

Module 4 Exercise Handout

What does economic sexism look like, and how can we seek equity for all?

I. WHAT ARE THE BASICS THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SEX AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE AND BROADER ECONOMY? (15 MINUTES)

“Sex discrimination involves treating someone ... unfavorably because of that person’s sex Sex discrimination also can involve treating someone less favorably because of his or her connection with an organization or group that is generally associated with people of a certain sex. Discrimination against an individual because of gender identity, including transgender status, or because of sexual orientation is discrimination because of sex in violation of Title VII.*(Reference to federal education laws)*

**(Read and select your answer.)*

1. How much income will an individual caregiver lose over the course of their lifetime due to lost wages and benefits? a. \$274,000.00 b. \$164,000.00 c. \$72,000.00 d. \$325,000.00
2. What percentage of minimum-wage earners are women? a. 66% b. 50% c. 35% d. 46%
3. What percentage of transgender individuals reported an adverse job outcome (being fired or denied a promotion) because of being transgender? a. 25% b. 35% c.18% d. 47%

STATISTIC - “Women spend about four hours a day on unpaid work, while men spend about two hours and a half.”⁸

(Divide into small groups, read one of these stories and discuss

Geri’s story: An underemployed and underpaid caregiver

I am 52 years old, and I work 30 hours a week at a large retail store. I

have a 10-year-old daughter. A year ago my mother fell and sustained an injury that prevented her from caring for herself, so I cut my hours to part-time to help her. When I worked full-time, I was paid an hourly wage that covered our family expenses. I earned less than my male co-workers, but I did get health insurance for myself and my daughter. I lost our health insurance when I changed to part-time work.

My brother helps our mother too. But he doesn't think cooking and cleaning are a man's work. So I spend more time caring for my mom than my brother does. I devote about 15 hours a week to helping my mom. If I could get compensated – even a little – for assisting my mother, it would help me feel like I wasn't so on the edge financially. And I could put some money away for my daughter's education.

Reflect on Geri's story: What assumptions about men, women and work do you hear in Geri's story? What is your reaction to her brother's belief that some duties are "women's work," and that women are better caregivers than men? How might your faith lead you to be a neighbor and act for justice for Geri?

Meg's story: Gender and sex discrimination at work

I am 29 years old, and I work full-time at a computer consulting company that has about 40 full-time employees. I get along with most of my co-workers, and I enjoy the technical part of my work. But there is one thing I don't like about my job. The company is really family centered. And by 'family' the owners mean

a straight, married, heterosexual family with children. We have family-friendly parties at Christmas and the Fourth of July. But my partner, Amy, isn't welcome. She attended the Christmas party once, and some of the people I worked with practically refused to talk with her. They don't view my family as the right kind of family. I've stopped attending these "family" parties.

This may hurt me professionally. My employers also host family nights at sporting events. Two years ago, I did not attend a family night at a baseball game. I did not want to go without Amy, and she did not want to deal with my co-workers. Within 10 days, another employee from my

division was promoted even though she has much less experience and technical skills than I do. She attended the baseball game with her family. I can't help but wonder if part of the reason that she got promoted instead of me is that she is straight, married and has kids.

Reflect on Meg's story: Where did you sense gender discrimination in Meg's story? How did Meg feel about the way Amy was treated by Meg's co-workers? If you were Meg's co-worker, what could you do to be a neighbor to Meg and support her at work?

What does justice look like? "Caring, serving, keeping, loving and living by wisdom – these translate into justice in political, economic, social and environmental relationships. Justice—in these relations means honoring the integrity of creation and striving for fairness in the human family. It is in hope of God's promised fulfillment that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action." (From the ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation*)⁹

II. HOW ARE SEXISM AND GENDER AND SEX DISCRIMINATION EXPRESSIONS OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SIN? (10 MINUTES)

**(Divide your group into small groups. The groups read the following paragraphs aloud and discuss one of the reflection questions.)*

In our current economic context, Christians must speak up and call sexism and gender and sex discrimination what they are – sin. While sin occurs—in our relationship with God, it also arises in creation when we sin against one another. Sexism and gender and sex discrimination are expressions of personal sin. When we think that others are of less value than we are because of their sex or gender, or when we believe that others do not bear God's image in the same way because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, we sin. We sin against the individual – who is the gift. And we sin against God – who is the giver.

In addition, sexism and gender and sex discrimination are also social or structural sin. This occurs when the very structures, rules, and policies of companies, institutions and communities discriminate against groups—of people and individuals. Unfortunately, we often knowingly and unknowingly participate in these sinful structures. For example, we

may work for, shop at, or invest in companies and institutions that have sexist or discriminatory policies and labor practices. In addition, our individual sexist beliefs may stop us from seeing structural sins.

The leadership gap and the wage gap between men and women is widely documented. But what about in the church? Perhaps sexist personal beliefs about women, work, men and leadership are supporting structural policies about education, employment and compensation that curtail economic well-being and make it difficult for women to assume leadership positions in the ELCA.

Reflection questions on the sins of sexism and gender discrimination

- 1. Who does the household chores where you live?** Who does which chores in your household? Are household tasks based on any sex or gender stereotypes? Do you want to make any changes to the way these tasks are assigned? “American girls spend about two hours on chores a week more than boys, and are 15 percent less likely to be paid for them.”¹⁵
- 2. Think about where you work.** What percentage of the employees at your work are male or female? Is there an equal balance of men and women in leadership? What do you notice about how individuals are treated in terms of gender and sex at your workplace? How are LGBTQ individuals treated where you work?
- 3. Consider clergy inequity.** Why do you think that women who are clergy of all denominations still earn so much less than men who are clergy? Why did the ELCA have only nine bishops who are women out of a total of sixty-five in 2015? Where do you see personal or structural sin affecting clergy compensation or leadership equity?

Statistics

- “New national data reveals that women clergy earn 76 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy.”¹⁰

- Within the ELCA, women clergy on average earn 86 cents for each

dollar earned by male clergy.¹¹

- "If the pace of change in the annual-earnings ratio continues at the same rate as it has since 1960, it will take another 45 years, until 2059, for men and women to reach parity."¹⁴

- The gender pay gap: A recent report shows that – compared to what a white, male worker earns

– Hispanic women earn 54 percent, African American women earn 64 percent, American Indian women earn 59 percent and Asian American women earn 90 percent.¹⁵

- "In 2009 ... women one year out of college who were working full time were paid, on average, just 82 percent of what their male peers were paid."¹³

Reflection questions on vocation: (If you have time.)

1. Ask people to pair off and discuss what they view as their gifts or talents and how they use these gifts in the world to serve the neighbor.
2. Discuss how you would feel if someone in authority said you could not pursue your vocation (or your career) because of the assumptions that they made about you as an individual or as a member of a particular group.