

Beauty, Objectification, Violence: Is there a connection?

A Proposal for the Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry

PART B: Project Description

1. Abstract

As images of beauty are bombarding woman and men every day, a multi-billion dollar economy is continually building on our insecurities about the size, shape and appearance of our bodies. It is not surprising then that these industries spend millions of dollars promoting beauty archetypes that are almost impossible to achieve. While women, especially, have achieved greater power and freedom over the past three decades, they are increasingly encouraged to discipline their bodies through diet and exercise to conform to the “standard” ideals of culturally suggested beauty. Ultimately, women and men who succumb to these expectations are more likely to move towards depression, low self-esteem, and little to no self-worth due to the underlying suggestion of objectification.

Objectification is dehumanization. To view or treat someone as an object, or a compilation of parts to be judged and consumed, is to dehumanize that person. The presence of female objectification in media and public settings is inescapable. Nearly nude, thin-yet-curveous, photo shopped body ideals are used to sell absolutely everything (including the promise of happiness, health, and desirability) to girls and women who will spend their lives, and their money, trying to attain such ideals. The same can be said for men; they often endure plastic surgery trying to obtain greater pectoral, buttocks, and calf muscles. When someone lives their life in a constant state of physical body-monitoring, he/she can begin to forfeit some of their own humanity. They can become passive individuals, merely moving from one day to the next concerned with the judgment of others rather than with a primary purpose of experiencing life for themselves by make personal choices.

Our culture seems to be becoming more comfortable viewing the human form as merely an object. Reports of rape and other acts of violence towards a person are becoming more prominent on television and social media. Is there a link between cultural beauty standards and acts of violence against the human body?