framing the dialogue around gender equality issues in New Hampshire. This multi-generational sphere of influence will help the NHWI leverage both the rich history and accomplishment surrounding women's issues in New Hampshire and at the same time craft a new path forward for gender equality born out of contemporary thinking and needs.

About the Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP):

The goal of the Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP) is to support the mission of the NHWI by informing its research, outreach, and advocacy with a better understanding of the gender equality issues that younger women and men identify as important to them. GAP members will work toward that goal by hosting Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Sessions in various geographic locations around the State. The Listening Sessions will be facilitated focus groups consisting of six to ten participants engaged in a formal discussion for up to ninety minutes using pre-determined questions. Results will be documented and shared with the NHWI Board. The Listening Session participants will come primarily from the existing networks of GAP members and are expected to be primarily women, however the method can be adapted to reach other networks and populations, including men.

About the Network Facilitators:

The first round of listening session hosted by GAP members took place in the fall of 2011. The listening sessions generated so much interest that participants, board members, and other colleagues wanted to be a part of the process and host their own sessions! The NHWI Board and GAP members enthusiastically support this extension of the listening sessions to others in our community. Network Facilitators use the same facilitation packet, including the note takers table, and draft a report based on the content of their session.

About the Authors:

FACILITATOR BIO: Sarah Mattson is the Policy Director at New Hampshire Legal Assistance (NHLA), a non-profit law firm providing civil legal services to low-income and elderly clients. Sarah coordinates NHLA's legislative and rule-making advocacy on a variety of poverty law issues, including public benefits,

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housing, domestic violence, and consumer protection, in addition to representing individual clients in New Hampshire courts and administrative agencies. She is a member of the NHWI Board of Directors and the GAP.

NOTETAKER BIO: Iris Estabrook served as a member of the NH Women's Policy Institute Board of Directors and is now a member of the NHWI Board of Directors. Iris has long been involved in public education, as a teacher, mentor teacher, researcher, and school board member. She served for twelve years in the NH Legislature, becoming chair of the Senate Education and Health and Human Services Committees and Senate Vice President for Policy.

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Introduction and Background

This listening session was designed to solicit input from women who are members of the New Hampshire Bar Association and actively engaged in law practice. Invitations were made primarily, but not exclusively, to attorneys who are actively involved with the Women's Bar Association.

This listening session did not have a geographic focus, however all participants live and/or work in Hillsborough or Merrimack County. The majority of the participants work in Hillsborough County. Hillsborough County's population is 50.5 percent female. Median household income is \$69,321. Women own 26.3 percent of businesses.

Methods:

Gaining insight into a community with the use of focus groups is a commonly used approach to qualitative research. Qualitative research is a systematic approach to understanding human thoughts, behaviors and motivations through thoughtful survey design, observation, and inquiry.

The GAP Listening Sessions are designed like focus groups where a facilitator and note-taker work together to gain insight into participant's thoughts and feelings about contemporary gender equality issues facing young women and men in NH.

Prior to conducting the listening sessions, each facilitator and note-taker is provided a facilitation packet that details instructions for conducting an effective focus group. This includes instructions for the specific roles of the facilitator and note-taker, the length of the session, and how to draft the report after the listening session.

Location

The listening session was held at the New Hampshire Bar Association Bar Center in Concord, NH. Participants convened in a small conference room. Lunch was served.

Participant Background

This listening session included six participants ranging in age from 27 to 35. Most participants are in their early 30s.

All participants are members of the New Hampshire Bar Association. All are actively engaged in the practice of law. Five participants work at private law firms, including primarily larger (for New Hampshire) law firms. One participant works at a non-profit organization.

All participants work in either Concord, NH, or Manchester, NH. Participants live in Contoocook, Henniker, Manchester, Nottingham, and Penacook.

Listening Session Format

The listening session followed a traditional focus group format which included a two to three minute allotment per question, per person. Each session was designed to last two hours including introductions, participant feedback, a participant exercise, and concluding remarks.

