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# Police and gendered labor performances: hypermasculinity and policing as a masculine function

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## Abstract

This article argues that despite the institutional effort made by Rio de Janeiro's Military Police (PMERJ) to transform its public image by promoting the work of female officers, workplace relationships based on traditional understandings of gender roles continue to hinder women's potential to thrive as police officers. Evidence for this claim is drawn from the existing literature, as referenced in the article, and a one-year ethnographic study conducted in 2014-2015 accompanying a Pacifying Police Unit (UPP), which we refer to by the pseudonym 'Morro Santo.'

**Keywords:** Hypermasculinity; Policing; Gender Relations; Workplace Relations.

# Performances de gênero no trabalho policial: hipermasculinidade e policiamento como função masculina

## Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo mostrar evidências de que apesar dos esforços institucionais da Polícia Militar do Rio de Janeiro (PMERJ) para transformar sua imagem pública através da divulgação do trabalho de policiais femininas, relações profissionais baseadas em entendimentos tradicionais das funções de gênero impedem que mulheres alcancem todo seu potencial profissional como policiais. As evidências utilizadas baseiam-se na literatura citada e em uma imersão etnográfica de um ano em 2014-2015, em uma Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP), a qual nos referimos pelo pseudônimo 'Morro Santo'.

**Palavras-chave:** Hipermasculinidade; Policiamento; Relações de Gênero; Relações Profissionais.

# Police and gendered labor performances: hypermasculinity and policing as a masculine function

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## Introduction

Based on a collaborative effort that draws from previous studies by Zaluar (1985, 1994, 2004 and 2016) and from ethnographic fieldwork (conducted during the years of 2014-2015 with a 'Pacifying Police Unit' or UPP in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), this article explores some of the challenges to the success of 'community' or 'proximity' policing initiatives posed by gender relations and their unequal power-distribution outcomes.

The ethnographic component of this article does not dismiss other studies. Rather than assuming an authoritative position, it seeks to inform the arguments of other authors with rich evidence collected from the case study in question. We present our findings based mainly on our fieldwork experience, considering the vast existing literature on policing and violence in Rio de Janeiro, but without taking any of these sources to be the 'absolute truth' concerning the polemical public security debate. Recognizing that authoritative arguments did not prove successful even for Franz Boas, Malinowski or Radcliffe-Brown, anthropology's founding fathers, and neither have master ethnographies that became the 'truth of the field,' we present both past and current findings, conscious of the limitations of the case-study method (Crapanzano 1992: 6-9; Clifford 1988: 21-54; Fox 1991: 5-8), yet respectful of 'our' natives' own points of view. Ethnographic data and theoretical concepts are always open to discussion; hence there is no such thing as 'the truthful ethnography' or the 'correct theoretical concept.' Definitions of concepts and their connotations are perpetually under debate. Sometimes problems arise from the use of a new term to signify a meaning already expressed by a different signifier; or, alternatively, conflicts about the meaning of a single word are set off, developing a conflictive yet bare semantic field.

In this article, our main referent for interpreting police action will be 'ethos' or logic in action (Paixão 1982), not to be confused with bureaucratic institutional norms, or rules tied to a specific policy with regards to the recommended attitudes of police officers when patrolling the streets. Moreover, we find it more appropriate to speak of 'cross-cutting moralities' (Muniz & Albernaz 2015) when it comes to the police, since the moral or practical claims (Boltanski 2011) adopted by officers themselves in the course of their daily activities are highly diverse.

In Brazil, we can identify two main approaches to security policies, which operate as opposites within the mixed array of policies implemented on the ground. One is based on an earlier scholarly diagnosis of a definite and single form of state, and a policing model pursuing an outdated opposition to citizenship rights. The other is more concerned with the Brazilian heterogeneous state formation and internally differentiated institutions, social classes and civil associations. Favelas, for instance, vary greatly in terms of their size, geographic location, and surrounding areas; the socioeconomic characteristics of their residents; their associations; and their economic, cultural and political ties with the city. Within each favela too there is considerable social diversity with variations in terms of gender, age, religion, income, education, occupations and even residents' origins, with most favelas now largely composed by migrants from other Brazilian states, especially from impoverished Northeastern region. In other words, their economic potentialities differ substantially when it comes to offering assistance to the poor and vulnerable

youths living in these areas, and to consolidating public services and projects important to the overall well-being of residents. The UPP<sup>1</sup> project should be analyzed from this latter perspective, taking into account not only surveys and official statistics on criminality but also the ideas and emotions that favela dwellers have developed over the course of the application of this new security policy – initiated in 2008 in one favela and extended to 38 favelas by 2014.

For our present discussion of masculinity, we have turned to empirical data collected during twelve months of immersion in the field, not just a few punctual interviews. At an international level over the past decades, numerous scholars have discussed women's presence in police organizations and the challenges they face (Balkin 1988; Martin & Jurik 1996; Prokos & Padavic 2002, Garcia 2003, Prenzler 2015, among others). In Brazil, more recently, with a rising number of women joining police forces, attention has turned to their experiences and potential to transform policing practices. Calazans (2004), for instance, has reflected on the 'cultural transformation' of women in the military police of Rio Grande do Sul, while Cappelle and Melo (2010), based on interviews with women in the military police of Minas Gerais, have assessed everyday manifestations of existing power relations stemming from gender differences. Moreover, Soares & Musumeci's (2005) extensive national survey canvassed data on the general profile of female officers. The authors' findings point to the increasing number of women in the military police forces around the country, their higher educational background compared to their male counterparts, and their frequent assignment to administrative functions.

Although the idea of an enduring habitus or masculinity ethos prevalent in police forces has yet to be thoroughly studied in Brazil, other important issues related to militaristic and 'warrior' dispositions have been addressed in studies focusing on police discourse (Sirimarco 2013), or police action in favelas as a violent form of governability aimed at simply exterminating favela-dwellers or *favelados* (Farias 2014). The aforementioned studies, however, given their date, objective and scope, do not capture nuances and contradictions of more recent institutional efforts to increase the presence of female officers in the military police, particularly in Rio de Janeiro. Such active endeavors have been particularly evident in the UPP program. Understood as an innovative attempt to replace the previous security policy, based on violent police incursions into favelas, in favor of a policy that would promote the permanent presence of police forces within favelas, operating under the precepts of community policing, this program has generated intense political, ideological and theoretical debate.

