

April 11, 2012

NHWI

Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP):
Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Session Report
For Portsmouth, NH

Offices of Vigilant Capital Management,
18 Congress Street, Suite 209, Portsmouth, NH
MARY JO BROWN, FACILITATOR; PAT YOSHA, NOTETAKER

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 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 Authors:

FACILITATOR BIO Mary Jo Brown is the owner and president of Brown Design Company of Portsmouth, NH. She is also the Chair of the New Hampshire Women's Initiative Board of Directors.

NOTETAKER BIO Pat Yosha is a retired educator and gender equity trainer. She was a member of the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women, and chair in 2007-8 of the CSW.

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Introduction and Background

The U.S. Census Bureau reveals Portsmouth population: 20,799: female: 10,699; male: 10,080.

The location for the listening session is the Offices of Vigilant Capital Management, 18 Congress Street, Suite 209, Portsmouth, NH. Time of session: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 11, 2012.

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

Vigilant Capital Management, 18 Congress Street, Portsmouth, NH

Participant Background

All participants are community leaders in Portsmouth, NH. Seven (7) Participants. All professional women from greater Portsmouth, NH area. They ranged in age from 42 to 60 years of age.

One state legislator; one architect/interior designer; two directors of non-profit agencies; one CEO of a capital management company; two lawyers.

All participants live in greater Portsmouth, NH region. Some work in Concord, NH.

Seacoast Community Leaders 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 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.

QUESTION #1: What brought you here tonight?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
6	I've been practicing law for 14 years. How has law practice changed, I wonder. What do younger women feel? How do women feel about feminism? I wanted to discuss these things here.	
1 (Fac)	You're not sure?	Laughter from the group
6	As we get older, we don't face obvious gender discrimination.	
5	[Redacted] is the biggest law firm in New Hampshire. It is male dominated. I've blazed my own path there. I was part time when I raised my children. But do women have to choose between work and family? I've made partner. Younger women want to know how I did it. White men partners say they're involved parents because they sometimes go to their kids' games! (Women go to games AND do everything else!)	
1 (Fac)	(Directed to 2 lawyers in the group): You're both in historically male dominated careers.	
5	Women tend to find a fit that's easier than a law firm, such as in non-profits, government.	
6	I chose. I left a large law firm. Men there expected women to do administrative work. They had huge egos; I managed the department and the office.	
3 (Architect)	I went out on my own because of male dominated architectural and related industries (workforces). I wanted to have children. My career suffered because I made that choice. If I go on a job site, it's all men. I had to learn how to deal with contractors on my own.	
8	Making choices equals making a concession, adapting (to others' expectations, traditions.)	
1 (Fac)	(Repeats rules of conversation because of late arrival of one participant.)	
2	I spent my life in non-profits and then in the legislature.	
4	I have an 11-year-old girl at home by herself right now, until her dad gets home. I came here	

	today because of the source of the invitation. I am intrigued by the topic of gender equality. I don't think of gender equality much. I'm alone at my work, a consultant. Non-profit (work) is different from law and banking. Non-profits have mostly women on their staffs. How does gender equality pop up for me? I work with [redacted]. Single moms make up ¾ of those receiving women aid. We're not helping women who work really hard in our society. In my next life, I'll be an advocate for what people need. I don't want to be polite anymore!	
7	I have 2 girls. I've thought of gender equality as a parent. There is less discrimination in the non-profit area. I sit on the Board of the Women's Fund. We have these same conversations. We tend to look at our situation, but we need conversations like this in a larger arena. We need to look at systems. The best credentials should be why you are where you are. In the music world, auditions are blind!	
3	I read recently that more girls are going to college than men!	
7	Are you sure that colleges want a 50-50 ratio of males to females?	
3 5	Connecticut College now has male students!	
5	In the past, women struggled; women would get the job, meet a man, and leave. Today women have choices. Men don't struggle with leaving the work force for a while and then returning.	

