

## **“Arrest me, DeleGata!” - gender performativities in the construction of beauty as an aesthetic and discursive weapon of power among female Civil Police chiefs**

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THEMATIC ARTICLE

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**Abstract** *This article discusses the performative gender constructions of female police chiefs working in Rio de Janeiro state. Using cartography as a research method, we follow the paths, connections, and construction of femininities, activated and performed by our respondents to establish a place of respect and prominence within and outside the Institution, using beauty as an aesthetic and discursive power tool based on the DeleGata performative class. Cartographic interviews were conducted with nine female police chiefs in Rio de Janeiro state aged 30 to 59. Although the police have historically valued recognized masculine ideals, such as strength and virility, the gender performativities operated by female police chiefs allow for police feminization. The figure/enunciation of DeleGata, who builds an image of the female police chief, implying a unity, signifies producing political subjects, ideas, and values that reach a communicative and performative standard, making visible some woman who adorns – with her beauty – and simultaneously surprises – with her intelligence. The DeleGata thus brings into play apparently antagonistic extremes: beauty-intelligence, sensuality-power, femininity-strength, producing a social and symbolic regimen for the production of bodies and femininities.*

**Key words** *Female police chiefs, Femininities, Police, Gender, Beauty*

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## Introduction

The historically constructed masculine police environment is a stage for different narrative productions that aim to disempower women, including those in power positions, such as police chiefs. Although they already arrive at the institution as heads due to their job role, they will need to build an image of reliability and management capacity in practice without deviating from gender prescriptions: they need to prove their professional capacity without losing the beauty of adorning, in a context where aesthetics sometimes serves as a basis for devaluing female capacity in the police, and sometimes – reappropriated – acts as a power for action. Besides dichotomous spaces, the construction of beauty produces value, guiding a particular circulation of bodies in an existing aesthetic hierarchy<sup>1</sup>.

As a device, gender helps to analyze the alleged female figure sacredness triggered in the police space as it allows analyzing specific heterogeneous power-knowledge relationships<sup>2</sup>, as if being a woman corrects any potential or actual and all female police chief deviations, including the analysis in discursive and non-discursive cultural practices that produce truthful effects on objects and subjects. Likewise, it allows us to discuss the performative gender uses to negotiate relationships within the police.

Performativity brings us the constitutive gender nature, such as gestures, acts, and ordinarily constructed representations<sup>3</sup>, thus destabilizing the alleged gender essentiality and naturalness, thereby exploring its performative nature, as the many ways the body shows and produces its cultural meaning. Suppose male police chiefs do not need to prove their abilities based on the specificities of their gender. In that case, their female peers will be challenged to prove their ability, regardless of any suspicion their gender may bring about that being their place. Two resources are especially activated in this setting: gender erasure and its positive essentialization<sup>4</sup>, in a resource that consists of activating the recognized feminine attributes in its favor, that is, essentializing gender as if it assumed the naturalized attributes that refer to the feminine in order to achieve some purpose: they need to be as good as males are when inside the police stations, attempting to erase all gender-marked differences. However, such marked differences between men and women are part of a set of central themes seen in different societies, which are organized and thought grounded on these relationships<sup>5</sup>, which,

far from being given, are constructed and mobile in varying degrees and different societies.

However, in the police, this erasure refers to what is prescribed to the female gender to value masculine-linked attributes or the masculinization of professional ideas and practices. This invisibility is also found in what is similar in behaviors between genders<sup>6</sup>. Female police chiefs act in games of forces, sometimes subverting the gender order or crystallizing old prescriptions, which produces a social and symbolic regimen of producing bodies and femininities for the police institution that, when publicized in the media, provides models activated in generating bodies and femininities aesthetics in the social environment<sup>7</sup>. Thus, we visualize here the production and embodiment of the *DeleGata* to support the fields of health and similar fields, whose care and body modeling practices naturalize the gendered beauty ideal – in many ways represented by *DeleGatas* – especially those more directly related to body modifications and plastic surgeries.

