

Fall 2011

NHWI

**Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP):
Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Session Report
for the Seacoast of New Hampshire**

Brown & Company Design, Portsmouth, New Hampshire
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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 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 first round of 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.

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 Seacoast Listening Session was conducted at the Brown & Company offices in Portsmouth, NH from 12:00pm – 2:00pm on November 14th, 2011. The session was hosted at Brown & Company because of the central location to the community (it is located near downtown Portsmouth).

Participant Background

Seven female participants ranging in age from early forties to early sixties joined the listening session. All of the participants report living in the Seacoast area.

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.

QUESTION #1: What made you interested in attending this session today?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#7	Personal invitation. The work I do with students, having 2 daughters. Gender is something I keep looping back to focus on. Have done work with race, GLBT issues, differences that effect groups. Gender is one of those things for me that I renew my interest and depth of understanding. I will go through phases that I am going through something, other times when things are happening globally that doesn't affect me, then I'll think of what my girls are watching. My lens moves all over the place.	
#3	The personal invitation that intrigued me is the question... is this a subject that I haven't given much thought to. For me, even with 3 daughters and granddaughters, something that hasn't had much thought.	
#2	Personal invitation, coming from someone I admire. In my company, it's male-driven management organization. My team is all women, except for one man. When I attend something nationally and see who is recognized in the industry and the company, hard to find women in that landscape. Then I get something from UNH Business School, and I see that all of them are men. I go through page by page looking for female stories- and I can't find them. Interesting- why is that?	(Someone in the group asked: "Do you send the magazines a note about their male focus?")

#4	<p>If someone isn't constantly counting it on the communications end- let's make an effort(to make sure women are counted)... it doesn't happen. Male success can be so much louder and shinier in some way. I don't know if I can summarize why I'm here. The personal invitation. I didn't know who else was going to be here, I just knew it was going to be an interesting group. I wanted the chance to spend 2 hours talking and thinking about these issues. How can we keep doing this that allow us ways to reflect with different lenses? In my work, I'm publishing documents on these topics, I see these issues from the data perspective. Then I see inequalities on how people are paid at work. Interested in proactive ways to move this issue forward, beyond the discrepancies for women. How can we move these issues forward for the next generation.</p> <p>I don't have time to sit around and whine, what are the next concrete steps that are useful to all parities. At [job], I am overwhelmed at the value of flexibility in my current job. Critical as working parent of 2 kids, and having an interesting job- all the jobs I've had, didn't have that flexibility.</p>	
#2	<p>I have two sons, I work, my husband is home. I think about the things I want to be modeling for the two men that I'm raising.</p>	
#5	<p>I'm 50, but I have an older sister. She was a women's libber... and it impacted me at that age. Now I'm at the spot that when I was asked to come, but sometimes I feel like, that was great, we made all those strides... now there's a burden to do all those things our sisters fought for. Sometimes I think, I'm so tired and wish can't we just go back to the old days before women's lib, when we had one job. It feels like we have 2. Expected to be a supreme business women and raise kids.</p>	

#6	<p>Choose to be homemaker, and you're looked down upon. That's so minimized in many ways. What you're speaking to is why I left my work. I wasn't able to get that flexibility. I worked part time, and that was the kiss of death. If you work part time, you're not honored as a professional. Personal invitation made me attend. Womens' Fund of NH involvement. Taking a look at what boards are comprised of... how many women are sitting on boards of nonprofit agencies serving women. Too many men sit on the Boards of non-profits. Increasingly aware of these nonprofits. Plus, in my community, I've done projects about raising awareness re: Greg Mortenson's work. The real education happened at home. Have to list board members in grant process. Not criteria to making awards, just aware. Because Women's Fund of NH coaches and helps orgs, it's raised awareness for us.</p>	
#1	<p>It should be part of your grant process to make the grantee take notice.</p> <p>I love to share ideas. A chance to hang out with MJB, personal invitation. This has been brewing for me for a while. 5-10 years ago I would have said I preferred to work with men. Recently in the last few years, I was reflecting on who my favorite clients are... they are evolved couples. The men and women share with me. Opens my eyes to working with women. Women are becoming controllers of more wealth. Philanthropy taking notes on women's giving. E.g. Microfinance and Women on Boards – important focus now. Starting to swim in this topic. This is where I'm meant to be right now.</p>	
#5	<p>One more thought to acknowledge #6's comments re: women staying home. To add on, I have a daughter applying to college. If she gets in, it will cost \$58K/year. I would find it heartbreaking that, if she paid that to go through school and decided to stay home as a homemaker. I would want my grandchildren to be cared for by her. This is not a politically correct statement.</p>	<p>(Someone observed: This is not politically INCORRECT!)</p>
Facilitator	<p>That's a real challenge.</p>	

#1	I don't think that discussion on education spending isn't a women's issue. Before you make that investment, what's the outcome going to be? College is a wise investment for sons and daughters.	
#5	In my mind, what are my values of my daughter staying home vs. the value of education. Terrible to put that in monetary concerns.	
#3	If it was a son, I would assume he would use that investment from a career and earning standpoint.	

