

April 24, 2012

NHWI

Gender AmGender Ambassadors Panel (GAP):
Contemporary Gender Equality Listening Session Report
for Senior Men; Exeter Mill, Community Room, Exeter, NH

Exeter Mill, Community Room, Exeter, NH
Authors | Pat Yosha, Facilitator; Karen Prior, 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: Retired, High School English and Women's Studies Teacher; Former member of NH Commission on the Status of Women; Member, NHWI Founding Mothers Committee

NOTETAKER BIO: Community Organizer; NHWI Network Facilitator

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Introduction and background

The U.S. Census Bureau reveals: Exeter has a population of 9,242. Females = 52.6% of the population, 47.4% male. Population over 65: 15.4%; 95.3% of Exeter citizens are white. 43.1% hold bachelors' degrees or higher. 25.8% of businesses in New Hampshire are female-owned.

The location for the listening session is Community Room, Exeter Mill Apartment Complex, 10 Chestnut Street, Exeter, NH

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

Exeter Mill, Exeter, New Hampshire

Participant Background

Six (6) White senior men, ranging in age from 63 to 79

Participants included two retired engineers, one retired lawyer, one retired biochemist, one retired psychotherapist/clergyman; one retired army major (Belgian army).

Participants live in greater Exeter area: Exeter, Stratham, Newmarket, Brentwood, New Hampshire.

Upper Valley 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 5:00 p.m. 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
Fac.	What interested you? Why did you come here today?	
1	I came for education. I don't know what the hot button issues are. What is the Legislature aiming to do? Mainly, I'm here to be educated about the issues.	
6	I came because of Pat. I'm skeptical about the process. I respect Pat, and I would like to be helpful.	
3	I came because of Pat. I think it will be interesting and worthwhile.	
4	I came here to compare with U.S. and Belgium (where I am from.)	
5	I came because I was asked, and I am interested in the topic.	
2, S	I came because of general curiosity. I have a daughter in her mid-50's. She has been a strong advocate for equality for years. My daughter wants me to fill her in on what we discuss here.	
Fac.	(Addresses #6) Why were you skeptical of the process?	
6	We are all liberal, concerned people. We will get a biased result from this group. We are favorable and concerned making life better for women.	
2	Does bias have a negative connotation?	
6	I'm concerned about the objectivity of this group.	
5	We do not have a wide representation here.	

QUESTION # 2: How do you define gender equality?

PARTICIPANT	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
1	Blindness to employees. Look to society to evolve to look upon individual talents, not based on gender. See discrimination gone. See individuals as people.	
5	I see it as a legal framework, rights under laws. Socially, in the interaction of people we are not there yet. Legally addressing equality is the key today. Gender is primarily about legal issues today.	
6	The genders are not equal, and will never be. But gender equality means equal opportunity for both sexes. Is gender a grammatical term vs. him/her? Sex has a male or female definition.	
Fac.	Gender is used scientifically. There needs to be clarity, distinctions.	
6	Opportunities are key to equality. Gender should not be the only criteria for selecting someone. And sex should not be overwhelming. I have a problem with extremes; for example, having women on submarines.	
Fac.	Why?	
6	Because it causes more problems than it solves. I am concerned about extremes when we're talking about equality.	
3	People like to avoid the word sex. Legally, women should have equal rights, equal pay. Morally, they should be the same.	
3	I agree with 6 in certain circumstances. Roles of women in the military have slowly evolved. There are even female snipers now, and they're in the foxholes. I don't know how having them in submarines is working out.	
4	Socially and legally, there are some differences between American and Belgian practices. In Belgium, a woman keeps her own name when she marries. Children can have either last name, though it's usually the father's last name for children. All have the same possibilities, but I have a problem with women in submarines. I have seen women lead teams. Women are not the problem; the troubles are with the men, not women.	
1	What do we do with physical requirements, e.g. firemen, where strength is a factor. What are the rules now? Are women being accepted where they do not have the same strength as	

PARTICIPANT	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	men?	
6	Women have limitations in physical ability. Gender is not the problem, but physical ability is. If a woman can lift a 100-pound pack, give her a chance.	
3	Why are there separate sports leagues: tennis, basketball - separation in sports? How do women feel about that segregation?	
Fac.	Equality and same are not identical terms. Think about whether women in tennis, for example, should be paid as high a level as men in tennis are?	
6	Maybe there should be separate categories for blacks. (Referring to Kenyan men AND women winning the Boston marathon – repeatedly.) This may be more interesting than I thought.	
5	We're quibbling about sports. What about elected office? We're on shaky ground when talking about sports. Physical differences are clear there. But there are mental differences as well. It's legitimate to make distinctions in sports; we will continue to evolve physically.	
6	It's staggering to see the evolution in offices over the last 20 years. The trend will continue in that direction: law, medicine, ministers – women are prominent in all those roles. Progress isn't fast enough.	
3	Think about daycare workers. Women are more nurturing. Men in daycare are the exception. I don't think that will ever even out.	
6	Elementary school teachers also. My father, a minister, when in his 50's and 60's demanded an equal number of men as Sunday school teachers. He was progressive for the times, in the Episcopal church, on gay and lesbian experiences, etc.	
2	Your father was exceptional for the times.	
Fac.	What does gender equality NOT mean?	
2	Sameness. Gender equality would mean each individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to be regarded on an equal basis.	
4	There should be the same opportunity for women and men in certain jobs. In Belgium, wanting the same numbers of people in government is the norm. There is not a rule about equality in government, though; it is a	