Being a *DeleGata* dialogues with a given construction that marks beauty based on performative games that bring to the fore the idea of power or status, where beauty is the thread that weaves together such settings. The idea of beauty can also mark the construction of a new social role for these women. Being in this place confers visibility. On the contrary, being outside this place suggests erasure. Here, beauty assumes the status of power and access to different social spaces of recognition. *DeleGatas*' appropriation of this place confers social recognition, prominence, prestige, and well-being, attributing social value to the body, building conditions for possible human dignity and happiness<sup>1</sup>.

## Methods

From this perspective, object, subject, and knowledge are perceived as co-emergent effects of the research process<sup>8-10</sup>. The method formulated by Deleuze and Guattari aims to accompany a process of producing subjectivities and not simply representing an object. Thus, the method itself oversees the movements of subjectivities and territories<sup>8</sup>.

Cartographic research follows how desires are imprisoned and directed to the production of some regimes of truth that will serve as a lens through which most of the eyes will pass grounded on the macropolitical effect, but going further, by verifying how these regimes are altered and

subverted, giving space to new forms and new regimes and deterritorialized perspectives based on the micropolitical effect, flows that change and cannot be perceived from Manichaean views. Therefore, this is not about evaluating – as that would not even be our intention – which are the most appropriate or incorrect ways for these women to perform their femininities.

Our research is based on joint production with these women, with what our meetings produce affecting them all. Mapping the movements and not trying to produce patterns or truths, as we disbelieve in this path, without disregarding, obviously, the effects of the biopolitical nature of being beautiful (supported by a powerful scientific discourse), however, bringing to the fore corporealization, not as something passive, but fluid, sometimes subverting, sometimes reinforcing gender stereotypes/asymmetries. When considering the field, it is interesting to consider that beauty performances are understood as some affective work where the product and act of production cannot be separated. Thus, beauty as self-management also implies work that shapes the producer's subjectivity and generates value in the body from the body itself<sup>f</sup>.

To help in this journey through the field and the writing that seeks to present the *DeleGata* emic category construction process, we should insert the discursive production from its context as something beyond a truth closed in itself, considering the possible discourses based on a state defined from the conditions of their production, extending the forces that compose/produce/authorize their meanings. Foucault believes discourse is a social reality production dimension, a socio-historical practice<sup>11,12</sup>.

We initially contacted a female police chief, identified as *DeleGata*, to reach the respondents. From then on, we used the snowball technique to contact potential respondents. We conducted cartographic management interviews with nine female police chiefs aged 30 to 59. It is noteworthy that only one of them is a mother. All names are fictitious, and the interviews were held after signing the Informed Consent Form. The State University of Rio de Janeiro Ethics Committee approved the research under the CAEE 97551018.0.0000.5282

### **Performativities: gender nuances**

The “*macho*” man constructed in the social imagination as an ideal figure of police strength and respect does not seem to make room for

vanity, which is still very much marked as a feminine attribute. For this reason, it is interesting to affirm that the establishment of aesthetic conventions allows for some police feminization. Although it leaves out variations of femininities, the construction of *DeleGata* – a name given mainly by the press to recognize beautiful female police chiefs, but which was assumed by those who identified themselves as such – can mean the production of political subjects and ideas and values<sup>13</sup>, which reaches a communicative and performative standard, visualizing a given woman who simultaneously adorns – with her beauty – and surprises – with her intelligence. Thus, the *DeleGata* sets seemingly antagonistic extremes into action: beauty-intelligence, sensuality-power, and femininity-strength.

Beauty is not a politically neutral category, but some biopower that instrumentalizes/categorizes some bodies as eligible to the detriment of others, producing forms of governance over social bodies and practices. Thus, some bodies will be chosen as more desirable than others, assuming a prominent position in the existing aesthetic hierarchy. Foucault describes political investment in the body through power-enabling mechanisms. Impacting on life, biopower permeated the body while laying down normative rules on the species' life and the population's events. The author argues that power relationships are strategic and contingent on the domain from which they are exercised<sup>13,14</sup>.