Idealizers of the UPP program have invested heavily in advertising its female faces in virtually all officially published materials (the program's website, books, promotional calendars, posters and videos).<sup>2</sup> However, as we will substantiate with field evidence, while the UPP initiative hoped to change the 'front-stage' presentation of police work, overemphasizing female officers' presence, police ethos and practical actions remain impregnated with the hypermasculine logic of violence, revanchism, and gender inequality. In this context, we use the first part of the article to briefly describe the context in which the UPP program was implemented.

Subsequently, we examine gender interactions within one particular police unit – our case study, fictitiously called Morro Santo to preserve the anonymity of participants. Our discussion in this article finds theoretical grounding in Zaluar' (2004) discussion of violence and hypermasculinity, and Butler's (1993) notion of 'gender performance.' Using ideas developed by both authors, we examine how masculinity,

1 Reference to the Portuguese acronym for 'Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora,' or 'Police Pacification Unit.' Since 'Pacification Program' became widely known as simply 'UPP,' we shall use this abbreviation hereafter.

2 See: [www.upprj.com](http://www.upprj.com) (official website). Referenced materials include official pictures, posters and calendars produced during the years of 2013, 2014 and 2015. In the 2014 official calendar, the effort to focus on female officers is particularly evident: each month of the year is accompanied by a photo of a UPP building or UPP police officers interacting with residents. Not a single male officer can be seen in any of the twelve pictures.

or better still ‘hegemonic masculinity’<sup>3</sup> (Connell 1995) poses additional challenges to the UPP initiative by hindering both police-community interactions and successful workplace relations.

Since earlier studies have not focused on the manhood ethos, that is, aspects that we consider important for any thorough interpretation of the problems faced by the realization of the UPP project – we have chosen to employ our own research data, collected over the course of long-term studies (cited below) rather than merely a few interviews. Although one could argue that masculinity and traditional understandings of gender roles operate in the military police simply by emulating norms that exist beyond the organizational culture of the police – that is, norms that are deeply embedded in the wider social fabric – we believe that police organizations are not merely a microcosm of society at large. Police organizations have their own distinctive features when it comes to selecting and reproducing certain social practices. Nevertheless, we take organizational cultures, or sets of practices, to be processual, historical and relational systems, not crystalized structures or closed systems that do not allow for conflicts, diversities or changes. On the contrary, similarly to what other studies have shown (Muniz & Albernaz 2015; Sinhoretto 2014), we emphasize that conflicts, debates, processes and backlashes mark virtually all attempts to alter public policies.

Based on our ethnographic data and personal experiences in favelas, we posit that the limited outcomes and backlashes of the UPP initiative are best understood when the police’s masculine ‘warrior ethos’ is taken into account. This police-focused perspective however, should not underestimate the crucial role played in the process by thirty years of drug traffickers’ turf war in numerous favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Zaluar 2010). Undoubtedly, the UPP program’s failures and backlashes also stem from the difficulties in dismantling long-established drug organizations and their ever-changing leaders and participants. Moreover, the program’s very design has its limitations, both in theory and practice. Our focus on gender relations and masculinity is intended to complement rather than replace other recent analyses of Rio de Janeiro’s pacification program and its multiple challenges, as discussed by Zaluar (2016), Cardoso (2016), Teixeira (2017), and Muniz & Mello (2015), among others.

Our analysis and interpretations draw from Elias’s (1990) ideas concerning the formation and changes to the masculine ethos and what he called the ‘first’ and ‘second natures’, later followed by Wouters (2011) who identified a ‘third nature’. In Elias’s formulation, *habitus* or *ethos* refers to subjective formations constituted through the long-term sedimentation of everyday habits, such as personal hygiene, how to eat properly, sit, walk, compete or address others. In short, labels and codes of what are considered ‘good manners’ at a certain place, in a certain time. In this sense, Elias called the lack of control of basic emotions ‘the first nature’, constitutive of the ‘warrior ethos’, referring to the masculine violence and power that other sociologists have called ‘hypermasculinity’ (Connell 1995). After being socially established through a ‘civilizing process’, the subjective formation of these individuals gives rise to their ‘second nature’, which is not only socially constructed, but also capable of controlling the ‘first nature’. Despite its social construction, this ‘second nature’ does not preclude individual differences and eventual regressions. According to Wouters (2004), the third nature is a form of self-control that allows for dialogue between repressed emotions and social etiquette, requiring suppleness, a combination of firmness and flexibility, candor and tact. This ‘third-nature’, a conversion of both social and psychic processes, involves mastery over impulses and the ability to control emotions in public, negotiating with other agents what is acceptable in each situation lived. For Wouters, this evolved from the ‘second-nature’, that is, an almost automatic, conscience-dominated mode of formalizing manners and disciplining the body, maintaining control of ‘dangerous’ emotions and impulses (including violence and sexual desires). In this sense,

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3 By describing a patriarchal understanding of masculinity as ‘hegemonic masculinity’, we recognize that alternative masculinities exist and have been increasingly able to thrive and gain acceptance in the social and political forum.

the 'third-nature' represents an 'emancipation of emotions', the acceptance of feelings, the expansion of mutual-identification and increasing informalization. The persisting 'warrior ethos' among policemen can be considered a disposition that contradicts contemporary forms of 'civilized interactions'.

Thus, although the meaning of 'being a man' seems to be undergoing dramatic change in the contemporary western world, these transformations within police institutions seem to unfold at a slower pace, aggravating community-police conflicts and contributing to the multiple dysfunctionalities of the UPP program. Following Wouter's discussion of a 'third nature' and an overview of the UPP program and its pressing challenges, as mentioned above, we shall discuss five aspects of gender relations within a military police unit: i) the history of violence and male warrior ethos; ii) physical strength (street work versus office work); iii) courtship and romantic workplace relationships, iv) sexual prowess. These five topics will illustrate how traditional forms of understanding and 'performing masculinity' contribute to the UPP program's failures and backlashes, feeding into violent 'masculine' forms of ostensive policing, while generating behavioral patterns that undervalue and disempower women in general, and female officers in particular.

### **Traffickers, Pacifying Police Units and Hypermasculinity**

When the UPP program was launched, a three-decade history of violent criminal activities and turf wars had already been established inside favelas targeted for 'pacification.' Since the 1980s, drug trafficking had created war-like conditions in numerous Brazilian municipalities, irrespective of regional differences between cities and districts. In Rio de Janeiro, although not completely coordinated by a mafia-like hierarchy, the drug trade established an efficient horizontal organization. These 'commandos,' as the drug-trafficking gangs are known, built geographically and hierarchically defined set-ups, which included central points of coordination (mostly inside prisons), widespread points of sale, and extensive networks based on horizontal reciprocity, despite their fragile relationships of trust and loyalty. Unlike the Italian-American or *Cosa Nostra* mafias,<sup>4</sup> these drug-trafficking organizations never had the stable ties of loyalty that exist among people related by ritual kinship or blood, conducting more 'controllable' illegal businesses that do not include drug trafficking (Zaluar 2010: 17).

