

Spring 2012

**NHWI**

**Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP):  
Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Session Report  
for Manchester Young Women – April 30, 2012**

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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.

## About the Authors:

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## Executive Summary

Throughout the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, the New Hampshire Women's Initiative (NHWI) Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP) is conducting geographically diverse listening sessions across the state with content centered on "Contemporary Gender Equality": gender equality issues as they relates to young NH women and men.

The listening sessions are designed to include a small group of women from each region to discuss broadly how the women's movement has, or hasn't, changed. Based on the observation that women in a younger age demographic often don't relate to the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s-1990s, the goal of the listening sessions is to tease out what younger women (and men) identify as important gender equality issues so the NHWI can develop programs and policies to support those areas.

The Manchester Young Women's GAP Listening Session is one of several sessions happening across the state. The other regions include: the Seacoast, North Country, Merrimack Valley, Nashua, Monadnock Region, and the Upper Valley.

The preliminary results from this session reflect an avid interest in the following topics: fairness in the workplace, reducing violence against women, reduction of domestic violence, and perceptions of the role of men and women in the home and workplace.

## Introduction and Background

The city of Manchester, New Hampshire is located in the southern region of the Granite State in Hillsborough County and is the state's largest City. According to the United States Census 2010<sup>1</sup>, Manchester has a population of 109,565 with slightly more female than male residents who are predominantly white.

## 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 was 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 Manchester Young Women's GAP Listening Session was conducted at the headquarter offices of City Year NH in Manchester, NH.

## Participant Background

Seven female participants ranging in age from 19-26 joined the listening session. The participants were of diverse racial backgrounds, and all have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

Each participant has been or are staff and/or corp members at City Year. Important subject matters covered by their collective work include, but are not limited to, domestic violence, education, women's health, and advocacy.

All of the participants reside in the greater Manchester area.

## Manchester Listening Session Format

The listening session was relatively informal. Each participant had an unspecified amount of time to answer each question, and the conversation bounced around amicably. The session, like the others, was designed to last two hours including introductions, participant feedback, a participant exercise, and concluding remarks.

The Manchester Young Women's GAP Listening Session was conducted using an agenda and script provided in the facilitation packet (Appendix A: Listening Session Script). The session began at 4:30 pm with introductions of the facilitator, note-taker and the participants. The participants introduced themselves by first name, occupation, age, and town of residence. Sandwiches, salad, cookies and water were provided to participants.

Once the introductions concluded, a series of four questions were asked of the participants (a closing exercise was used for the last question). This process began with general questions, designed to get the conversation started. Throughout the process, the participants seemed to warm up to the questions. Their answers became more detailed and thoughtful. As there were relatively few participants, some of whom were familiar with each other, the talk was friendly but focused.

Toward the end of the session, a participation exercise was conducted as a means to extract the top issues that the participants would like to see the NHWI pursue. Each participant received 3 standard yellow Post-it notes and a pen; they wrote their top three issues, one per Post-it note and then they put the Post-its up on a blank wall in the room. Then each person placed a fuchsia post-it strip on their top issue - which wasn't necessarily an issue that they originally wrote. Please see 'Question 4: The Post-It exercise!' for the results of this exercise.

Lastly, each participant was asked to fill out a participant information sheet which details their age, occupation, zip code and contact information if they would like to remain apprised of NHWI work. We are pleased to report that participants wished to remain informed of the NHWI efforts.

## 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.

Participants: Women who are serving with City Year New Hampshire as Americorps members and on staff; 7 participants

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

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
6	Interested because from NH, didn't know of this organization, didn't realize the merger; wanted to see what aspect the organization was taking on.  Into politics and policy, so wanted to share her opinion.	
2	Learn more; hears friends talk about politics and policy.	
1	Interested in women's rights and feminism, studied in college; didn't think about it in NH; only has applied it to college campus and work but not to just living.	
3	Interested in women's rights; staying in NH for a couple of years so interested in finding out what's going on.	
4	Want to be here for a few years and wants to be involved civically; women's studies classes in college; interested in equality generally.	
7,5	Same, politics, women's issues.	Laughing and agreement from group that it sums it up.