QUESTION #2: How do you define gender equality?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
2	I don't think gender equality means we have to do the same thing. We should have opportunity to do whatever we want. Music, for example, is gender neutral.	Group members laugh, and point out that flutes and harps are musical instruments women were "assigned" to!
8	In mechanical fields, there are some differences. We're built differently.	
8	Why would a firm want a woman? Because it looks good? What if a man is better? The younger generation hasn't seen the struggle.	
1 (Fac)	Equality doesn't mean same. Men and women	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	may have different qualifications. What does gender equality mean to you?	
6	People have the same, equal, opportunity. Before I was a feminist: boys could go to any college, because they would need to work. The girls in a family had fewer choices – schools and work.	
3	Where did you go to college?	
6	State schools for the first 2 years.	
5	Gender equality means the opportunity to do what you want. (I'm thinking about children.) I think about the struggles of parents; men struggle too (in parenting). It is hard for men to say, "I have to pick up my kids today because my wife is working."	
4	Gender equality means the same treatment, the same opportunity. Women work part-time sometimes. Men should have that opportunity too. My friend has opportunity because her boss understands her needs regarding her kids. It works for her. She advocates for equity. But it is NOT the policy in her work place.	
1 (Fac)	I'm curious...have you all defined "gender equality"? Is it a phrase that resonates with you?	
4	Language is not always clear. Language can be incendiary and taken the wrong way. There are buzzwords. G.E. can be divisive. "Feminist" has become a bad word. "Gender equality" scares me.	
1 (Fac)	Other impressions?	
6	Feminism use to be the word for gender equality.	
2	"Gender equality" sounds forced.	
3	My 18-year-old son wouldn't know what gender equality means! The next generation sees things very differently.	
5	Young people don't think there are differences. People over 50 don't recognize discrimination. Gender is not an issue.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
3	My daughter doesn't see gender barriers.	
4	What are younger women experiencing?	
7	My 29-year-old daughter works in a firm with 60 people and a female CEO. She has great role models. She's very conscious of gender equity issues because of her upbringing. I don't know if the salary schedule at her firm is equal.	
4	There are more opportunities (for women) now.	
5	Too bad "feminism" has become a hated word. My mother-in-law was (is) a strict feminist!	
6	Burning of bras seems stupid now.	
5	Others' efforts made it possible for me to be what I am (attorney/lawyer).	
8	Words are so important. We mute the message in order to bring people to the table!	
1 (Fac)	(To the group) Do you think of yourself as a feminist?	6 (of 7) raise their hands.
1	(How about) gender equity?	
2	That's better than "gender equality".	
1 (Fac)	"Women's rights?"	
2	I'm good with that.	
6	"Women's rights" took the place of "feminism."	
1 (Fac)	"Women's movement"?	
2	Speaking of women's movement: People believe there is more equality than there is. A movement is needed for equality. Contraception (availability) has been assumed for women. Now there is fear because contraception availability and insurance coverage may be gone.	
5	Young women don't know that it wasn't always available!	
2	Younger women are talking about contraception.	Many simultaneous side remarks and discussions of contraception. Seems to be unanimity here about opposing efforts to reduce availability and to change laws regarding insurance coverage.
6	Younger women wonder why there is a question about contraception.	
2	Old men make decisions about contraception availability (and laws). This shocks younger	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	women.	
1 (Fac)	Is there any phrase you want to talk about that is related to gender equality?	
4	Some of those phrases focus on women. Gender equity to me means <u>ALL</u> genders. You're the (NH)Women's Initiative. When you talk about "no access to contraception," it's really an issue for all, but it's treated as a women's issue!	Nods of agreement from all.
2	I think about health care, education, childcare etc. as women's issues because women traditionally are responsible for these.	
5	Women are trying to figure out how to do it all. Men don't worry about arrangements (for child care, etc.).	
2	Fathers say, "I'm baby sitting tonight" when they are responsible for caring for their own children!	Laughter from all
1 (Fac)	I'm curious. It feels like there's an absence of an acceptable, accessible phrase to cover what we're talking about.	
7	What phrase will be identifiable? We're all white middle-aged women. Is NHWI reaching out to other groups? Color? Economics? Education?	
1 (Fac)	Explains the breadth and extent of people in statewide Listening Sessions. "All people."	
6	When I left my firm to come here today, I wondered if my staff women thought about "could I go too"?	
2	It is a luxury to be able to come to this session in the middle of the day.	