Gang warfare began in the early 1980s in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, sometimes involving three or four traffickers' factions disputing control over territories (Zaluar 1994). This state of affairs grew systemic as it also began to involve extensive and intricate networks of arms and drugs suppliers, rarely investigated or properly contained by the Brazilian justice system. One of the main negative effects of the local 'War on Drugs' policy was that it engaged the police mostly against the retail trade run by poorer and lower-class dealers, but seldom against wholesale traders, usually from upper social strata.<sup>5</sup>

Firearms possession, a feature of drug dealers since the implementation of the 'War on Drugs' at the end of the 1970s, is a corollary of the long-established 'war logic' initiated by robbers and thieves who discovered that drug dealing could be a much more lucrative business as routes of cocaine distribution to Europe and other continents begun to open up across the Brazilian territory. In the country's capital cities, the high prices of cocaine made it a more valuable commodity than gold. Soon after, an arms race between dealers' gangs was used as a strategy to try to maintain rival gangs distant from their drug outlets. This arms race and the escalating violence also changed the informal rules of conviviality among neighbors inside

<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it is noticeable that drug trafficking can disrupt even stable organizations like *Cosa Nostra*, the reason for banning it as acceptable business, and maintaining *Camorra* as the most violent mafia-like corporation in Italy.

<sup>5</sup> After a search for books and articles on judicial processes related to illegal drugs possession or trafficking, we could only find one article (Zaluar & Ribeiro 1995), one thesis (Nascimento 2000) and one book (Costa Ribeiro 1995), which presented some data on racial discrimination concerning drug related crimes, albeit concluding that a private lawyer instead of an always overworked public defense lawyer had a greater impact on judicial decisions.

favelas, gradually establishing a set of unwritten rules beneficial to gang members and later on to faction's members, although objectionable to most workers who had been living in these communities since their inception, marking a clear divide between unarmed workers and armed criminals (Zaluar 1985; Cardoso 2016). Nevertheless, police officers who dealt with favela dwellers did not always acknowledge this division and mistrusted local residents, perceiving them as possible or potential criminals.

Meanwhile, the widespread circulation of guns fostered an ethos of 'hypermasculinity' or 'warrior ethos' that lead men to armed confrontations as a way of addressing different kinds of conflicts, which significantly increased violent death rates (Elias & Dunning 1993; Zaluar 2004). On one hand, guns became a normalized way of guaranteeing the traffickers' rule over a certain territory, settling debts, avenging crimes against locals, avoiding competition and threatening possible witnesses. High concentrations of 'powerful' armed traffickers in favelas created violent aspirational models for residents, particularly male youths. On the other hand, for the police, guns also became a day-to-day instrument for keeping traffickers geographically contained, and for arresting or killing them during armed confrontations. This violent reality has also promoted the 'warrior ethos' of police officers trained to suppress the illegal drug market. Thus, the destructive social configuration labelled the 'warrior ethos' or 'hypermasculinity' became a common trait of both armed drug dealers, transformed into 'traffic soldiers' (Zaluar 2000), and military policemen, turned into 'police warriors.'

### **New Program, Continuing Practices**

Police territorial occupation of favelas as part of the UPP program spurred a change in operational style among drug dealers: if they could previously run their business and display firearms freely, now they were forced to hide their guns and sell drugs as discretely as possible, especially in the favelas once considered bastions of the traffickers' factions, where they now had less scope for action but continuous disposition to confront the police. Such a change in style had other important symbolic and political consequences, since it struck at their 'hypermasculinity', formerly displayed with automatic weapons, jewelry, fancy cars, clothes, and other objects of conspicuous consumption as a way of affirming their power over favela residents (Zaluar 1994).

After the installation of UPP units, funk balls – a youth cultural activity in favelas, mostly financed by traffickers (who sell large quantities of drugs during these events) – were restricted in an effort to curb their noise levels, duration and neighborhood disturbance. The organization of such balls and other parties are now subject to permission from the local police commander. This created a new zone of conflicts between local youths and police officers in favelas dominated by the faction that were the target for the new policy. As far as drug dealers are concerned, conflicts with the police grew in scope, since they lost not only dominium over the favela territory, but also the profits from drug trafficking, and, perhaps worse, symbolic power over favela dwellers.

In the absence of heavily gun-dominated territories, favela residents could finally come and go freely, and visit friends or relatives inside 'enemy' favelas.<sup>6</sup> Accusations of duplicity or disloyalty towards the favela 'owner' no longer developed into trafficker 'courts' and punishments, as seen in the past. Vehicles, including those not previously allowed to enter the favela to deliver necessary goods or take ill residents to hospitals, could at last come in and out. Tourists could visit restaurants and pubs, travel on the chairlifts that link some favelas to the *asfalto* ('asphalt'),<sup>7</sup> and even stay at newly developed hostels or residences built to rent.

<sup>6</sup> In the past, local 'owners' of the drug trade would prohibit the entrance and circulation of residents from 'enemy' territories.

<sup>7</sup> The words 'hill' and 'asphalt' are commonly used in Rio de Janeiro in reference to favelas (since many of them are located on the city's hills), and the contrasting regular city, where there's 'asphalt'.

But all these positive outcomes were and remain constantly threatened by the dilemmas, challenges and double function of the UPP units inside favelas: establishing closer relations and protecting residents, while arresting drug dealers and drug users.

Without a doubt, conflicts and tensions between residents and police officers continued – albeit at differing levels of intensity, depending on how negotiations with the local UPP commander went, especially those involving youngsters and the funk balls.

One persistent problem is that, even after UPP units ‘occupied’ favela territories, some traffickers remained, most of them armed, and residents’ fears did not completely recede. Favela residents remain apprehensive that traffickers could regain control of the *morro* (‘hill’) and punish those who have collaborated with UPP officers. Furthermore, the program failed to establish a clear policy to address drug dealing, and on many occasions, local police engage in violent repression and corruption, including bribes for turning a blind eye to the illicit drug trade. In some favelas, where the trafficking faction had been particularly powerful and violent, skirmishes with the policemen increased after they were blamed for the death of a resident whose body was never found.<sup>8</sup>

Social movements and some media channels (created in the aftermath of this episode of police violence and malpractice) launched persuasive campaigns that put into question the legitimacy of the UPP program. It soon became clear that UPP officers, though almost all new recruits, were repeating the same behavior as the previous officers, reactive, acting out of fear, continuing to ‘hunt down criminals,’ chasing after local women or coercively conducting biased searches. As a result, neighbors begun to watch whenever policemen stopped and searched a young worker or a student to ensure that they would not be beaten, arrested or, worse, go missing (Zaluar 2016).