## Question 2: How do you define the term gender equality?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
2	Equal, no difference.	
6	Gender equality means everyone has a voice in what their equality is; one gender doesn't take over and establish what equality is.	
4	See gender as leaders in the community as leaders and politicians; transgender community comes to mind – missing part of the conversation if only defined as male and female.	Nods in group.
1	Freedom from stereotype and not assuming that there are certain things because of their gender.	
5	People have same rights and resources as everyone else; men and women and transgender can all not have full rights in different situations.	Nods in group; rights and resources are most important thing.
3	Equality, if could it be possible, would be great; there may never be equal because there are naturally things that men are better at and women are better at because they are built differently - physical aspects.	Other participants understand but don't like that there are differences.
4	Rules and practice are two different things – need policy first but then need the cultural shift; grassroots stuff started it, policy changes.	
7	Other day, someone (male) said to her that you aren't as powerful as you think you are – that's not equality; the opposite is equality.	Facilitator asked if talking about empowerment, and she said yes.



### What does gender equality not mean to you?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
3	Not telling someone what they can do with their body.	
6	Males determining what every other gender is going to do; one group having the say over everyone else.	Agreement from a few others.
6	Doesn't mean that people can't have opinions; not only meant for one gender.	

### What issues are you thinking of?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
3	Abortion.	
7	Equality in classroom and gender roles being played out; reinforced for their gender in the way they are treated, how they treat each other.	
3	Custody – mothers sometimes get preferential in divorce situation for children.	
4	Paternity leave, inequality of pay.	
3	Planned Parenthood, birth control; things going on currently in government that affect everyone.	
6	Women's health across the board.	
6	Gender pricing – heard about it recently; examples in dry cleaning, deodorant, razors, and how women pay more for their products than men; health insurance is more for single person coverage up to	Group is interested and curious about this issue; remarks that hadn't really thought of it or knew about it.  People want her to share the article.

	45% more (saw it in an article).	
4	Car insurance is more for men. Question if it is fair for men based on statistics?  Flip the statement on its head – insurance companies are going to protect themselves because men get in more accidents but still profiling.	
3	Domestic violence – usually only thought about for women being abused; men being abused isn't being talked about; only heterosexual couples too – gay couples and transgender isn't represented or talked about.	
1	Attitudes of kids – girls can't do math, boys always making fun of the girls; expectations of what is ok for being a boy – rough, not crying, active; girls – gossip, not smart, mean to each other.	

**Question 3: In New Hampshire, have you experienced or observed gender inequality?**

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
3	State house, decisions being made about women are being made by white men.	
6	Last year, Executive Council pulled rank and going to make decisions about Planned Parenthood; politicians saying, "If women want to have fun, they can live with the consequences"; not an equal number of voices involved in the process.  Inequality in laws and process.	
6	Union Leader is biased as major newspaper in NH.	
7	Only one male teacher in elementary	Others agree – lack of male role

	school, only others males are janitors and administration. Hard for fourth grade boys because don't have male role model when developing their social habits.	models in schools and other situations for kids.
4	LGBTQ issues tied up in gender stereotypes; boys who like pink are linked to being gay which government right now is saying is not okay because they don't have equality.	
4	Shared recent law that was introduced about being able to deny services based on religion.	
3	Getting cat-called while riding her bike by New Horizons.	
1	In high school, had to stop going on runs because men would yell at her as they drove by so she stopped running in those neighborhoods.	
6	At UNH, classes that she took with certain topics had less women (political science); back to what is emphasized in school about what different genders are good at and can grow up to be.	
2	Engineering major – scholarship opportunities for women because less in the field; is it ok for women to get those scholarships? Is it fair? Is that equal?	Some laughing – this theme that when there are different treatment and questioning if that is fair keeps coming up.