QUESTION #3: How have you, in NH, experienced gender equality or gender inequality?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
1 (Fac)	What have you observed, about equality or inequality?	
6	There was the first gender equality initiative among women lawyers in 1989. Men would say, "We're fine. We treat everyone equally." We gave evidence of inequity!	
5	When I take a deposition, the staff observing assume I'm a stenographer. I was buying a car; my husband was with me; the sales person assumed my husband was the buyer and addressed every statement to him. I walked out!	Laughter from the group

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
2	Older men are still surprised by women being lawyers!	
3	In my husband's firm, he told a woman not to tell the firm she was pregnant because then she would lose out on the deals being made. (Architectural/interior decorating business.) Certain industries are still locked into old roles, determined by gender. Insurance, law, architecture, real estate – for examples.	
2	When many women were in key roles in the NH legislature, there was much talk about it. But when it's mostly men, there is no notice.	
7	The communications industry in NH is male dominated. Men say they can't find women in leadership positions. The assumption by men is that women are not there. The absence of women in leadership has been codified by our culture.	
8	There are only token females on Boards.	
2	Except special service organizations Boards. There are women on those Boards	
5	There are places where men make decisions. Women aren't there. E.g. golf. That is true in many industries.	
3	The men aren't meeting on the playground!	Laughter from all.
6	Some men will say that women lawyers are needed for women clients.	
2	Women become more acceptable as they get older.	
8	Women are at a disadvantage because we tend to process things more. So we take more time to make decisions. And men say, "That's bullshit." Our way of doing things is different. We have something to say, and it may take time.	
1 (Fac)	That relates to how women lead. Their style of	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	communicating and use of words differs from men.	
8	And feeling is important to women.	
3	Is it a weakness in taking time for decisions? Men look at the bottom line!	
8	I'm looking at the bottom line in my business too. But we need to pay attention to the process.	
5	Men think that rapid decision-making is strength.	
2	One other difference. Men tend to say, "I can do that." They may not be qualified when they say that. Women want to be sure, want to be methodical.	
8	Women become heads of departments BECAUSE they process.	
5	Women ask, "How are you doing?" of their staff.	
8	Look at male and female managers. A staff stays longer where there are female managers~!	
1 (Fac)	There are 300 people doing these Listening Sessions. What didn't we talk about that you wish we'd covered?	
7	Being reflective about women in the workplace. In education: what opportunities exist for young men and women; that's important because attitudes are formed in school.	
3	Things that touch the next generation. To have children or not? To stay home with kids, or not? There are no across-the-boards answers. These are personal issues. I'm glad we touched on that.	
5	Women have some control over whether they have equality. We need to be assertive, not defer, and not simply accept what others tell us. I'd love to have young women feel empowered. Studies show men are more assertive than women.	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
6	There are examples of inequities in pay. Women don't ask about what they will be paid when interviewed for jobs.	
2	We need to go back to more assertiveness training.	
7	Societal assumptions are: we have to ask. There should be no taking equity for granted on the part of bosses. What will we do?	
2	What could we provide to make life for other women better?	

QUESTION #4: The Post-It Exercise!

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
All	<p>5 Stars Reproductive healthcare Contraception + abortion + education about both Affordable and accessible contraception Birth control</p> <p>3 Stars: Childcare for all children After school care</p> <p>Care for children of working women</p> <p>2 Stars: Opportunities for struggling women Low income; single moms, Improved socio-economic status for struggling women</p> <p>*Equal pay for equal work *Maintaining equity in post-elementary school years *Educating women on how far we have not come so they will be prepared and keep pushing</p>	

Closing remarks from participants:

There was about 30 minutes of small group conversations about a broad range of issues from the composition of the New Hampshire legislature and recent votes on reproductive rights to concerns about tapping the views of younger people, single moms and less well-educated women.

Limitations:

As a note-taker, I did not feel there were many limitations except for those that come from having all middle-aged, white, highly educated and successful women in one group. But they were aware of those characteristics among them, and were sincerely concerned that the opinions of a huge range of women be sought in developing the NHWI. Of course time limitations are always a factor; many had to squeeze this Listening Session in on busy schedules, one came late, another left early, and only a few could continue conversations after the closing exercise. But some did stay for almost an hour!

Facilitator and Note-taker observations and concluding thoughts:

Note-taker thoughts: This group was highly motivated to discuss gender equality; they did not all agree on terminology, but were interested in discussing what language does to the perceptions of gender issues. They were thoughtful, relaxed, willing to share personal experiences that were pertinent to the topic of gender. It appeared they were all grateful for the opportunity to discuss gender equality with other professionals, and they did not hesitate to disagree on words or to acknowledge the depth of discrimination experiences some had encountered. The group felt cohesive to me.

Appendix A: Listening Session Script

I. Welcome and Introductions

- 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

- 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?

(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?
- Thank you to participants by facilitator
- Collect participant information sheets; distribute NHWI information sheets

V. Adjourn

Works Cited