Butler<sup>3</sup> believes that a “subject” is a performative construct. As a result, gender identity would be sequential acts without a pre-existing actor (performer) to perform them. However, we should stress that our gender performances can only occur within a discursive scene full of subjections that would curtail what it recognizes as intelligible, which inserts us into the interesting construction performed by the *DeleGatas*, who need to recognize the rules and limits to which they are subjected, as we will see later.

By mixing strength and sensitivity, as they are called upon, female police chiefs constantly rebuild interesting ways of being a woman. They perform within gender prescriptions, highlighting, subverting, fixing, and transforming these truths about themselves and their profession. Beauty as a feminine attribute widely used to disempower women seems to gain new strategic uses here:

*Being pretty helps, yes... people are, as I said, more receptive... So, I don't know whether anyone has ever done anything for me because I was pretty [laughs].*

*Interviewer: Have you ever noticed your peers doing this type of negotiation? Maybe even in a more subtle way...*

*It already happened. I don't know whether it was on purpose or not; it did happen, yes. Men almost always fall; all of them do [laughs] (Paolla, 30).*

Incarnated as affective capital<sup>1</sup>, the beauty found in *DeleGata's* performance circulates through different social spaces and is a field of social relationships where some bodies accumulate more value than others. The *DeleGata* is inserted in some beauty topography of its assigned environment. These women reproduce beautification rules and practices and work by building and reconstructing this space, where their bodies are relational objects in an affective beauty economy. Inserted in markedly misogynistic and asymmetrical places, where the rules of recognition and social ascension are not objective when it comes to women, female police chiefs need to operate different performative and discursive logics in which the embodiment of specific erected beauty seems to be conferred as yet another form of power, at least those that are recognized as such.

Unanimous or not, the *DeleGata's* recognition can symbolize the production of the image that part of the group has of itself and indeed reaches the external public powerfully. It can mean the social recognition of those female subjects who do not need to renounce their femininity to be recognized as police chiefs, even if this recognition involves association with a given stereotypical feminine figure. The exaggeration of these traits, heels, lipstick, and the like, can indicate the construction of a specific space that is being built, with criticism or not. After all, these figures can only be seen because they exist.

For female bodies, self-esteem is associated with the appearance of their body; on the contrary, not being here can cause suffering. However, if watertight answers do not seem to answer the problem, perhaps the inventive answer for this field lies at the intersection, where female police chiefs find alternatives for reproducing gender stereotypes and prescriptions and inventive rationale of reconstruction, reappropriation, and operation of beauty as symbolic and real capital<sup>1,15</sup> when operating beauty inscriptions on their bodies.

In this sense, the *DeleGata* may not be associated only with merely aesthetic or plastic attributes, "but rather with several values embodied as aesthetics in that body and femininity"<sup>13</sup>(p.8). Thus, the *DeleGata* could reverse the erasure of

the expressed femininity, very much present in police careers, especially when women began to enter such spaces, resorting to some exaggeration:

*I see a movement to bring greater femininity to the police. Bringing more of the, albeit caricature-like feminine brand (Heloísa, 41).*

If the process recognized as "masculinization" sought to erase the difference that made police women inferior, a high note of the feminization evoked by the *DeleGatas* would be precisely to make women visible in the police, even via aesthetic attributes to meet a specific hegemonic beauty standard or of a beauty that comes close to the ideal of white, noble-like beauty, because, far from being a coincidence, the *DeleGata* that graces the covers of newspapers follows specific aesthetic standards such as thin body, long straight hair, and white or moderately sun-tanned skin.

Jarrín<sup>1</sup> proposes that beauty performances be understood as some affective work in which the product and production act cannot be separated. Thus, beauty as self-management also implies work that shapes the producer's subjectivity and generates value in the body from the body itself. The author also argues that biopolitics seems to produce beauty normative types, whereas affection acts on normative and non-normative perceptions of beauty. However, tightening the normative rules that impact the construction of particular beauties, such as their social validation, is necessary. Biopolitics as a normative character should not be disregarded here. However, the proposal to reappropriate the normative and that which escapes it, once again, seems to account for some "in-between" space, where the creative power of these women would be produced in what concerns corporeality, the *DeleGata's* performance, including contradictory aspects.