QUESTION #2: How do you define gender equality? What does it mean to you? What does it not mean to you? What subjects/issues do you think about when you think about gender equality?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#4	Anyone being allowed to do anything they want. Simply choice. Not to have 2 jobs. Nothing is going to keep me from doing what I chose to do. My husband and I can choose what we want to do, as a team, and as a professional individual, I can make choices that are not based on my gender.	
#7	Living free of systemic bias. Choice is there, but being free of systemic bias.	(Many in the group stated their support of this thought.)
#6	Seamlessness of it all.	
#1	Love systemic bias. Equal to that... access and opportunity. When you look at % of women on boards, % of women who receive funding. Stats show us that we still haven't achieved equality.	
Facilitator	If you were asked what Gender equality was, what would you say?	
#5	Equal value to the gifts women and men have. Society revolves around money giving. Society needs to value more than just money.	
#2	Equal opportunity and recognition.	
Facilitator	what about the term Gender equality? Are there other terms/words?	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#6	I like the term gender equality because it's about everybody. I still have and women are still making a caricature of the work the women did that turned into being anti-male. I do like that gender equality.	
#7	In my neighborhood, there are more men at home than women. That was a choice. We are all hurt by sexism and biased systems. We can all be helped by more gender equality, and more equality in general.	
#2	My husband struggled with that. He's stay at home. And how the other women would or wouldn't interact with him since he was the only man on the playground.	
#3	Coming from a women's world. Office is all women... with one token male. The awareness of the subject amazes me. In our relationship, my husband and I are equal. No thought of whose job is whose – at home.- Our children share equally because they see our relationship. What I hear from interviewing for a position right now, is that it is a dog-eat dog world, and women are pushed down by men in the workplace. I wonder if there's a way to take the words that we used to describe gender equality to come up with a better phrase.	
#6	Why is it gender at all? I understand this is about women's' issues... but this should be about human issues. People should be celebrated for who they are and what they bring to the table. Gender equality is just as defining- can box you in.	
#5	I had a meeting when I couldn't remember what color they were. I would love to see if we could get to that place when we don't notice inequalities.	
#7	If we remember gender, we're ranking people.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#4	Wondering about your husband (#2) and wonders if gender equality is something he thinks about. Brain child magazine had a dialogue between two writers debating thinking parents vs. thinking mothers. Is our job here to focus on women... I don't think men see the issue as anything they 'own' that they feel is equal in some way. Whether they feel overburdened to earn more money. Is the goal of the organization to educate and raise issues around women's inequality or is it raising about men's inequality as well. If it is, then maybe it shouldn't be called 'gender equality'.	
Facilitator	Is there any other phrase?	
#1	Language loaded. Women effects. I like the focus I've seen- supporting and empowering women to overcome societal issues. How do we overcome societal global issues because of this focus. Research shows that when women manage and focus, there is greater success. Globally.	
Facilitator	What is your response to the word feminism? I would only use it when the other person knows what I'm saying because I don't want to be judged.	4 thumbs down, 2 half-way.
	Women's movement?	historical
	Women's issues?	All thumbs up
	What word not using?	Empowerment Equality
Facilitator	"Contemporary Gender equality listening session"... Had that language shown up on something that you wanted me show up to, I wouldn't show up.	
#6	Get more excited when I hear terms like women's studies, conflict studies. Has a thoughtfulness to it.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#5	Don't like the equality word. It's not that women are exactly the same. Their differentness is a better mix. The differentness is what we're talking about, not equality.	
#4	I mean equality of opportunity.	
#5	There might be some things that it's not equal, that women are better. It's not just about equality. Microgrants to men – spent on booze. Microgrants to women – they help others. We should find what we're better at.	
#6	Should celebrate the differences so it doesn't go through the filter. I watch as my husband has shifted how he reacts to our children 18 vs. 8. We are wired differently.	

QUESTION #3: Why is gender equality not talked about?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	Group dictates list which is put on board: Gender equality = children, education, safety, economics, political voice, volunteer work, health care, elder care.	Group: We don't talk about gender equality much. Economic inequality is an issue!
#5	We have to pick the right fit/gender for teams in work	
#4	May not be a safe place or time to have the conversation. Women in competition with other women. Coopertition.	
		Might make men seem 'bad'
#7	We spend a lot of time talking with people we agree with.	
#3	Don't think you have this conversation with many males (other than your partner). Men are dismissive about the nurturing environment and being too touchy feely. Has created a challenge.	
#4	Economic equality. A huge issue among my friends is being able to do salary negotiation well. We weren't taught how to do that.	
#5	How do we compensate women who have worked as many hours as someone else, but is just as qualified.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
Facilitator	There is a study on women's ability to negotiate.	