PARTICIPANT	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	goal but is not forced.	
6	Men and women are each about 50% of the population. There is no reason why one sex should be considered better than the other. The goal of equal numbers is just that, a goal. We should put policy and programs in place over time toward that goal.	
4	I agree. We should work towards that but not force it.	
6	And on the submarine? I'm not sure about 50/50. Maybe.	
2	What's the distinction here. What is so special about the submarine? Is the assumption that males cannot control their sex drive?	
4	In Belgium the men were like wild roosters, and there was much jealousy of each other when women came into the military.	
2	Men had something to learn. It was a new situation.	
4	I was not proud of being a man at that time (in the military).	
1	Going back to goals, aiming toward 50/50 in college admissions and programs. More blacks/women/more qualified. That is a good goal, but there is then the trouble with discrimination against a qualified male candidate.	
6	Progressives really struggled with equal opportunity and affirmative action. I'm not sure we ever completely bought into it; there was a terrible struggle over affirmative action; who was most qualified? Mostly racial and gender (women) who were not qualified. (We're part of this dilemma.) Companies hired the black person even though he was not as qualified.	
3	Issues of gender or race caused pressure. There was a struggle with employees who had to hire; those who hired employees took heat from white colleagues for affirmative action hires, and got credit from management for these hires.	
5	I do not think there should be a (percentage) goal. I think women have excellent access to government.	
1	Barriers had to be broken down in government. In the 70's, there were 6 women in the (US) Senate. It's getting easier; there is more	

PARTICIPANT	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	acceptance. There has to be a knocking down of the barriers; it will not happen naturally.	
5	Are the barriers real or in our minds?	
6	I'm concerned about education at the elementary level, and the family. We need a conversation about women as mothers and/or career women in the workplace. I'm thinking of long-term efforts. Give girls better opportunities in math and science for example. We are just finding out that women are good lawyers, for example. Wow. We need to push long-term goals.	
4	We need to create opportunities for women to do more. In Europe, there are policies where men can stay home with the newly born children and the wives can return to the workplace if they want to.	
6	Yes, at an early age we need to create opportunities, in math and science too.	
Fac.	Some countries have constitutional rules with percentages of parliaments that must be women. (Afghanistan; Pakistan, for example) These written goals help the voters to develop expectations for society and equality.	
3	No one ever said we must force women in government. The NH Senate had a majority of women for a while. But you can't make numbers a rule. Goals vs. rule; goals are preferable way to achieve equality.	
4	Belgium had a rule, but had to change because there were not enough candidates. Were there enough candidates of good quality? It could swing the other way, too; unqualified men are sometimes elected.	
Fac.	What gender equality issues have we missed?	
1.	Childbearing; military. There are differences between the genders here.	
4	There are differences and there distinctions. Discrimination is not necessarily at stake when we're talking about difference.	
5.	Should 50% of marriages be same sex marriage?	Laughter among the group.
3.	Medical research. Breast cancer is an area of obvious difference, so more spent on medical research in this area.	
Fac.	Men can get breast cancer too.	
6	Can women get prostate cancer? Man and	

PARTICIPANT	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	woman are different; they are not the same. But they can be equal.	

QUESTION #3: How have you, in NH, experienced gender equality or gender inequality? Let's start with gender *INEQUALITY*.

