

Module 3 – The 5 Areas of System and Cultural Control of Women

From pages 52-53 Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement

Individuals, systems and our culture often **objectify** the bodies of women and girls by holding them to unrealistic expectations of beauty, often associated with thin, white women. The results of this can be easily seen in the numbers of young women suffering from eating disorders, depression, body cutting, or preoccupation with perceived flaws. For women of color, the result can be the sometimes harmful skin-whitening and hair-straightening chemical processes.

Individuals systems and our culture often **police** the bodies of women and girls by creating shame around female sexuality. One concrete way we see evidence of this is in the rising number of instances in which ex-partners expose risqué photos or videos of their ex on-line, using shame to get revenge. This is called revenge porn or non-consensual porn. 90% of the victims are women.

Individuals, systems and our culture often **politicize** the bodies of women and girls by linking cultural and political controversy over abortion to all forms of reproductive health care, including contraception, access to necessary reproductive health care, and access to information about bodies.

Laws that place major restrictions on clinics that provide abortions result in burdens for women trying to obtain reproductive health care. This especially affects women with limited incomes.

Individuals, systems and our culture often **dominate** the bodies of women, girls and non-conforming people through gender-based violence or the threat of violence. While violence is perpetuated by individuals and sometimes against men and boys as well, gender-based violence functions to silence, shame, violate, exploit and terrify its victims, mostly women and girls.

Gender-based violence includes but is not limited to sexual harassment, sexual and intimate partner abuse, stalking, assault, rape, trafficking, and murder.

Individuals, systems and our culture often **marginalize** the bodies of people who do not conform to binary gender identities or biology, especially transgender people and intersex people (those whose sexual anatomy doesn't easily fit into the typically understood categories of male or female).

As a result of this marginalization, transgender people, especially people of color, are