

4/25/2012

GENDERListening Session 4/25/2012 – Participants: TCCAP
Clients from various programs

TCCAP
Authors |

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.

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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.

QUESTION #1: What brought you here tonight?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
1	Her supervisor had suggested she attend. She needed to make up hours.	Workplace Success Client
2	Interested in the topic – wanted to learn more.	Workplace Success Employee
3	Very interested in women's equality in the workplace.	Alcohol/Drug Facility Client
4	Happy to attend, feels there are many issues to discuss.	Domestic Violence Employee
5	Wants a voice and appreciates these work groups.	Alcohol/Drug Facility Employee
6	Volunteered to attend when the topic was mentioned.	Domestic Violence Client
7	Curious...	Domestic Violence Client
8	Was asked to attend, decided it would be interesting.	Workplace Success Client

QUESTION #2: How do you define gender equality?

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
1	Men and women need to be treated fairly, no matter the setting – mom was stay at home mom and dad was the “bread winner” – society much different today.	Single parent – feels she is doing everything and should be treated as an equal.
2	Equal pay for equal work – feels some women cannot do exactly what men can do and vice versa – she is a “human righter” not an “equal righter.”	Very strongly believes men and women each have some roles, which are distinctly defined by sex.

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
3	Men and women should be afforded the same opportunities – should be on an even playing field.	Strongly believes business is dominated by males and “domestic” positions are still primarily offered to women.
4	Compassionate and just partnerships – same opportunities.	Strongly believes political inequality runs rampant (i.e. males controlling a woman’s body – birth control issue).
5	All genders equal – same opportunities offered.	Bothered by healthcare system – feels often times males are discriminated against (i.e. pregnant females qualify for health insurance more readily than healthy males in need).
6	Participant stated she is teaching her child to hit back, no matter what gender; anyone that hits him first – right to retaliate – when pushed for more relevant response, participant explained she feels gender equality to her means that the female should not have to do all of the child rearing. It should not be a responsibility automatically relegated to the female.	Off the wall comments really depict the nature of the client’s position in life – domestic abuse client.
7	Same opinion as number 6 – “What’s good for one is good for all” – described bullying situation and the measures she took to retaliate (i.e. metal lunchbox to head of attacker).	Again, similar position in life as number 6 – hostile environment and similarly hostile responses.
8	Men and women should be all equal – agrees with number 6 – child rearing should be done by both parents and not automatically fall to the mother because she is a female.	Quiet and shy participant – tends to go along with group response.

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

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
1	Feels she has experienced gender equality when she worked at paper mill with guys; and she was the only female out of 6 people (male and female) that stayed due to the strenuous working conditions. She proved herself and was given equal pay for equal work.	Participant feels she is an exception to some females in that she is able to endure more strenuous activities and therefore should be afforded the opportunity.
2	Feels she experienced gender inequality and was not given equal pay for equal work – note the same type of position as number 1, however, many years ago – she was in the paper mill as well. She observed that the men would either view the females as a distraction, or fear they	Appears discrimination against women working physically demanding jobs was more prevalent in past years than today.

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	would lose their jobs to them. They wanted the women at home and did not want them to get hurt.	
3	Experienced gender inequality when interviewing for jobs directly after graduating from college. The males she was grouped with were receiving more offers and offers at a higher rate of pay, even though she graduated with higher rank and better grades.	Currently works as a teacher – a more predominately female position.
4	Has not experienced inequality personally – but has witnessed it in the court systems (i.e. restraining orders). She has a strong personality, and her husband is a stay at home dad raising their grand son.	Older participant – seems to feel that gender inequality has evolved since the 70's.
5	She states her strong personality stops anyone from treating her differently from a male. Has not personally experienced either.	Participant again spoke about inequality in healthcare.
6	Experienced gender inequality when working as a temp in a mill as a machine operator. Claims they let her go because she was pregnant, and they didn't want to pay maternity leave.	Participant particularly hostile towards society in general.
7	Was in the military and feels that previous boyfriend treated her differently – “bossed” her around because she was female.	Difficult for participant to understand the concept of gender equality/inequality – responses were not relevant to topic.
8	Did not want to respond – has seen gender inequality, but declined to share.	Again, fairly quiet participant.

QUESTION #4: The Post-It Exercise!

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
Group - Top Three Issues	** (These are not in the same order as the previous questions!)**	These are the top issues identified by the group as the most important issues they would like to see explored in more depth by NHWI.
1	Equal opportunities	
2	Human Rights – be kind!	
3	Equal opportunities for men and women	
4	Health care	
5	Equal pay for equal work	
6	Health care	
7	Child care	

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?

(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