Moreover, some UPP officers, despite being trained in the precepts of community policing, still thought of controlling criminals and punishing offenses as their most important task. Residents can easily identify those officers who go beyond their expected conduct since they hoped that the new program would result in the prevention of violence in more personalized terms, with more communication and negotiation between the community and the police. Favela residents define community (or the parochial sphere, since they consider community to be founded on personal relationships) as an extension of private space, where locals and police officers could get to know each other and establish informal relationships. Another question is the meaning of ‘proximity’ when it comes to policing tactics: sometimes knowing locals by name, talking to them as equals and listening to their suggestions is as important as proclaiming the defense of civil rights and the public space. For residents, personal relationships should be established and informal rules clearly defined, so they know how to proceed with their daily routines and activities, especially those related to leisure and pleasure. On one hand, for police officers, crimes, and the need to affirm their authority, are the most pressing concerns. Again, an impersonal, hierarchical and more distant way of approaching community-police relations. For residents, on the other hand, UPP officers should have lower turnovers and invest in establishing lasting relationships with them (Zaluar 2016). Officers’ opinions concerning the UPP program are not homogenous, however, and vary from one officer to the next, reflecting their different ideas and practices:

*When we talk about police, I remember that the term comes from the Greek: ‘politia’ - in the company of the town, the police is to preserve the city. Preserve the physical integrity; preserve the assets of this city, of this community. When the*

8 In July 2013, Amarildo, a bricklayer living in the Rocinha favela, disappeared after being taken by UPP officers for questioning. After this occurrence, the name ‘Amarildo’ appeared daily in the Brazilian news. Protesters around the country held up signs saying *Cadê o Amarildo?* (Where is Amarildo?), a phrase that quickly became a rallying cry. The attention given to the ‘Amarildo case,’ as it became known by the press, brought the whole UPP endeavor into disrepute. Sources: *Folha de São Paulo* (2 August 2013); *O Globo* (2 October 2014; 1 February 2016).



*community is close to the police, and when it is integrated in order to solve its security problems; this is 'proximity or community policing' ... developing together the issues that will benefit the community.*

*What we want to do is different: everyone knows that they have to behave properly, carry motorcycle documents, use helmets, and maintain their vehicle up-to-date, driving license in the pocket. You can't do anything wrong. You can't have a very loud sound so as not to bother the neighbors, you cannot commit crimes, and you cannot assault a woman. Everyone knows all of this, and also knows that the policemen are present. If you do any irregularity they can arrest you.*

Police officers who think of policing as an activity to be undertaken in close liaison with residents, as a way of protecting citizens, are those who have developed a 'third nature', those that have better overcome the 'first nature', constituted by primal and explosive emotions, as well as the conventional and bureaucratic 'second nature'. This transition from traditionally designated role models to a more informal conduct might itself explain the increase in violence and crimes in favelas and poor urban peripheries, since the propensity to commit such acts is stronger among those living in settings of precarious social integration. Concentrated disadvantages and the geographic isolation of favela dwellers – that is, segregation as a neighborhood characteristic – leads to the concentration of various local social problems. Social and physical disorder, unwillingness to intervene personally and directly with young people, lack of trust between neighbors, lack of institutional resources such as schools, libraries, recreational centers, health centers or parent and youth agencies, along with the absence of employment opportunities, complete the complex context in which youths associate themselves with drug trafficking, and become 'soldiers' for drug chiefs.

If, in addition to weak social or cultural capital, which prevent someone from being despised or socially excluded, there is also lack of 'personality capital,' that is, the flexibility to balance appeals between emotion and morality, then they are more likely to resort to violence or criminal activities. The process of 'informalization' or social egalitarianism (Wouters 2011) also includes the ability to reflect on existing role models, such as the good neighbor or the good police officer.

In Brazil, social democracy and political democratization did not evolve at the same pace. The intransigence of social authoritarianism, or a rigid social hierarchy, especially the forms of despotic power that flourished during the military regime in the most deprived urban areas and in the Military Police, stymied the 'informalization' process. Consequently, it proved difficult to develop the habit of seeking dialogue with authority figures, including discussions of 'the rules of the game,' but also with the general population as a way to avoid grueling conflicts, particularly among the less educated and more subaltern layers of the population. This includes some police officers and favela dwellers, although not all of them.

### **'Hegemonic Masculinity' and the Presence of Women in the Police Force**

In this context, the 'hegemonic masculinity' observed in one particular police organization, discussed in more depth in the following sections, can be understood as a combination of traditional gender roles or 'hegemonic masculinity' as found in society at large (naturally, with variations according to geographic region, age group, social strata and educational level) with the 'warrior ethos', a disposition more specific to the male population accustomed to firearm use, violence and the imminent possibility of injury or death.

Excerpts from field notes illustrate how this combination influences gender relations within a UPP police unit, where 'hegemonic masculinity' steers female officers away from physical danger or violence, a place reserved for male officers and their 'warrior ethos'. The episode narrated below was sparked when a male teenager, for unknown reasons, punched an on-foot police officer in the face.

*In the Morro Santo community, confrontations between residents and the police quickly escalate into serious crises. As in past episodes, witnessing bystanders started throwing random objects at officers – bottles, rocks, trash, or whatever was found within reach. Others whipped out their cellphones to film and photograph everything that could attest to police malpractice. With the police station so close, less than two hundred meters up the hill, cops were quick to come down and attend to the scene. Three or four held their guns up, pointing at the growing crowd of protesters while other two snatched cellphones away. Jerome, tired of wrestling with his attacker, slammed the boy to the ground by banging a rifle against his back, as soon as Soldier Neves managed to hold him still. Observing this, the crowd immediately advanced towards the police yelling and protesting.*

*The height of the confusion, as well as the dispersal when the police finally drove away, taking the young man and other people into custody, was watched by Soldier Perez and myself through the windows of the second floor of the station. When the commotion broke out, Perez, three male officers and myself were walking past Jerome and his partner as we headed back to the police base at the end of their shift. Following Jerome's yell, I heard unfalteringly orders to go 'straight and fast back to the base!', and before I could even react, Soldier Lucas was escorting us in that direction. Us, not just me. Soldier Perez, a woman too, but unlike myself a trained and armed police officer, was promptly ordered away from the turmoil by her male peers.<sup>9</sup>*

Many narratives like this fill up the pages of notebooks used during fieldwork at the UPP police unit we refer to as 'Morro Santo', illustrating the pervasiveness of gender differentiation and the assertion of masculinity through the attribution of a lower status to women. As a group, women in the military police, whether troopers or officials, are simply referred to as *fem*, an informal reference to *policial feminina*.<sup>10</sup> Although derogatory at times, depending on its intonation and context, the word 'fem' is not exclusive to the vocabulary of male officers, but is frequently used by female officers themselves. The derogatory connotation of the term *fem* may be related to it also being a contraction of the Portuguese word *fêmea*, which equally designates the female sex but is more often used in reference to female animals, not women.