QUESTION #4: Issues/subjects that fall under gender equality?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	<p>Economic- wage/gap issues</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Earning power</p> <p>Political voice</p> <p>Volunteer voice</p> <p>Community engagement</p> <p>No room fathers</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Housecare</p> <p>Healthcare</p> <p>Elder care</p>	

QUESTION #5: Have you experienced or observed gender equality or inequality?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#1	On the political side, women have shown up as political leaders in NH. Wonder about the salary issue- wonder, but don't know. My goal is to become a partner... it's an advantage because there aren't many women partners.	
#5	Severe struggles with child support as a divorced woman. Personal struggles to have the value of childcare and working valued. There are laws, then there are decisions. The decisions that were made in the judicial system didn't recognize the flexibility in schedule. I was told by the courts to get another job to account for difference in earning.	
#3	Re: elder care. We have this informal support group of women my age caring for elderly parents. When you have siblings, the males tend to go to taking care of finances, and the women are taking care of the nurturing and healthcare.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#5	It's my mother who says the boys should handle the finances, and the girls driving to the store. Elderly women go along with that idea.	
#4	It's a social thing. I don't remember ever having a conversation. It's the invitation to the golf game invites going to the men. I see subtle pieces like that. How does that lead to other opportunities? Social stereotypes where protocol is defined for them. We may be more comfortable in some socially stereotyped situations.	
#6	My generation was the first to grow up in suburbia. My mom was very liberal, went to Sarah Lawrence, and still came out with her MRS degree. But she told me, "You're in a relationship because you want to be, not because you need to be." As a kid, I was ingrained to always have my own money. In my dealings with my community- I find less gender issues when doing community work, more when doing paid work.	
#7	Trying to think of something current... I'm in education, both children born in spring. I was able to plan it that way. I was early in my career and didn't want to be gone for anything big. I planned my kids around career pressure. I see micro moments that add up. In academia, it's an elitism and classism, and ranking of lots of things- so they all pile in together. Toward inequality.	
#2	In the for profit world, it's the good old boys network... how strong and alive that is. Why isn't there a good old girls network? Are women doing a good job promoting women. When I first started working, the Sr. VP was a woman, and she helped me. Since then, leadership has been all men, and I'm still in the same job. It's all about the boys and their friends- not about the work. It's still about how much gets done on the golf course.	
#7	We have a girls' network.	
#6	I have a good girls network for community stuff... doesn't feel as alive in education work.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
#1	I want the childcare issue. Our country undervalues and underfunds childcare. We don't know what we don't know.	
#1	On the political side, women have shown up as political leaders in NH. Wonder about the salary issue- wonder, but don't know. My goal is to become a partner... it's an advantage because there aren't many women partners.	

QUESTION #6: The Post-It Exercise!

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	<p>ALL ISSUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal Political Voice • Corporate boards • Equal pay (two post its) • Awareness and visibility of GE issue • Women in Leadership Roles (Corporate boards; Non-profit boards; management; Executives; Government) • Family Structure (benefits; health, marriage equality) • Work/Life Balance • Outdated social norms (men do this; women do that) • Celebrate success show it exists • Maternity/Paternity child care • Education K-12 – and beyond, training • Equal job opportunities (two post its) • Reproductive choice • Economic inequality/Economic justice • Belief systems: lack of awareness • Celebrate men who “get it” • Family friendly jobs 	<p>RED DOT RESULTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal pay (two post its) 4 dots • Women in Leadership Roles (Corporate boards; Non-profit boards; management; Executives; Government) 4 dots • Family Structure (benefits; health, marriage equality) 1 dot • Work/Life Balance 3 dots • Outdated social norms (men do this; women do that) 1 dot • Education K-12 – and beyond, training 1 dot • Reproductive choice 1 dot • Economic inequality/Economic justice 1 dot • Belief systems: lack of awareness 3 dots

Closing remarks/other comments from participants:

How would we like to stay involved further? We will be reaching out to people to see if anyone would be interested in running a listening session.

Number comments and have participants put in their numbers instead of dots on the board.

Landscape analysis- is anyone doing a landscape analysis on all levels? We could do that again before going into strategic planning session. Engage regional organizations.

Religiously conservative women. Women's equality is seen through such a different lens in that world- should be sectioned off as a whole.