The Listening Session was conducted using an agenda and script provided in the facilitation packet (Appendix A: Listening Session Script). The session began promptly at 11:30 AM with introductions of the facilitator, note-taker, and the participants. The participants introduced themselves by first name, occupation, age, and town of residence.

Summary of Findings:

The Summary of Findings is organized by each question asked at the listening session. Synthesis of material will occur at a later date when all of the listening sessions have been conducted. Please note that participants are identified only by a number to protect their privacy.

1. What brought you here today?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker observation
1	Not involved in bar association, this looked interesting	
2	Women's Bar heard presentation on WI, interesting to me as active participant in that organization, share these issues.	
3	Heard presentation for Women's Bar group, peaked interest, WI work relevant to work of Women's Bar.	
4	To learn more, these issues come up at work in conversation with peers. Have a female litigator for boss, discuss these issues.	
5	Interested in WPI, curious about combined organization.	
6		

2. How do you define gender equality?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker observation
1	<p>I look at it from a different perspective lately, doing a lot of reading in news about women breastfeeding babies, having males say that's not ok. I'm looking at having a family and cutting back from 80 hours week to maybe 50 and being able to go to my child's doctor appt.</p> <p>Due in 3 weeks, getting ready to go. Put parental leave memo in place, approved and ok to come back part time in summer. My ED was very excited about my pregnancy; I was very supported. My husband is taking paternity leave and they were ok, not great about it. School districts push teachers to have babies in the summer and consider that their leave.</p> <p>It's generational. My husband's father worked, his mom stayed home. His dad expects the women to do everything at home, such as you need to get my drink, etc. My husband's smart enough to know it's not ok. My parents both worked full time; they had to. My dad cleans the house, etc. since he's retired, my mom's not. People in our generation are</p>	

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	<p>problematic because they had these parents.</p>	
2	<p>Gender equality is difficult to attain, true equality would mean it's not an issue anymore.</p> <p>When we don't have to talk about it any more, it would be achieved. In addition to #3's issues, when will partners stop asking an eight year associate to make copies, my male cohorts are not being asked to do things like that, those things are often more oppressing to me.</p> <p>Men our age are starting to get it, but even they don't acknowledge independent women and make disparaging remarks, citing one 30ish married man's comments. Another serious attorney's husband won't help with children at all.</p> <p>In response to #5, agree hard or impossible to do both.</p> <p>Men sometimes make adjustments to work life for home life, cites one who was able to. Thinks this man will still make partner.</p> <p>I plan to just bill less when I become a mom.</p>	
3	<p>More of a goal, like the glass</p>	<p>Large discussion of getting it</p>

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	<p>ceiling, issues of pay or promotion, advancing at same rate as men, filling judge positions with women, having a more equal level, more difficult to reach in field of litigation because of inflexibility of practice, difficult to have home life. Some employers are trying, but the culture isn't accepting it. Cites man at accounting firm annoyed that part time woman was promoted.</p>	<p>or not getting it</p>
4	<p>It's changing the perception of females, more difficult with the older attorneys. The older partners don't want to deal with it. Out of big firm there are only 2 female litigators, the other has no children, not married. Hoping it will be better as I talk about it with my contemporaries.</p>	<p>Comment from 6, that's why she's successful</p>
5	<p>Part of the problem in our profession is that a lot of the male attorneys think they have achieved gender equality because there is no overt discrimination. Still battling the non-explicit, subversive. Two women just made partner and they think they've fixed the problem, first women made partner in maybe ten years. Long discussion of what her obligations would be when she came back from 3rd child, lots of concern with her ability to meet demands. The rate at which women</p>	<p>Do I want to reduce % time (for pay) and still do the full job.</p>