The 'fem' are seen as a special group within the organization, who may formally reach all upper ranks through seniority, but are rarely appointed to higher positions of command.<sup>11</sup> In its two hundred years of history, the military police of Rio de Janeiro, not unlike most military organizations, has never had a woman occupying its highest post of command – *chief of general staff*. When asked whether a woman had ever been part of the top police echelon, composed of three high ranking officials, a senior major responded with a playful yet revealing answer: 'No, fortunately we never had that problem.'

The UPP program, however, was purposefully designed to include a larger feminine population in the military police force. From its inception, policy makers from Rio de Janeiro's Public Security Department have widely advertised the congenial presence of female officers in pacified favelas, pictures of whom can be seen in virtually all the advertising material produced for the program. Women also dominate its public relations posts. Major Priscilla, for instance, whose friendly face can be regularly seen on television and newspapers, became an early icon of the UPP, speaking on its behalf.<sup>12</sup> Major Priscilla's well-recognized work during critical phases of the program made her popular among the police and civilians, and her achievements helped advertise the UPP's early success. Although the police public relations office bets heavily on the friendlier image portrayed by female officers, tirelessly having them attend public events and

<sup>9</sup> From fieldnotes, September 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Female police officer.

<sup>11</sup> Military promotions may be based on merit but also occur automatically over time. Thus, women who remain long enough in the organization will eventually reach the highest position among troopers (sub-lieutenant) or officials (colonel).

<sup>12</sup> Since Major Priscilla is not associated with our case studies and is a widely known figure, her identity has not been granted anonymity. The major's reputation resulted in her being an awardee of the U.S. State Department 'Outstanding Leadership and Courage' prize in 2012, when in blissful tears she posed next to Secretary Hillary Clinton for various media vehicles.

publishing images of them on foot patrol, participating in community events or harmoniously interacting with children and citizens, in reality the female presence in the organization is still very low. At present, only five of the thirty-eight UPP units are commanded by female officials, while a senior female official heads just one of the thirty-nine state battalions (which cover broader areas and deploy larger contingents of officers).<sup>13</sup>

In the state of Rio de Janeiro, women have been allowed to join the police since 1982, and unlike other Brazilian states, Rio does not cap the number of female recruits admitted to military police training. A non-gender-discriminatory ranking system, however, was not fully consolidated until 1993. According to official data, women represent about 4% of the total military police force in Rio de Janeiro, placing the state in fifth position among the country's twenty-seven federative units. Nevertheless, when we consider the UPP program in isolation, the presence of female officers rises to 14.3% of the total force.<sup>14</sup>

According to Prokos & Padavic (2002), the generally low presence of women in police organizations can be explained by the fact that male officers intentionally create a work environment unappealing to women, undertaking a kind of territorial defense of an originally masculine space. In this space, the authors claim, men seek to maintain what Connell (1987) popularized as 'hegemonic masculinity,' influential discourses and images that reinforce male power at the collective sociocultural level. Although these discourses and images may not be the norm, they are certainly normative.

Our empirical research shows that police officers display remarkable unity in defense of traditional understandings of masculinity. Police organizational culture sustains a tacit consent concerning the informally institutionalized practices that serve to disempower women and delegitimize alternative masculinities, consequently strengthening the dominant masculine discourse. Individual resistance to dominant discourses and practices is feeble and rare, making the hegemonic masculinity culture appear natural, self-evident, structural, and totalizing, despite its asymmetric power distribution outcomes.

### Physical Strength: Street Work as Masculine Function versus Office Work as Female Role

At the Morro Santo UPP, we could observe that both men and women consistently draw on stereotypical constructs of labor division, which label women as unsuited for functions that involve physical strength, threats to life, high responsibility and authority.

Only nine female troopers work at Morro Santo alongside a contingent of approximately eighty-seven men, including three male officials.<sup>15</sup> Five of these nine female troopers work in administration (together with seven men), in a four-days-per-week schedule, starting at 9 AM and ending at approximately 6 PM. Unlike the personnel engaged in patrol work on the streets, officers assigned to desk jobs are exempt from mandatory alternating night shifts.<sup>16</sup> Police administrative positions involve activities substantially different from patrolling and certainly lighter in terms of physical effort. Like most office workers, police administrator's file and process paperwork, answer emails, register data on spreadsheets, write memos, attend meetings, and answer non-emergency phone calls. Compared to street work, officers consider administrative duties '*mel na chupeta*'.<sup>17</sup> Thus, male officers generally believe it is only 'natural' that the '*fem*'

<sup>13</sup> As of September 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Numbers are from the *Coordenadoria de Polícia Pacificadora* (CPP) of Rio de Janeiro's Military Police (PMERJ), as of October 2016.

<sup>15</sup> The numbers presented here maintain the original proportions but have been slightly changed to help preserve the anonymity of the case study. Numbers reflect data as of September 2014.

<sup>16</sup> 'Approximately' because the end of the administrative work is indeterminate. Officers are only allowed to close the administrative office once the coordinating agency that supervises all units (CPP or *Coordenadoria de Polícia Pacificadora*) announces the end of their workday.

<sup>17</sup> Literally a 'honey-dipped pacifier' the expression is better translated as 'a piece of cake'.

should be most commonly assigned to these administrative positions. After all, for the men, the alleged weaker physical status of women is an indisputable truth.

Although Kimmel (1994: 129) stresses the importance of intra-gender competition and self-affirmation among males – ‘we test ourselves, perform heroic feats, take enormous risks, all because we want other men to grant us our manhood’ – field observations show that women’s presence serves as a foil against which men elevate themselves, counterpoising female ‘fragility’ to their male ‘might.’ For male officers, devaluing women is just as important as praising their own physical strength.