In this sense, we should point out that even appearing in magazines as *DeleGatas*, this nickname does not seem to please everyone, as, for some, it would highlight a possible futility linked to beauty, something that should not stick to the female police chief's image, precisely because of her emphasized qualification and position:

*We have to put an end to this term, DeleGata. There is no DeleGata; a female police chief is a female police chief. Moreover, that's it. I don't like it when people call me DeleGata; I don't like it... (Francis, 42).*

The statement above is essential for us to analyze this disqualifying image of female beauty, mainly sensuality, which would not match the se-

rious image that the female officer should display. While fed back by the media and the female police chiefs themselves, this negotiation between the female police chief who overshadows traits of what she identifies as femininity and appears discreet and the one who explores and exacerbates some feminine aesthetic that reveals contours and shows herself through seduction seems challenging. Although rules are not explicit, disqualifying labels may punish any excess. However, *DeleGata's* image can be valued at times precisely because it brings together power and sensuality, arousing interest and curiosity:

*I always say that public prosecutors and judges have more power than we do. However, we only have the glamor, right? (Nanda, 43).*

Although she likes glamour, Nanda also highlights the fear that it will overlap with the actual exercise of the role, and this concern is more evident in the case of women. Taking care not to merely adorn the institution or even tarnish its centuries-old masculine image seems essential to ensure respect, especially when bearing the weight of being a woman in a sexist society and a sexism-and-machismo-based institution. In this regard, we should point out that studies with female police chiefs refer to gender discrimination and harassment as significant stressors directly affecting their physical and mental health<sup>16-18</sup>. Besides the emotional cost of institutional sexism, Bezerra *et al.*<sup>16</sup> bring up the critical issue of women's double shift, as although they can assume historically masculine positions, "women continue to take on domestic work and take responsibility for the care of the family" to this day<sup>16</sup>(p.659).

However, the *DeleGata* can be seen as one of the performative possibilities of that woman who adheres to the idealized image of a given female figure. While the *DeleGata* is not activated in all aspects of the female police chief's life, it is recurrently invented and activated in public environments:

*We do care about our image indeed [...] Once, I participated in a police operation in a drug trafficking-affected community. There was much press and so on. Well, then I was going to give an interview to the press, and I told my superior that I would put on makeup, at least some lipstick [...] We're going to be seen by everyone. We are concerned about image, aesthetics, and beauty, above all... How we want to be seen and remembered (Catarina, 48).*

By illustrating how she relates to the *DeleGata* figure, Catarina helps us think about how appearance, beauty, and the quality of being sex-

ually attractive are part of a system of cultural and social power relationships in a process that involves embodying postures, norms, and languages closely linked to hegemonic practices and conceptions about the feminine that "establish or reproduce particular classificatory notions about the *beautiful* and *abject*"<sup>19</sup>(p.42).

In the Brazilian setting, the idea of a corporeality that values appearance and sensuality, especially of women, is still very present. Alde-man and Ruggi<sup>19</sup> highlight that countless "masculinist" discourses ranging from media to arts revolve around an alleged naturalization of the beauty/sensuality of Brazilian women. Besides common sense, the authors address the importance of deepening historical studies about the social and cultural values of beauty and the "perfect body" in our country.

Although it is healthy to consider that sexist and patriarchal notions of femininity are at play in understanding this process, we cannot fail to discuss the apparent alleged pleasure or displeasure of women searching for this idealized body. Thus, although the beauty search can be marked by power games that degrade or objectify women, both those who fit in and those who would be left out of hegemonic standards, beautification techniques are essential recognizably feminine themes and exchange practices, which can act by creating or reinforcing a relationship of belonging and recognition of female spaces<sup>20,21</sup>. The *DeleGata* can recognize herself as powerful based on these affective marks linked to what is built as beautiful. Here, power and beauty mix, encompassing desires that symbolize being assertive, strong, and recognized.