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
4	I am still surprised that women do not always change their names when married, and change them back when divorced	
1	My wife has kept her name.	
2	I can't identify or recall specific examples of gender inequality in New Hampshire. But I hear examples of stereotypes, and attitudes and language that are discriminatory toward women.	
3	Where do you hear these things?	
2	Everywhere I go I hear it. Not as much, but it is still going on. In my profession as a therapist: when we get together with other therapists, mostly women, I hear what they have to put up with!	
5	Professional women in technical roles. Society was not feeding organizations options. There was an undercurrent of bias; males were (are?) dominant.	
6	As a retired person, I choose the organizations I want to get involved in; e.g. church, marine docents. They are not representative of what is going in New Hampshire today.	
1	Yes, being retired is different. I do not see as much because I left my professional world, so I do not see as much of what is going on in the wider society.	
Fac.	That is why we wanted senior men, where you live our lives now. You will have different reflections and observations of change, which younger men do not have. Good for comparison.	
3	Are all these organizations coming together? (The groups we are interviewing in the Listening Sessions.) What is the agenda? We are not coming up with many issues.	
5	Boards and town administrations are mostly men. Women are in the offices; women get lower paying jobs.	
6	Getting back to the idea of change. I have seen a	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
	lot of change over my 45-year career. Engineering was very male dominated; I have seen a gradual change over the years.	
1	I fully agree with you. But I have concerns. Something is going wrong with young males, boys. Women are pursuing more education. More women than men are pursuing higher education. Jobs are changing. There are no factory jobs. Women are competing for jobs. The trend: males are falling behind. Men are not taking care of things as well as women. Women are progressing through their own hard work. Boys are falling behind.	All of the men nod and make brief comments in support of this observation.
6	Where are the jobs today? Where will they be tomorrow, nationally and globally? Partly the lack of jobs is the result of efficiency. Women are growing in the knowledge business.	
3	Women are surpassing the men.	
6	Are men falling behind?	Several chime in, "Yes, they are."
5	The way our economy works has to change.	
6	Benefits are going to a small segment of the population.	
3	If we are able to provide food, electricity, etc. to survive, we have to better distribute the wealth. Public services are falling behind. There is a tremendous range (of have's and have-not's).	
5	There is a lot that needs to get done.	
6	When I had my first parish in Rockingham County, there was maybe 1 woman pastor. Now, 75% or more are women.	
3.	That's true across all denominations. (Except Roman Catholic)	
2	What is happening to the males: they are not getting what they need from their fathers. Fathers are not teaching their sons, but rather living through their kids. I've seen a lot of adolescent boys "at sea," more than girls. Parents are very concerned for their boys, much more worried than they are about their girls.	
Fac.	How would you define "at sea"?	
2	Males see adolescence as a time to go wild.	
6	Think of the prison populations. The number of children growing up with mothers only. This must have something to do with how they are growing up.	
1	Children have mostly women teachers	

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
3	In athletics: they are a major big deal. A non-athlete has social/esteem problems today.	
1	Boys care less about their grades; girls care more about their grades. My grandson focuses on sports; his sister focuses on grades. Less is expected on grades for boys than of girls. I sat down with my grandson and pointed out there are not as many job opportunities now as there once were. "This is a serious situation," I said to him. My wife disagrees: "Dream when you're young" is her belief. I say to him, "Knuckle down in order for success; keep your eye on the ball." Boys are in a bad position these days.	
6	A few years from now, men will be holding these discussion sessions. I taught for 10 years in a boys school; I went to an all-male college. It took me forever to overcome that. But in the school I taught in, we addressed these issues (of where adolescent boys were headed, and why).	
Fac.	Was the goal in the boys school to address inequality?	
6	No. They are about development. There is some justification to separate sexes at lower levels, but not at higher levels. There is some benefit to girls (of separation) but definitely not for boys. My wife, however, argues for the benefits of a women's college.	
Fac.	I was a high school teacher. Boys dominated the conversation – always.	
4	Were they taught that way? There is confusion in roles. There is confusion about gender roles. The military taught one way, and yet how to behave in mixed society. In 1995, all men spent some time in the military, and women went to school.	
5	I think women in their 20's and 30's are adopting the attitude that they don't need men.	
6	There are more options than the earlier pressure to get married and have a family – for girls. My daughter sees that women have the option of being a single parent. We are horrified!	

What evidence of *equality* have you encountered in New Hampshire?

3 Politics. New Hampshire Senate (for a time.)
School boards

- 4 Town Councils
- 5 Police chief (Greenland; recently named.)
Engineers

QUESTION # 4: The Post-It Exercise!

Participant	Comment	Note-Taker Observation
All	Items on post-its: Equal opportunity and affirmative action; Equal pay for equal work; wage equality; equal pay for equal jobs; support women in politics; sexual harassment; businesses provide day care for children; more available and payable day care; single mothers; gender discrimination; futuristic social thinking; leadership for women; women should keep their maiden name; helping boys grow up; well-being of families; early childhood education	Three red dots on “Equal opportunity/equal pay” Two red dots on: child care and early childhood education

Closing remarks from participants:

This was very interesting. We had more to say than I thought we would. I learned some things. I want to know the overall results from Listening Sessions all over.

Limitations:

The participants are all well-educated professionals, and 5 of the 6 are retired. They do not represent a cross-section of society. Because they were invited by a woman who is seen as “progressive” in her thinking, and most of them are her friends, the general leanings of the men are apparently quite similar to her political bent.

Facilitator and Note-taker observations and concluding thoughts:

Sometimes there were repetitious comments made in succession, which may have indicated the men were not listening carefully to each other all of the time. They would sometimes talk in a less than coherent order about their ideas, jumping from one thought clearly not related to a prior statement by someone else in the group. However, their enthusiasm for discussing these things grew as the hours went on; most of them had not engaged in a conversation on the topic of gender inequality/equality with anyone in the past. And because of their age, they were aware of changes in their lifetimes regarding gender equity issues. PY)

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