These are some of the remarks about the ‘fem’ made by policemen informally chatting while on duty:

Sd. Lucas: (...) *they can’t, it’s just not the same! Everyone knows this. That’s why during the training they have it so easy, even the instructors know it. Women can’t run fast enough to chase a ‘goose’<sup>18</sup> while carrying a rifle, for example. For their own safety, it’s better to have them at the base, doing whatever it is that they do up there.*

Sd. Perez: *Whatever, who cares. I don’t want to get a ‘suck’<sup>19</sup> during the day and get home dead tired. When I get home, I still have stuff to do. These big boys here have their women putting food on their plates. I still have to go home and cook for my husband.*

Sd. Tomazine: *It’s not good to have a ‘fem’ in your sector [patrol territory to which a duo or group is assigned]. You know? Especially in the GTPP [tactical unit that conducts non-stop, non-territorially delimited foot patrolling]. I prefer not to. Imagine if something happens, if I get shot... Do you think a woman would be able to carry me up on her shoulder?*

Maj. Thomás: *I wouldn’t take a ‘fem’ on a mission. What if something happens? I’d feel terrible.*

*-But doesn’t it feel terrible when something happens to a man? [I asked]*

Maj. Thomás: *No... I mean, yes. But with women it’s worse. I don’t want a ‘fem’ to get hurt under my command. Women need to be protected.*

Commander Cap. Nathan: *I don’t like to send my ‘fem’ out in the streets at night to patrol. They are not prepared. Plus, they do an excellent job at the administration; they are much more organized than men.*

The reason for having proportionally more females in the administrative offices was often explained by male officers through two contradictory arguments. Sometimes it was described as the result of a natural selection process, which had proven men to be more physically suited to the strenuous street work. On other occasions, male officers would suggest that women were favored precisely because of certain attributes of their gender. Male commanders, a soldier once explained, make sure to assemble a highly feminine administrative office in order to surround themselves with women, who would then, in his words, ‘return the favor’ in appreciation of having been assigned ‘away from hard work, dirty alleyways and the risks of potential confrontations.’

Female officers working in administration reject this view as ‘jealous and male chauvinist’ (*machista*), whereas policewomen doing street work would grant it some credibility: ‘those office girls are the commander’s baby dolls,’ a female soldier would repeatedly say. Whether or not this alleged motive exists among male commanders, it is unsurprising that they do not admit to it. Commanders, however,

<sup>18</sup> Goose (*ganso*) is police slang for a criminal.

<sup>19</sup> In Portuguese, a *suga*, police slang for an exhausting activity. Citing an example from field notes: ‘I couldn’t get any sleep, because we had to patrol that whole hill yesterday. Today we’re all sucked’ (tired, worn out).

do frequently and openly cite men's superior strength as a reason for placing women in administrative functions, an argument based on their subjective experience, transformed into common knowledge. This process of discursive naturalization of a social fact establishing women's physical ineptitude for police work serves to deflect male responsibility for actions that could otherwise be considered discriminatory.

At Morro Santo, yet another element could be observed in the heap of contradictions that characterize policemen's perception of female police work. Although female officers are perceived as less capable of succeeding in the 'action-filled' work of policing, and are therefore deemed better suited to jobs with organizational responsibilities, administrative tasks are at times described as an enviable prize, used to favor certain troopers over others.

At the police headquarters of Morro Santo UPP and various other Pacification units, officers assigned to administrative work rarely wear full uniforms, spending most of their day dressed in cargo pants and plain white t-shirts. This seemingly unimportant detail impacts their comfort level significantly. Police uniform in Rio de Janeiro is made of a thick dark fabric, which in addition to the weight of accessories (military boots, beret, badges, bullet proof vest, radio, gun and holster, extra ammunition, handcuffs, flashlight, baton, knives, Taser, water bottle, sometimes a rifle carried in a cross-body sling, and additional personal belongings) is a huge source of discomfort and fatigue, particularly when officers are climbing up and down the steep steps of favela alleyways.<sup>20</sup> This type of patrolling is already tiring by itself, and becomes far worse when accompanied by the frequent foul smell of uncollected garbage, poor ventilation between residences and the acutely hot summers of Rio de Janeiro with consecutive days of high humidity and temperatures over 110 °F. Air-conditioning and other advantages of administrative work, such as considerably lower exposure to risk, and conveniences such as bathrooms and kitchenette access, make the administrative offices an attractive place for many, especially those who find themselves disillusioned with their institutional mission, judging the risks of police work too high for its benefits.

Furthermore, administrative workers are closer to the commander, both physically and relationally. During the holiday season, many commanders organize some kind of 'Christmas gathering,' sponsored by the units whenever possible. At Morro Santo, the 2014 party had to be sponsored by the officers themselves due to the unit's tight budget. Their official resources were scarce, and the commander was already paying out of his own pocket for many office utilities and equipment. Even basic expenses for building maintenance had to be cut, and female officers were forced to bring their own toilet paper, soap and hand towels to restock their workplace bathroom.<sup>21</sup>

Since the unit was not sponsoring the Christmas gathering, costs could not have been the primary factor in the commander's decision to allow only administrative workers to be invited to the event – an eight-hour barbecue organized on a workday Friday. Female officers from the administration took the initiative to rent a space at a nearby country club, and shared the responsibility for preparing side dishes and desserts. All invitees chipped in and abundant quantities of grilled meat and cold beer were offered to administrative police officers and troopers' supervisors (sergeants), who spent the day eating, drinking, playing soccer and relaxing in the swimming pool. This event, unsurprisingly, caused resentment among uninvited troopers, particularly those off-duty that day and thus potentially available to join the party. Among the uninvited on-duty troopers, a duo conducting a car patrol made a short appearance after being called to bring in ice. The call was not made without a facetious but acute reassertion of hierarchical power, an important feature of the Military Police in Brazil that divides troopers and officials:

20 UPP police officers are encouraged to wear a distinct uniform with a lighter blue shirt of equally thick fabric. Some commanders allow the use of the traditional dark uniform, while others enforce use of the lighter blue shirt.

21 Male restrooms were also unequipped, but men would generally not bring in such items. In the administration, one female officer would frequently bring in extra toilet paper for 'the boys'. Troopers on street patrol generally used the restrooms of commercial establishments.

Sgt. Nelson: Lucas [soldier], go and fetch us some more ice for the party, our beer is getting warm. And make sure you turn on the strobe lights, the police shouldn't have to wait in traffic during an emergency [everyone within earshot laughed]. Don't you make your commander wait!<sup>22</sup>

This and other similar events made it unclear to troopers whether the administrative staff were composed of 'inferior and physically weaker' women and men, or women and men who were actually being favored.<sup>23</sup>

## Courtship and Affective Relationships as Part of Hypermasculinity?

Courtship conventions symbolizing men's dominant position and traditional gender ideologies remain important in the police force, where women have achieved equal status *de jure*, but not *de facto*.