**In New Hampshire, have you experienced or observed gender equality?**

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
6	At UNH and Americorps things, have males involved in rape crisis center and those types of presence; promoting	

	opportunities for men to support and have a voice relating to those issues.	
3	Worked in crisis center at UNH and at the YWCA here, and they have services for both men and women; not like working in VT where they only did services for women and wouldn't really serve men.	
1	Domestic violence shelter in Atlanta, only allowed female volunteers at the shelter even though men would go through volunteer training classes.	Theme: hearing that it matters that genders are both represented and have equal voice and opportunities.
4	Education is important – you can't be involved in the conversation if you don't know it is going on.	

**Overall, do you feel what you have observed in NH is more equality or inequality?**

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
4	Since most of observations in schools, inequality because of the stereotypes and roles that are reinforced.	
2	Doesn't really follow politics so agrees based on observations in schools – inequality.	
6	Inequality because issues aren't being talked about in an equal way; issues are removed because money and who backs down – no process for discussion and open forum.	
1	In politics, politicians main goal isn't to make life better for women but to appeal to the people they want to gain support from; about pleasing people and getting votes.	

**Question 4: Post-it Note Exercise: What issues relating to gender equality do you think are the most important for the New Hampshire Women’s Initiative to address?**

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
<p>Top Three Issues from participants</p>	<p>Youth development and gender stereotypes</p> <p>Education and lack of role male models in elementary schools</p> <p>Women’s health</p> <p>Gender stereotypes in schools</p> <p>Women’s health</p> <p>LGBTQ issues</p> <p>Educational equality in elementary</p> <p>Women’s health – better sex education in schools; informing all young people about health issues</p> <p>Gender equality and equal representation in the state house</p> <p>Reproductive rights</p>	<p>Red Dots:</p> <p>Stereotypes in schools</p> <p>Women’s health</p> <p>Equality in representation</p> <p>Discussion when picking top ones:</p> <p>Group moved notes to be grouped by themes</p> <p>Does health include mental health? Yes, it should.</p> <p>There are stereotypes in mental health diagnosis.</p> <p>Women sexual dysfunction, pharmaceutical companies created a disease for women so they could manufacture drugs to “cure” dysfunction, but nothing proved to be wrong with them or no proof that the drugs actually did anything.</p> <p>Box office movie out this summer about hysteria and sex toys.</p>

	<p>Equal marriage opportunities</p> <p>Sex Education</p> <p>Women’s voices for women’s health</p> <p>Women/more genders for LGBTQ in politics</p> <p>More male roles in schools</p> <p>Gender stereotypes among children in schools</p> <p>Women’s health</p> <p>Crisis center work – more advertisement/promotion/PSAs of abuse for men, women, children</p> <p>Stereotypes in schools – students and teachers</p> <p>Women’s empowerment</p> <p>Sexual equality/marriage equality</p> <p>Equality in professional environments</p>	
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### Reactions to priorities

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
2	Three that talked about the most.	
5	Hard to only write three, hard to only choose one because interconnected in a way.	
5	A lot of group agreement about issues.	
2	If you have equal representation in legislation then it starts to trickle down to changes in the other issues, everything falls underneath representation and voices.	

### What should be included in women's health?

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
4	Marketing around disorders i.e. HPV vaccine targeted to young girls, making people sick.	
3	Health insurance disparity	
3	Annual check ups	
3	Not talked about	
3	Birth control	
5	Educating men and women about men and women and everything it entails – sex, how to take care of yourself, how/when to go to the doctor for what symptoms; who reminds you to take care of your health? Only your parents and loved ones?	

	<p>Need more education, reminders, PSAs about the importance.</p> <p>People accidentally find out they have a disease, not proactively.</p>	
4	Worked in DC last year, HIV rate high	
7	Mental health – a lot of time it takes the girl acting out to have it addressed instead of being supported early or her have resource.	

