



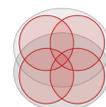
The Women's Fund
of Central Ohio

THE
**PERVASIVE
POWER OF
GENDER
NORMS**

Suppressing Economic Opportunity
for Central Ohio

JUNE 2016

IN COLLABORATION WITH



KIRWAN INSTITUTE
for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

Gender norms are the root of many issues facing women and men in our society. They are implicit or explicit rules, expectations and standards placed on both sexes regarding how they should behave and be treated by society. According to our *Womenomics* research report, one in four women in central Ohio are not economically secure. We believe this problem is caused in part by gender norms and their impact on women's economic self-sufficiency. We wanted to explore this issue and its impact in central Ohio in order to begin the conversation to create positive change.

We collaborated with **The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity** at The Ohio State University, a national expert on implicit bias and the structural factors that restrict access to opportunity. Kirwan has long held a powerful role in drawing attention to, and helping communities devise remedies for these structural disadvantages. Established in 2003, The Kirwan Institute is an applied research institute whose mission is to create a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed. For the past three years Kirwan has focused on uplifting the cognitive and social forces that contribute to racial, ethnic and gender disparity, often unintentionally (implicit biases).

Our intention is that by identifying the underlying causes of women's challenges in achieving economic self-sufficiency, we are better able to identify solutions to the problem that will create equality and empower women and girls to achieve their full potential; as well as an economically secure community as a whole. Please join us and The Kirwan Institute as we further this work, together.

Sincerely,

Nichole Dunn, President and CEO of The Women's Fund of Central Ohio

Sharon Davies, Executive Director, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Gregory H. Williams Chair in Civil Rights & Civil Liberties, Michael E. Moritz College of Law, The Ohio State University.

As a leader of social change, The Women's Fund of Central Ohio is a public foundation committed to advocating for and convening voices to create gender equality and influence. Economic Self-Sufficiency is at the core of our work, and is supported by Lifeskills for Girls, and Leadership for Women. Underpinning this work is the effect and implications of Gender Norms. Our work is guided by our research, which informs our programs and partnerships, grant making, and advocacy efforts; all while growing women's philanthropy to influence change.

The Women's Fund
of Central Ohio



KIRWAN INSTITUTE
for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender norms and implicit bias are root causes of gender disparities in central Ohio and must be challenged and disrupted if we are to see improved economic self-sufficiency, leadership representation, and positive life skills for women and girls.

By **gender norms**, we are referring to the popular and conventional ideas most people have about what it means to “act like” a man or a woman; for example, the pervasive expectation that men are “breadwinners” while women are “caregivers.” We tend to learn them from our experiences in family, peer groups, churches, schools, movies, magazines, and the internet, for example. With persistent use, they come to be taken for granted or thought of as “natural” and “just the way things are.”

By **implicit bias**, we are referring to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Implicit biases may be activated based on identities we perceive in others, such as gender, age, or race and tend to favor our own group, creating “us” and “them” divisions. Implicit biases encompass both attitudes and stereotypes.

Gender norms and implicit biases are mutually reinforcing. Over time, observation of gender norms serves to develop and perpetuate implicit associations, as information reflecting gender norms may be ingrained in the direct and indirect messages that shape individuals’ implicit biases. These processes work together across institutions, people, and time to contract or expand opportunity for women. We also know that these twin forces can harm more than just individual women. They have material and drastic implications for the welfare of families, and for larger society.

AT A GLANCE:

What are Gender Norms?

Gender norms are the popular and conventional ideas most people have about what it means to “act like” a man or a woman. We tend to learn them from our experiences in family, peer groups, churches, schools, movies, magazines, and the internet, for example. With persistent use, they come to be taken for granted or thought of as “natural” and “just the way things are.” Gender norms tend to be narrow and significantly limit the range of possibilities for gender expression.

What is Implicit Bias?

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Implicit biases may be activated based on any number of identities we perceive in others, such as gender, age, or race, and they tend to favor our own group, creating “us” and “them” divisions. Implicit biases encompass both attitudes and stereotypes we may unconsciously hold regarding groups in our society.