The intransigence of traditional gender norms contributes to the lack of professionalism within the police and fosters an organizational culture in which men and women are expected to simultaneously navigate courtship and workplace relations. Although seemingly innocuous, these gender norms constitute modes of interaction with deeply embedded and unreflectively reproduced gender stereotypes that create social expectations of behavior for men – 'manly,' dominant, strong, and flirtatious; and for women – 'feminine,' passive, objects of conquest.

While male officers use courtship in the workplace to obtain peer recognition of their 'masculinity,' female officers are re-assured of their 'femininity' and attractiveness. This dynamic is evident in the narratives officers use to make sense of their flirtatious behavior, which is commonly defended as 'harmless' and 'spontaneous.' When flirtation causes surprise or is deemed unpleasant or unacceptable by women, male officers generally downplay their words or innuendo by classifying them as a *brincadeira*, just a joke. When talking among themselves, these commonplace flirtations or 'jokes' are characterized by an attitude of *se colar, colou*: literally 'if it sticks, it stuck,' or 'just testing the water.'<sup>24</sup> What this means is that there is no apparent reason to refrain from a flirtation attempt: it may be successful if reciprocated or welcomed, but when unsuccessful, it is generally inconsequential, and rapidly dismissed as a 'joke'.<sup>25</sup>

Occasionally, successful courtship and flirtation evolves into casual or formal romantic relationships among troopers and officials, with some kept discrete because of their extramarital nature. Even when formal and public, however, many workplace romantic relationships prove problematic when it comes to conflicting professional and personal interests, aggravated by hierarchical distances between the couple.

The administrative staff of Morro Santo, for instance, harbored a hidden resentment towards Captain Nathan and his wife, Mona. The couple met while Mona, a trooper, was working under the Captain's command at a different police unit. Shortly after Nathan was transferred to the command of Morro Santo, Mona was also transferred to the unit at his request (a questionable yet not uncommon practice given the assumption that over time commanders build their 'trusted staff'). Staff's resentment however, resulted from the unusual fact that Sd. Mona was transferred during maternity leave. When her leave was extended based on undisclosed 'special circumstances,' rumors of favoritism quickly spread, creating an uneasy work environment in which the commander lost credibility among his staff.

22 Sergeant Nelson speaks to the car patrol crew on the phone, as per the commander's request.

23 Not all police units hold a seasonal gathering exclusive to administrative staff. During the same year, for instance, a different unit in the same city region organized a gathering for all its personnel, at least three times larger in size than Morro Santo's. However, all units I visited at some point organized social gatherings exclusively for officials and/or administration workers.

24 Thereby implying that there are few or no consequences for jokes deemed unwelcome.

25 Furthermore, male troopers make widespread use of words of affection when referring to their female colleagues, such as *bebê* (baby) or *gata* ('cat,' beautiful woman), both on and off duty.

A few months before Captain Nathan's transfer, Major Muniz, the previous commander of Morro Santo, was accused by his staff of favoring Sd. Rebeca, the girlfriend of Sd. Ronaldo, his driver and personal friend. Unlike other troopers assigned to administrative functions, Rebeca worked only four days per week. Major Muniz once justified her schedule by pointing out that the 'community events' for which she was responsible seldom took place on Mondays. Other female troopers, however, friends with Sd. Rebeca, knew that she was taking college courses on Mondays. Unsurprisingly, such differentiated treatment caused resentment among many troopers who also struggled to pursue a college degree while working for the police.

The affair between Sd. Cavallo and Sd. Esther is also illustrative. The couple met while working at UPP Morro Santo, shortly after Esther's transfer to the unit. Soon after, their relationship was made public after both soldiers were disciplined for an on-duty display of affection, witnessed by a supervising sergeant. A couple of months after this episode, Esther took medical leave – according to her colleagues, prompted by emotional distress and verbal threats made by Cavallo's wife.

Certainly personal relationships develop in all types of organizations, and the clouding of professionalism that potentially results from it can be a more or less recurring and/or grievous aspect of any workplace. In the police unit observed however, startlingly frequent personal matters, not rarely resembling soap opera plots, result in multiple violations of institutional rules, the diminished credibility of superiors in the eyes of their team, lowered officer morale, conflicts of interest, and internal gossip and rumors that affect overall productivity and poison the work atmosphere.

## **Assertion of Masculinity and Sexual Prowess**

Wouters's (2004) work explores the ongoing transformations in social manners and personal interactions that would have resulted in a new equilibrium between sex and love, balancing what he describes as the Victorian extremes of a 'de-sexualization of love' and the 'depersonalization of sex'.<sup>26</sup> In his account of the evolution of sexual manners, Wouters describes the transition from the 'chaperonage system' – when a third party had to accompany and protect young women from both male seduction and their own sexual desires – to a 'system of dating', in which women and men are allowed to spend time by themselves, outside of their homes.

These changes were linked to innovations such as the birth-control pill, and new transportation and communication technologies (more recently cellphones and the internet), that required new modes of behavior, interaction and feeling. As a whole, the 'dating system' made possible the informalization of manners between people, and enabled more freedom of choice with respect to possible sexual matches. However, while the rigid external social controls of the twentieth century steadily disappeared, a greater need for self-control emerged, calling for a 'third-nature' type of personality. In other words, privacy and formality, bastions of Victorian social relations were gradually replaced by 'naturalness', 'informality' and reliance on 'self-control' as opposed to external forms of social restraint over sexual behavior. While we saw the relaxation of traditional rules, social distance and forms of personal address, or even greater permissiveness in public and private touching, we demanded new forms of 'emotional management' and control over impulses that demonstrate flexibility, respect and considerateness.

However, although Wouters points to common trends, he recognizes that variations, 'waves or spurts,' as well as local diversities, persist in the relationship between changing manners and a person's mastery

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<sup>26</sup> In this book, Wouters (2004) compares etiquette 'manners' manuals popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and the United States. He looks at the advice provided by these manuals on courtship, dancing, dating, engagement and marriage, and conceptualizes the relationship between men and women as the 'lust balance' – a tension between 'the longing for sexual gratification and the longing for enduring intimacy' (p. 6).

over impulse (Wouters 2004: 167). These variations partially stem from the fact that Wouters describes a trend that involves women's sexual emancipation combined with diminishing gender inequality, a process very heterogeneously lived across the globe. What prevails in the police organizational environment we describe is a persistent lack of mutual identification and gender inequality that limits behavioral transformations. Generally speaking, manners and dynamics of interaction between men and women reflect perceived or real power ratios among individuals.