Therefore, if Catarina is concerned with keeping the *DeleGata* alive in spaces where her career is recognized, she also makes that space visible as a possible place for women. As her account reveals, the *DeleGata* represents herself and her police institution. A masculine place in its creation and tradition, the police takes on new contours by including women. Although she may be the target of criticism, the *DeleGata* changes this setting, subverting the merely decorative logic of beauty, because, as Catarina says in her interview, this is where a woman's beauty and the power attaching to her position meet. Nanda also corroborates this point:

*Look, there is a concern about appearance, indeed... So, I worry a lot; I always have. [...] You are the mirror of the police; you are the logo of the head of the civil police and the governor. The image of the civil police, the more beautiful we all are,*

*the more positive the image will always be* (Nanda, 43).

Beautiful and in high heels, between authority and fetish. Embodying beauty is an obligation for women, unlike men, as strong men fight for beautiful women<sup>21</sup>. It is impossible to question the subject's masculinity based on his beauty or ugliness. An ugly man is not a target of ridicule or discredit; on the contrary, virility is often present in the man's markedly brutish face and asymmetrical features; his masculinity does not come into question – unless it does not perform strength. It is interesting to realize that beauty, as a historically pre-established standard, was a mark erased by women who joined the police forces. Today, this meaning seems to have been reconfigured, sometimes operating as a way of making women visible through the exaggerated traits that mark their femininity – and all the gains that this can bring – sometimes placing them in the delicate terrain of the objectified feminine.

Although beauty works as an artifice in building these women's subjectivities and is used as a force for female empowerment, Wolf<sup>21</sup> problematizes beauty as the ultimate hurdle to prosperous women's freedom since the higher the number of legal and material obstacles overcome by women, the greater the beauty demands, with increasingly rigid, heavy, and cruel models. The author also affirms that, no matter how successful the woman is, there is a secret underlife, in which – immersed in beauty concepts – obsession with the physical and the fear of aging and losing control seem to take away from empowered women their whole sense of freedom. In Wolf's thesis<sup>21</sup>, we would be amid a violent reaction to feminism, which uses female beauty images as a political weapon against women's evolution; she called the beauty myth, which would function as a social control weapon, psychologically destroying women based on their control actions<sup>21</sup>. Viewed this way, beauty would also be a political system consisting of the best set of beliefs to keep male dominance unscathed.

Adelman and Ruggi<sup>19</sup> argue that beauty, physical strength, fragility, and the quality of being sexually attractive are attributes and values that need to be understood as part of a system of social and cultural relationships and not as individual features. Thus, the distribution of bodily capital involves a complex scheme of social positions and normative expectations that represent a significant element of material and symbolic power relationships. Put this way, beauty does not transit in the fatalistic venue addressed by

Wolf<sup>21</sup> in her book "The Beauty Myth", because, as a form of power, it can constitute multiple relationships, which not only imprison, but also empower, build values, and give new meaning to relationships.

However, there is a dividing line between what is allowed or not for the *DeleGata*, this vain figure. She needs to make negotiations that allow her image to adorn the police effectively, but "without exaggeration". Defining such exaggerations seems like another one of the many symbolic games operating in this setting:

*You have to have a decorum to dress. Suit and tie for men, especially in interviews, and suits, skirts or more formal dresses, no neckline and such for women [...] These symbolisms and appearance are essential* (Paolla, 30).

Male decorum seems to involve only guidance regarding formal clothing, whereas women have to adopt special care with parts of the body that cannot be visible, such as breasts and legs, for example. Police chief Heloísa, 11 years older than Paolla and with longer police service, comments on the greater visibility of women through the *DeleGata* figure but analyzes which discourses are produced through the activation of the *DeleGata*. She believes that, although the *DeleGata* gives more visibility to female police chiefs, the "most serious" cases would continue to be represented by men:

*About this DeleGatas thing... It attracts attention. The media likes it. It appears more, but maybe that makes much sense. If you are considering calling a police chief to be part of a panel or a meeting who will speak about a serious topic... It is usually a man, right? However, the cases with the most significant repercussion are generally handled by men... [...] You have many women talking about Maria da Penha cases, cases that don't mobilize as much, right?* (Heloísa, 41).