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	<p>drop out after becoming moms makes gender equality difficult. You feel like you can't do either job well.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>I have a strange perspective. My husband is also a lawyer and we have an 11-month-old child. I have a hard time sorting out what is gender based, went to my firm because it has a lot of female lawyers. Husband took 1 month paternity leave, paid after I went back after 3 months. He was only one ever to take this option. His boss was fine with it, but he got a lot of pushback from higher up. On the other side, I work with another attorney and asked why I wasn't getting work from him, he thought I didn't want night work. Though I made it clear I could handle it, he mommy tracked me. With active fathers, it is no win. We both take hits on our careers. My experience, in taking leave, was do the best you can and go take your leave. I could have extended my leave. That part is not the problem. The problem is the rest of your life and the private sector's expectations.</p>	<p>I'm part time and I assume I will not make partner. I made that decision.</p> <p>Long discussion of ways to cut hours or billable hours to "make it work" – She is supposed to take Fridays off but usually if she takes her daughter to the park she'll check email, etc. and it works; because then I have more weekend time. I think a male associate would have a hard time setting up the same arrangement.</p>

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3. How have you, in NH, experienced gender equality or inequality? Outside of professional setting? What's happening that's important?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker observation
1	<p>I was previously married to a cop, and there was a female officer there. Males were not comfortable with her. Female officer rarely got invited to hang out with male officers. She was tomboyish and could have been one of the guys. She was a supervisor too and the comments would be "she does this and I can't believe this" though male supervisor was doing the same things. The male officers would treat her differently on the job too.</p> <p>Our clients can't afford childcare, not enough subsidies; even with subsidy can't afford it.</p> <p>Acknowledge that workers are paid poorly but so expensive nonetheless.</p>	
2	<p>I am divorced. My ex's mother was a woman who stayed home. He did not help at all at home, would drop his clothes and expect me to pick up and make dinner though I was working. One of last fights over having baby, he assumed I would leave my legal career even though it would be easier for him to stay home, and I made more money. He really thought his</p>	

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	<p>view was correct. Current relationship very different. Have met a lot of people who felt that way.</p> <p>Quality child care, we could have it at work.</p>	
3		
4	<p>Generational thing, my mom stayed home. My boyfriend's family same about women doing everything at home. They need to be trained to help.</p> <p>Recent article about how men treat women at a particular university, I didn't have that experience where someone was going to take advantage of me.</p> <p>In work the most frustrating thing is that men give most interesting projects to men, you need to prove yourself more than they do.</p> <p>One lawyer seems to test females to see if they'll crack. I try not to let it get to me; I talk to female associates about it.</p>	
5	<p>Success judged by clients you bring in or billable hours, not the job you do.</p> <p>Amazing how much men offer to help/protect women, it's annoying.</p> <p>People constantly comment on how hard it must be to be atty. and have kids, don't</p>	<p>Big discussion of difficulties finding quality, affordable care. Lots of concern for affordability.</p>

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	<p>make these comments to men.</p> <p>End up paying full time childcare because part time not available.</p>	
6	<p>Yes, you need to do more. Males are more comfortable with males. Women fall off along the way and there aren't women to talk to about the issues. You aren't invited to go get a beer; it's an indirect gender thing. 35 year old male associates want to hang out with other males.</p> <p>We're in service industry in private sector and that drives not being able to succeed because you are in a service industry.</p> <p>Full time K and child care.</p> <p>Just got in after waiting on list.</p> <p>Cheap places even are \$150/week.</p>	

4. Post-It Exercise!

Participant	Comment	Note-taker observation
	<p>4 specific to affordability/availability of child care</p> <p>1 to reproductive rights</p> <p>1 to personal choices in</p>	<p>LIST ALL RED DOTS:</p> <p>Women need to stop judging other women's choices, women supporting other women no matter their personal choices</p>

	<p>general</p> <p>5 related to Equal pay and advancement</p> <p>Paid medical/family leave</p> <p>Health care category – affordable birth control, breastfeeding at workplace, affordable and comprehensive healthcare</p> <p>Women in leadership positions</p> <p>Societal perception of women</p> <p>Women supporting other women</p>	<p>Societal perception of women</p> <p>Child care affordable, good and convenient</p> <p>2 dots for: personal choices (reproductive rights, staying home vs. working etc.)</p>
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Closing remarks from participants:

None.

