

From the article **'Under the knife, Under the Sun'**

by RAKEL SOSA.

"Beauty in Venezuela has become a social value that often defines success or failure, personally and professionally. It is a value that sits atop the many other conventions demarcating the role of the woman in a society that has yet to accept various key feminist principles.

Torn between racism and machismo, many women regard beauty as an efficient way to leap upwards through the social ranks and often the only way to live.

The cult of beauty in Venezuela explains the country's huge boom in cosmetic surgery over the past decade. There are no official figures, but the reality is probably similar to that described by the American Association of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAPRS), which reports that the number of people seeking cosmetic surgery has risen by 60 percent in the past two years. Between 1992 and 1998, the association says, the most popular operations were liposculpture (up 264 percent), breast enlargement through implants (up 306 percent), face lifts and nose jobs."