However, the *DeleGata* is frequently publicized in the media. The press, soap operas, and TV programs often sell this image. The term *DeleGata* itself seems to have emerged from the press, as one of our respondents highlights:

*This DeleGata thing comes up with Monique Vidal, right? If you think about it, that woman from the south zone... Because she's from the south zone, pretty and blonde... the stereotype of a beautiful woman... born and raised in Copacabana. She gained notoriety when she worked in the Barra district and represented the arrest of pitboys, right? They had fights in Barra's nightclubs... She gained all the notoriety, but this is about her being a beautiful woman* (Heloísa, 41).

Bordo<sup>22</sup> affirms that the information transmitted by advertising is not based on rational argumentation but persuasive devices that reinforce and appeal to culturally established stereotypes, such as specific aesthetic standards. Thus, when creating the *DeleGata* figure, the press resorts to the heroine's aesthetics, a character who fights crime but never loses her beauty and sensuality. Although this process is reappropriated and reconstructed by the characters themselves – who are not passive figures – it helps to give a more attractive image to that figure who changes the police's historical space, recognized and culturally claimed as masculine (and highly sexist).

Thus, the *DeleGata* responds to a sexist appeal about the social role of women. However, by appropriating this place, these women help to redesign the very police and their images of themselves because now they offer their ornamental beauties to the eyes of spectators and use the beautiful female police chief's social power, making them protagonists. If the police institution kept them silenced, the *DeleGatas* could not speak. So, would those who don't fit this heroine's aesthetic stereotype be left out?

When studying the construction of female images in comic books, Melo and Ribeiro<sup>23</sup> highlighted that the heroines generally appeared as young, beautiful women drawn in sensual positions and outfits, emphasizing their physical attributes in a communication generally aimed at a male audience. The characters' femininity was represented almost exclusively by appealing to the sensuality and attributes of their bodies<sup>23</sup>. Although this view may be a reductionist of a more extensive process of intergender relationships, it helps us to think about some points, such as the mediatic image of female police chiefs. Thus, deciding to what extent clothes, accessories, and adornments translate into the female police chief's authorized femininity or whether, on the contrary, they are rejected and considered vulgar can represent a fine line:

*There are clothes and clothes... clothes that are too short don't look good in any work environment, right? A very short neckline, but for a reason more than being a social environment, not because it is a masculine environment, but because it is the environment of a public body* (Paolla, 30).

Thus, the discursive games that will help compose *DeleGata*'s image will change depending on the context, and although the institution seems to reinforce this image sometimes, recognizing the *DeleGata* directly triggers sexist constructions that place women and the free expression of

their sexuality as a moral issue, which permeates their entire lives, whether private or public, disqualifying them. Subjected to gender discrimination and harassment in the police institution and suffering such impacts on their production of subjectivity and health<sup>16-18</sup>, the *DeleGata* needs to remain within some boundaries to be respected: transcending sensuality, she will be responsible for the lack of morals; transcending femininity, she will be disqualified as a respectable figure in public space.

Although some said they were satisfied with being recognized as *DeleGata* – due to the appreciation of beauty, prestige, and power – none of the respondents recognized themselves as Barbie, *DeleGata*'s exaggerated and stereotypical nickname, even when they abused heels, makeup, tidy hair, and pink badge. They believed it was inevitable to associate the figure of the American doll with exaggeration, with the futility they tried so hard to show that they did not possess. They said they knew Barbie-like female police chiefs and criticized these characters, but none of them recognized themselves as such.

Heloísa, who stated that she thought it was important for female police chiefs to put on makeup, wear high heels and other adornments, believes that Barbie female police chief is a way of affirming femininity, albeit resorting to what she understands as “infantilized”. In the following excerpt, the female police chief assesses whether this infantilization would not be an attempt to erase female sexuality. It is interesting to think about how moral evaluation fits into this discourse since there would be no space for sexualized women:

*I think it is a way of affirming this femininity, but I don't think it can be like that... because when you do something Hello Kitty, cell phone, pink badge, I think you erase this issue of sexuality [...] this more childish thing* (Heloísa, 41).