REPORT PURPOSE

This report explores the impact of gender norms and implicit biases and outcomes for women and girls in central Ohio along three dimensions: economic self-sufficiency, leadership, and life skills development. We have sought to understand what gives rise to the assumptions, associations, and expectations we place on women and men, and how these assumptions and expectations are perpetuated through our interactions and relationships with one another (via implicit biases). Gaining a clearer understanding of how gender norms are created and perpetuated allows us to strategize around disrupting these norms and mitigating the influence of such biases.

We utilized the following research methods:

- Literature review and collaboration with Riki Wilchins, Executive Director of True Child, an organization that helps donors, policy-makers, and practitioners reconnect race, class and gender through “gender transformative” approaches that challenge rigid gender norms and inequities.
- Analysis of Columbus metropolitan statistical area (MSA)* results from Harvard’s Implicit Association Test: The gender/career IAT shows whether respondents implicitly and explicitly associate women or men with family or career, giving us a snapshot into the implicit and explicit biases held by Columbus MSA residents.
- Distribution of central Ohio Gender Norms Survey: In order to gain a broader perspective into local gender norms, we conducted a survey of 919 central Ohio residents aged 9 and up.
- Consultation with Gender Norms and Bias Advisory Committee.
- Focus groups: We conducted 13 focus groups at five sites throughout the Columbus MSA, identifying the most frequent narratives that surfaced through the engagements.
- World cafés: Five world cafés were conducted at five separate sites throughout the Columbus MSA. World Café engagements are designed to allow an organization or group to effectively surface the knowledge of the group through structured small-group conversations and large-group reflection.

KEY FINDINGS

The expansion of opportunity for women was a tremendous civil rights victory of the 20th century. Despite gains in employment, education, and leadership positions, systemic and pervasive disparities still continue to harm the economic empowerment of women nationally and in our central Ohio community in the 21st century. Here, we share the key findings for economic self-sufficiency, leadership, and life skills development for women and girls in central Ohio.

Economic self-sufficiency:

In some respects, central Ohio women have advanced their position in our local economy:

- Women- owned businesses in Franklin county grew by 29% from 2007–2012

* As defined by the census, a metropolitan area consists of one or more neighboring municipality, situated around a core with a population of at least 100,000 (where at least 50,000 of which live in the core).The counties in the Columbus MSA include: Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Hocking, Licking, Madison, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, and Union.

- In Franklin County more than 40,000 female-owned businesses in 2012 represented 39% of all business ownership

However, the gender pay gap and economic insecurity present challenges for women to translate higher educational attainment into opportunity, for themselves and their families. For example, women living below the poverty line have slightly higher educational attainment than men, yet they still have higher overall poverty rates. Consider:

- In Ohio, women earned just \$0.78 for every \$1 men earned¹
- Hispanic women earn 89 cents on the dollar when compared to Hispanic men and just 54 cents on the dollar when compared to white men.² Similarly, African American women earn 90 cents on the dollar when compared to African American men and 63 cents on the dollar compared to white men.³
- 27% of female heads of household are considered economically insecure in central Ohio.

From our engagements, we learned that women felt pressure to make it in male-dominated fields, and that economic differences place them at a disadvantage in the household.

Leadership:

In Ohio, we see evidence of systemic underrepresentation across the board: in public office, nonprofit, and corporate environments. For example:

- 1 in 6 elected statewide executives is a woman
- 10 of 53 cities (populations greater than 30,000) have female mayors
- 27 out of 99 Ohio House representatives, and 3 out of 16 Ohio Congressional representatives, are women
- 1 in 10 CEO and Executive Board positions are held by women

Through our engagements we learned that women felt the need to adjust to male peer requests in the workplace, and that being collaborative, accommodating, or non-assertive were seen as weaknesses of female leadership.

Life skills development

Schools are important sites of imparting and enforcing traditional gender norms. With the onset of adolescence, particularly during the “gender intensification” period of ages 10–14, youth are acutely aware of prevailing gender norms and actively seek to integrate them into their own lives and behavior. However, this can also be a period of significant trauma:

- A national study of 600 girls aged 12–18, 52% had experienced academic sexism, 76% had experienced athletic sexism, and 90% had experienced some form of sexual harassment.⁵
- Gendered expectations result in disparate educational opportunities, which in turn result in diverging career paths for many women versus men. Studies suggest rigid feminine gender norms also are pushing girls away from the emerging field of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), which is expected to generate a disproportionate share of the high-paying, high-advancement jobs for the 21st century.