Limitations:

Most of the participants in this listening session knew some or all of the other participants professionally and/or personally, and several also knew the facilitator. This could have prevented truly candid discussion, however there was no indication that participants felt uncomfortable with the group. Most participants work at larger law firms in Concord, NH, and Manchester, NH. Their experiences may not be representative of all women attorneys (such as those engaged in solo law practice or those practicing in rural areas). The facilitator designed this listening session to last one hour and fifteen minutes to accommodate the schedules of the attorneys; the group could certainly have used more time.

Facilitator and Note-taker observations and concluding thoughts:

This listening session produced a rich discussion. It was obvious that participants had previously thought about how gender impacts law practice and work/life balance and were committed to

advancement of gender equality. The Women's Bar Association could be a terrific partner for future NHWI initiatives.

Appendix A: Listening Session Script

I. Welcome and Introductions (*slightly shortened for this listening session)

- Thank participants for coming
- Distribute participant information sheets (and agendas if using)
- Introduce facilitator and note taker
- Overview of New Hampshire Women's Initiative
 - The New Hampshire Women's Initiative is a new non-profit organization
 - A unification of:
 - The Commission on the Status of Women
 - The Women's Lobby and Alliance
 - The Women's Policy Institute
 - ***NHWI Mission: To advance social, economic and political opportunity and equality for women in New Hampshire.***
 - Has a Board of Directors and two advisory panels
 - Founding Mothers
 - Gender Ambassadors Panel
- Objective of Listening Sessions & GAP
 - Gender Ambassadors Panel will support the mission of the NHWI through researching and better understanding the gender equality issues that younger women and men identify as important to them.
 - Members of GAP will host a series of Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Sessions in various geographic locations around the State.
- Introduction of participants: *First name, age, town, occupation*

II. Overview of the Process

- Description of plan for Listening Session by facilitator
- How discussion will be documented during the Session
- How a report will be prepared after the Session
- Assurance of confidentiality (inform participants that any report will only identify participants by age, zip code, and industry/occupation)

I. Establishment of Ground Rules (*slightly shortened for this listening session)

- Ground rules encourage active and honest participation and a safe discussion environment.
- If a participant violates a ground rule, they will be politely reminded of the ground rule.
- If a participant continues to violate a ground rule, they will be asked to leave the group.

Ground Rules (The 5 A's)

Participants of this group...

- Agree to maintain confidentiality
- Agree that there are no “right or wrong” answers to the questions
- Agree to speak honestly based on our own experiences
- Agree that only one person will speak at a time
- Agree to respond to one another politely and respectfully

II. Discussion of Contemporary Gender Equality

1) What made you interested in attending today's listening session on gender equality?

2) How do you define the term gender equality?

What does gender equality mean to you?

What does gender equality not mean to you?

What issues or subjects do you think about when you think of gender equality?

3) In New Hampshire, have you experienced or observed gender equality or inequality?

III. Post-it Note Exercise

What issues relating to gender equality do you think are most important for the New Hampshire Women's Initiative to address?

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(Each participant receives 3 standard yellow Post-it notes and a black sharpie; they must write their top three issues, one per Post-it note. Ask them to put the Post-its up on a white board or wall. Then each person gets one red dot. They must place their red dot on their top issue, which doesn't have to be one of the ones they originally wrote.)

** Facilitator must collect the Post-its and return to the GAP Committee when complete*

IV. Wrap-up

- Do you have any other thoughts or ideas that you really want to share about gender equality in NH? (*not asked at this listening session due to time constraints)
- Thank you to participants by facilitator
- Collect participant information sheets; distribute NHWI information sheets

V. Adjourn

Works Cited

Hillsborough County Census Data, available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33/33011.html>