The appearance of Barbie female police chief calls into question other elements and some questions. One of them is what dividing line determines how far vanity can go so that the *DeleGata* doesn't cross the dangerous Barbie female police chief boundaries? If the *DeleGata* allows herself to be beautiful and powerful, would the Barbie female police chief be an apparent *DeleGata* exaggerated and childish performance?

The *DeleGata* may exist, but her professional rise may be fraught with suspicion. Disqualification is based on the eroticization and objectification of female police chiefs, and a sexist resource is still very much present in the police. Thus, their

body and sexuality are highlighted as bargaining chips in the non-specific strategy of nominations for career progression. Virtual or not, this imaginary appears in the respondents' statements:

*The world for a beautiful person, man or woman, is another world [...] that's the truth. People are very receptive. Appearance, unfortunately, matters much. [...] Beauty also has a negative side because people are prejudiced, right? [...] I saw so many comments about women who came to power and said: "It's because she had sex with someone" [...] I never needed that kind of thing to achieve anything, and I am sure most people had no favoritism. Now, if the guy thinks the woman is pretty and wants to help just because she is pretty, then the problem is with this stupid man, right? [laughs]* (Paolla, 31).

As affective capital, beauty accumulates in particular bodies and moves away from others, generating aesthetic hierarchy<sup>1</sup>. The *DeleGata* (or even the Barbie police chief) uses such signs to belong to the political and social body, still closely associated with physical appearance, as the field suggests. As a police authority, the female police chief must address police-assigned functions. Monjardet<sup>24</sup> reminds us that the State upholds the monopoly of force and legitimate physical violence, and public forces can enforce this monopoly. The dominant symbology more easily recognizes men as holders of this element. In this sense, we can reflect that the excess of "femininity" and the gender prescriptions that align with this could place this woman who seeks equal rights under suspicion. Therefore, being a female police chief, she must have more than a pretty face. She must be strong, just like her male peers, which the Barbie female police chief seems to lack.

### Final considerations

The tensions in the activity area of female police chiefs are overly influenced by ideas about some essentialization of what their femininity attributes would be. However, contrary to passive stances in the face of such issues, we saw that our respondents operate their femininities performatively. Paths marked by continuous movements

of territorialization, escape lines, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization, female actions, and struggles to conquer space and recognition are inserted in a diffuse setting of advances and setbacks.

These discursive constructions help establish barriers to be overcome by women who hold jobs historically marked by an ideology or a specific idea of masculinity, such as the police. Denaturalizing this place is essential for us to analyze the processes in which the differences between masculine and feminine are forged from some diffuse power mechanisms. However, the symbolic dimension of male domination is markedly present in institutions that legitimize the use of force, such as the police. Thus, the androcentric vision imposes itself as an order and neutral, eliminating the need to express itself in legitimizing discourses<sup>15</sup>.

Although female delegates undergo some "masculinization" in order to be respected by their peers and subordinates, this is far from meaning that they become masculinized; that is, they begin to renounce feminine aesthetics. On the contrary, let us remember the image of *DeleGatas*: beautiful, feminine, powerful, and in high heels. Alternatively, even an ethos was attributed to them since by performing the *DeleGata*; this woman helped to make visible the female police chief the institution had erased. Without giving up her power of command, she plays the beautiful and powerful woman who commands and seduces.

Thus, the *DeleGata* can empower and emancipate the figure of the female police chief, traditionally erased and without a place. However, it reaffirms specific hegemonic beauty standards and can reinforce female objectification. This figure blurs categories, plays with performativities, and mixes the unthinkable because *DeleGata* certainly highlights that she will not need to renounce her femininity to be respected. On the contrary, her attributes of power and seduction can be enhanced but without exaggeration, using aesthetic resources and with the help of the media, as they don't seem to fit them or it will cost them their respect, just like the Barbie female police chief.

## Colaborations

AP Uziel partially contributed to data analysis and guided the research. DA Silva built the project and carried out all the data collection and analysis work.

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