- Columbus MSA IAT results showed that women associate women with family and men with careers more so than did men.

Thus, many young girls may not be considered by their mothers or female teachers, let alone their fathers or male teachers, when certain opportunities arise that could help them obtain skills they might need to be successful in what is stereotypically considered to be a male-dominated field. During our engagements, many local experts pointed out that girls and women need to “prove themselves” before being viewed as leaders, while for boys and men leadership is often assumed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender norms influence all aspects of our lives in ways explicit and implicit. In central Ohio, as elsewhere, the perpetuation of gender norms has significant material and social impacts on the economic status and leadership achievement of women and girls. Because gender norms are socially constructed and perpetuated, these influences begin with the first social interactions young children experience and continue to be reinforced throughout their lives through social interactions, exposure to the media, and by parents, teachers, and other figures imagined to possess authority. Our findings suggest that these norms are deeply ingrained in the central Ohio community. To challenge and replace gender norms to open opportunity for women and girls, will require a community effort involving employers, schools, families, institutions and public policy. Several actions provide an opportunity to create an economically secure community for women and girls in central Ohio. We must work together to achieve the following goals:

- Challenge and disrupt the influence of gender norms and implicit bias. Develop *diversity and inclusion* initiatives or programs, and implicit bias and gender norm trainings, especially at the sites where we spend most of our time—in the classroom and in the workplace.
- Eliminate the gender-based pay gap and support a living wage in central Ohio. Build awareness that wage discrimination exists in central Ohio, and advocate for more corporations in our community to ensure a livable wage and family-friendly workplace policies that benefit women *and* men.
- Increase the number of women in political office and corporate executive positions in central Ohio by creating leadership pipelines. Many corporations in our community support diverse leadership—we should lift them up as exemplars for others to follow. Central Ohio also has a substantial number of women entrepreneurs; we should continue to develop programming to tap into this great resource through mentorship opportunities and other leadership development programming for girls and women at all stages of their educational/career paths.
- Engage men and boys in the conversation around gender norms and gender bias. Many programs in our community explore the ways implicit and explicit biases impact men and boys of color, raising their awareness of these challenges and devising solutions. However, these programs do not address how men and boys may be contributing to the perpetuation of gender norms and their own implicit biases in this regard, a missed opportunity. Including such training in these programs is one method for engaging men and boys in the conversation.

6.4 GENDER NORMS AND BIAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

We consulted with an advisory committee that included 19 local experts. We met on four occasions in September and October of 2015. During these meetings the advisory committee provided feedback on the research questions, survey questions, and engagement materials. In addition, we interviewed a total of 19 local experts, many of whom were members of the advisory committee who drew on their experience and research to provide perspectives on how gender norms are produced, internalized, and perpetuated in central Ohio. The following individuals and organizations made up the Advisory Committee:

Suzanne Roberts, Women Generating

Angela Stewart, Maryhaven

Jess Sparks, Girls on the Run

Maria Stockard, Columbus City Schools

Amy Hawthorne, HelpLine of Delaware & Morrow Counties

Meredith Kits, New Directions

Caroline Woliver, New Directions

Alesia Gillison, Columbus City Schools

Joyce Ray, Columbus Foundation

Sue Wismar, SARNO

Lauren Strand, Ohio State, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Jill Yavorsky, Ohio State, Department of Sociology

Haley Swenson, Ohio State, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Wendy Smooth, Ohio State, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Yolanda Zepeda, Ohio State, Office of Diversity and Inclusion

6.5 FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted 13 focus groups at five sites throughout the Columbus MSA. Each focus group was recorded and the audio was analyzed in NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software tool that enables users to code both audio and transcripts and run various other analyses on the materials. The coded audio was then transcribed and analyzed further for themes. The themes identified were the most frequent narratives that surfaced through the engagements and are discussed in subsequent sections of this report in addition to the detailed summary of the focus groups in the appendix.



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