One illustrative aspect of power asymmetries between men and women in the police force is officers' reproduction of hegemonic masculinity by treating sexual activities as an 'achievement,' a conquest to which many aspire and thus for which they should be given credit. In Edley's (2001) analysis these 'achievements' are mostly recognized through real or embellished storytelling of sexual encounters. But at Morro Santo, mere storytelling, although frequent, was insufficient by itself to consolidate a man's image of sexual heroism, since the possibility that such tales might be fabricated induces skepticism among male peers. To ensure credibility to their accounts of sexual prowess, officers often show visual proof, flaunting text messages and pictures on their cellphones sent by women they have been dating or had encounters with. Assessments of each other's 'achievements,' based on open discussions and the display of private photos, often provocative 'selfies,' kept troopers entertained for hours, especially during slow overnight shifts. Pictures or screenshots of intimate conversations were frequently exchanged through a cellphone application (WhatsApp), informally used by duos or trios of colleagues based at different strategic spots around the favela to communicate with each other while on duty.

Although these male officers often spoke proudly of their families and significant others, many extramarital relationships were not concealed, but instead openly used as a tool to assert masculinity. Most likely a secret kept from their significant others, affairs were described and interpreted as frequent and benign adventures, unrelated to their family lives – a conduct evidently not exclusive to police officers or the male gender, but recognizably frequent within this professional group. During our fieldwork, close to 70% of all male officers who were married or in stable relationships voluntarily disclosed information on extramarital affairs. With these public disclosures being so frequent, female officers would humorously tell each other: 'never marry a cop.'

In their group exchanges about dating, officers reproduce a patriarchal and heteronormative form of 'hegemonic masculinity.' Within the police organization, these discursive practices have an impact on professional relations: in their need to assert sexual prowess, officers do not refrain from courting female colleagues or female civilians with whom they interacted while on duty.

At the bottom of Morro Santo's hill, an untidy and pricey 24-hour restaurant was a regular hangout for officers due to its staff's friendliness towards the police. At late hours, in between check-ins by supervisors, police officers would spend long hours courting the waitresses, most of them residents of the favela. Although the police prohibit such behavior while officers are on-duty and publicly wearing their uniforms and other symbols of the institution they represent, policemen (and their supervisors) would often ignore such rules.

Excerpt from field notes:

Last night, Sd. Frederico, as everyone predicted, got in trouble for his reckless behavior. Despite being warned several times about the waitress' upset husband, Frederico continued to pursue her. He insisted on displaying his 'desired prize' to all his colleagues, and thought that the rumor about the husband was simply 'intrigue from the opposition'.



The husband, however, came over around midnight, and we were standing at their base point, right across the street from the restaurant. Nobody knew who he was or noticed him, until he walked fast in our direction yelling at Frederico - *'Why are you after my wife? Yours is not taking care of your needs?'* *'Let's have a real man's deal'*, he shouted, *'without your pistol or your buddies.'*

After trading insults, a recipe for misfortune was rapidly set in motion: enraged men fighting over a woman and within easy reach of firearms... The intervention of others prevented the situation from escalating, fortunately avoiding worse consequences. The police, clearly, did not need to be called – they were already there.

## Final Considerations

As a cultural manifestation, hegemonic forms of traditional understandings of masculinity may be losing their dominance, allowing 'softer' or alternative masculinities to unfold. Inside police organizations however, as evidenced in this article, such transformations take place at a slower pace. Hence a reappraisal of gender dynamics and their internal and external repercussions for police work is imperative to build a less violent and more professionalized institution. The gendered performances of policing that we have observed and described contrast with Rio de Janeiro's attempt to transform the institutional image of the military police. Although the UPP program relies heavily on representations of female officers in its publicity materials, in reality, daily interactions among officers reveal social practices that undervalue and disempower women in general, and female officers in particular.

Although female officers may have gained increased access to the profession through the UPP program, the police work environment remains heavily gendered, and in practice women in the organization have not been allowed to *de facto* expand their occupational space. Male officers resist the integration of women by focusing on a definition of police work marked by danger, risk, physical strength, authority and leadership abilities – which allegedly make police work 'men's work.' Meanwhile, women remain confined to office tasks or community relations work, perceived as better suited to their 'nurturing dispositions and weaker bodies.' However, community policing initiatives attempt to emphasize a particular set of attributes, promoting an image of police officers not just as physically strong and skilled, but also as good communicators, honorable, cooperative, and reliable, caring and protecting of individuals. For the success of the UPP program, these characteristics should be seen as essential, and not merely complementary to police work or relegated to female officers.

Furthermore, we argue that the 'hypermasculine' disposition that favors the reproduction of violent and punitive forms of ostensive policing also promotes a work environment that diminishes women's potential to thrive as police officers. While the unreflective reproduction of the masculine 'warrior ethos' marks police work as confrontational and aggressive, male behavior and attitudes towards females in the workplace are also negatively affected by such a view. Female officers, regardless of their hierarchical position, but mostly when equal or inferior in rank, are not only perceived as 'weaker' but also as potential objects of seduction. Hence, male officers do not refrain from actions and speech that place their female counterparts in awkward positions, where all parties are forced to navigate the blurred boundaries between personal and professional relations.

It should be noted, nonetheless, that we do not intend to use the evidence presented here to depict women as a passive group of individuals whose position and professional challenges are imposed on by men, lacking self-determination, agency or the ability to react. Female officers and their concerns have been gradually gaining more visibility, although questions related to discrimination, harassment or even sexual assault are still often concealed out of an understandable fear of intimidation, retaliation and career

threats. We should also note that power asymmetries do not simply stem from a binary dispute between oppressors (males) and their victims (females). The male behavior described here is, naturally enough, not without exceptions, and while some females resist male attempts to downplay them professionally, others (unreflectively) feed into the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

Improved work conditions and internal initiatives to secure gender equality could elicit greater participation of women in police organizations, particularly in the UPP program, helping establish an environment where both policewomen and less violent forms of policing can thrive. Policewomen are more prone to talk and negotiate conflicts than armed policemen. To this end, we should further discuss ways in which women's occupation of key senior posts within the police force can be fostered. By allowing female officials to assume more positions of command and promoting their leadership functions among troopers, we can help reject the cinematic model of what a policeman is, and fight the hegemonic masculine culture that equates police work with 'tough men,' guns, confrontations and killings.

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