**Closing Remarks: Do you have any other thoughts or ideas that you really want to share about gender equality in NH?**

Participant	Comment	Note-taker Observation
5	<p>In Manchester and refugee population, how do we connect with them related to all of this stuff?</p> <p>Challenges communicating relating to English speaking people about these issues, so what about those where there is a language barrier?</p> <p>Are service agencies equipped to welcome and deal with refugee families and women to be able to serve them?</p>	
	<p>How do young people get involved? How do you get involved in fixing the problems?</p> <p>Reach out to younger generations to get involved and share thoughts and take action so they can create generational change.</p>	



	<p>Tap into 25-30 year olds – one of the most neglected, out of college, young professional, young families, on own for the first time – need to be sure they are represented, voices heard, education/information targeted to.</p> <p>When part of a community (i.e. college campus), you have access to education and resources, but then once you are on your own, start a family, get a job, you start to leave communities and don't have different support systems that you once had.</p>	
	<p>Didn't talk about religion – for some people, can be basis of inequality between men and women because shapes people's thoughts and beliefs about roles and ways people are treated, definition of gender.</p> <p>How do you reach different religious communities? How do you target those that perpetuate inequality?</p> <p>There is no separation of church and state in this country so how do you allow for their own beliefs but then have policy not governed by religious beliefs?</p>	
	<p>Adoption and what does that look like for a single man and/or woman who want to adopt? Easier for heterosexual couples?</p>	
	<p>Making decisions based on statistics – is that right and fair and equal?</p>	

**Comments from facilitator:** This group of women was very engaged with the topic at hand – and they seemed to know each other well, which made for easy conversation. They kept coming back to inequalities in the schools and education – likely because of their City Year connection. Overall, there seemed to be a couple of overarching themes that were frequently a part of the discussion: (1) We need more voices from all genders – in the statehouse, in the classroom, everywhere. They talked about the need for more women in power and the need for more men in the classroom a lot. (2) We all need to talk about these issues more. They brought up several times the notion that we just don't talk about this enough – and that more education and awareness should be brought to a lot of the gender issues they discussed.

Overwhelmingly, the group seemed to feel that they see more gender inequality than equality, that gender inequality is bad for everyone regardless of gender, and that if we increased information and diversified who gets a say (again, in the classroom, the government, the media, everywhere) things could get much more equal.

### **Closing remarks from participants:**

The general feeling at the end of the session was appreciation at being asked to participate and positivity about the continued work of the NHWI.

### **Limitations:**

The methods designed by the GAP members to conduct the state-wide listening sessions were well thought and academically sound. While the GAP members worked hard to minimize the effects of bias on the thoughts and opinions of the participants, limitations to these methods still remain.

The session was characterized by the similar ages and experiences of the women present.

The timeframe for the listening sessions proved sufficient. Though the number of participants was small and allowed for each participant to flesh out his ideas and speak when ideas came to mind. The informality of the session was ideal for the size, though a larger variety of work experience and age would perhaps have been more indicative of the region.

Many of the participants either currently, or in the past, have worked directly with City Year NH, which means they are already well versed in social issues. This serves to influence their thoughts and opinions because it primes them to discuss issues that they are exposed to at their employment or volunteer efforts.

Lastly, each participant was selected based on a connection to the executive director of the hosting site.

### **Conclusion:**

The results of this New Hampshire Women's Initiative (NHWI) Gender Ambassadors Panel (GAP) Listening Session are promising. They reveal a community of young women ready to engage in the meaningful work necessary to close the gender equality gap in New Hampshire. It also reveals a complex and dynamic environment in which this work will be accomplished.

Top concerns identified by the participants include raising awareness about economic inequalities. Though these issues earned "red dots/fuchsia flags," the group was sensitive to many other issues: reducing domestic and sexual violence, and involvement and examination of ways men can be positively engaged in the issues.

To engage younger women and men in New Hampshire, NHWI can begin to think about ways to involve young people in New Hampshire using college networks to engage young women and men in addressing the issues outlined above. Using the energy and enthusiasm of the existing GAP listening session participants, the NHWI can begin to reach out more broadly through the academic community since each region has a college or university affiliation.

## 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**