



LAW, LINGUISTICS AND THE FAR RIGHT

**INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON VERBAL ATTACKS
ON VULNERABLE GROUPS**

Edited by
Tímea Drinóczi and Ana Larissa Oliveira



Law, Linguistics and the Far Right

This book examines how verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility directed at women and LGBT+ people operate across linguistic, multimodal, legal, and institutional domains, and how these practices contribute to discursive, democratic, and constitutional erosion. Bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives from linguistics, discourse and media studies, gender and queer theory, constitutional law, and human-rights scholarship, the volume addresses forms of aggression and hostility ranging from insults, ridicule, and digitally mediated shaming to metaphors of contamination, symbolic erasure, administrative practices, and doctrinal silence.

Through comparative analyses of cases from Brazil, Germany, Italy, Poland, China, and the European human rights system, the chapters show how these practices shape political communication, institutional behavior, and legal meaning-making, thereby affecting visibility, dignity, participation, and the practical enjoyment of rights. The volume highlights recurring mechanisms, such as purity and protection narratives, victim-perpetrator inversion, and multimodal amplification, that travel across platforms, political systems, and institutional settings.

The book demonstrates how verbal and symbolic aggression functions not only as an isolated speech act but as a cross-contextual mechanism with cumulative democratic and constitutional effects. The volume will be of interest to scholars and advanced students in law, linguistics, media and communication studies, gender studies, political science, and human rights.

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Attacks on Vulnerable Groups

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First published 2027
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-041-20676-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-20712-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-71761-4 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003717614

Typeset in Galliard
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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Introduction to law, linguistics, and the far right

International perspectives on verbal attacks on vulnerable groups

Tímea Drinóczi and Ana Larissa Oliveira

Motivation, framework, and research context

Verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility directed at women and LGBT+ people have become defining features of contemporary political and institutional life. Across diverse contexts, these practices – from insults, ridicule, edited images, body-shaming, and multimodal short-video attacks to metaphors of contamination, symbolic erasure, administrative boundary-policing, doctrinal omissions, and the co-optation of equality language – shape who is recognized as a legitimate political actor, whose dignity is protected, and whose claims to participation or rights are treated as valid. This volume takes as its central premise that such forms of aggression and hostility constitute a shared mechanism of democratic and constitutional erosion, operating simultaneously across linguistic, multimodal, legal, and institutional dimensions, producing democratic and constitutional erosion in democratic settings and reinforcing exclusionary governance in authoritarian ones.

The volume's conceptual motivation emerged from our earlier research on online verbal attacks against the Brazilian judiciary (Oliveira, Drinóczi, and Miranda, 2024). That project revealed how linguistic impoliteness (Culpeper, 2010, 2011; Wodak et al., 2021) circulated within far-right digital ecosystems, contributing to the discursive deterioration of democracy. These findings led us to refine our analytical lens: could models of impoliteness illuminate broader patterns of aggression and hostility across different targets and political environments? To test this, we extended our research to Brazilian women in positions of public power – two elected representatives and a justice of the Federal Supreme Court – using a combined qualitative-quantitative methodology. This work supported two preliminary hypotheses: first, that impoliteness theory is a useful analytical tool for understanding discursive erosion of democracy; and second, that far-right political communication directed at women and LGBT+ public figures relies on recurrent forms of linguistic impoliteness that strategically weaken democratic norms.

Yet these insights also revealed the limits of our approach. The evidence, although compelling, rested on three Brazilian case studies, and our analysis remained primarily linguistic. At the same time, scholarship addressing political

and legal discourse – across sociology (Sobieraj and Berry, 2011), anthropology (Cesarino, 2020, 2022), political science and legal studies (Meyer, 2021; Louault, 2022), and social media/discourse studies (Kalil, 2022) – offered important conceptual resources but rarely examined how aggression and hostility travels across linguistic, visual, legal, and institutional domains. Linguistic analyses of impoliteness map interactional dynamics yet seldom address how discursive aggression and hostility affect constitutional authority or the practical enjoyment of rights. Conversely, constitutional and human rights scholarship debates hate-speech doctrine without examining how hostility is constructed in multimodal ways on specific platforms. Gender studies analyze anti-gender politics and patriarchal backlash, but often without linking these developments to digital affordances; political science studies populism without a sustained focus on multimodal hostility; and media studies chart online hate without integrating its institutional effects.

Parallel fragmentation appears in scholarship on misogyny and LGBT+ hostility. Research on attacks against women shows how irony, ridicule, and digitally mediated misogyny reinforce patriarchal structures (Lopes Miranda, 2023) and how these practices generate chilling effects on participation (Carlson, 2017). Scholars have situated patriarchal and misogynistic speech within equality and hate-speech frameworks (Richardson-Self, 2018; Barker and Jurasz, 2019, 2021) and analyzed emerging policy and legislative responses (Brayson, 2024; Policy Paper, 2022). Similarly, scholarship on LGBT+ aggression and hostility documents its psychological and social harms (Keighley, 2022; Ștefăniță and Buf, 2021), identifies platform-specific discursive patterns (Condom Tibau et al., 2025), and demonstrates how online hate can predict offline violence (Arcila Calderón et al., 2024). Together, these works illuminate crucial dimensions of misogynistic and LGBT+-hostile discourse. Yet, they typically focus on separate linguistic, doctrinal, psychological, or platform-specific aspects rather than treating these phenomena as interconnected parts of a broader democratic and constitutional problem.

What remains insufficiently explored – and what motivates this volume – is how verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility operate simultaneously across linguistic, multimodal, legal, and institutional dimensions, and how these combined practices reshape the conditions for democratic discourse and human rights protection. We contend that aggression and hostility function as a structural mechanism through which far-right and other exclusionary actors redraw the boundaries of belonging, treating women and LGBT+ people as symbolic instruments for negotiating authority, legitimacy, and identity. By foregrounding how discursive aggression and hostility travel across modalities and institutional arenas, this volume shows not only that such practices degrade individuals, but that they reconfigure who is heard, whose claims count as political or legal, and who is recognized as a rights-bearing subject.

These developments must be understood within a broader global context. Verbal and symbolic aggression targeting women and LGBT+ people – and political, legal, and institutional actions against them – have become central

tools of political mobilization, institutional delegitimization, and rights backlash. As Stopler (2025) demonstrates, right-wing populism increasingly relies on patriarchal aggrandizement and the systematic degradation of women's rights as engines of political transformation, threatening liberal democracy even in consolidated Western systems. In Central and Eastern Europe, de-democratization and anti-gender politics – manifest in opposition to gender, policy backsliding, and state antifeminism – are directly linked (Bogaards and Pető, 2022). Two features connect these trends: (1) the instrumentalization of women's and LGBT+ rights for short-term political gain, and (2) the strategic deployment of verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility. These practices seek to legitimize inequality, mobilize supporters, weaken institutional constraints, delegitimize individuals and groups, and construct cohesive in-groups defined against newly constituted “enemies”. At the same time, institutional silence or insufficient legal protection persists despite the existence of hard and soft law frameworks.

This volume's contribution is to demonstrate, through interdisciplinary analysis, that verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility are not only fundamental to political communication but also central mechanisms of democratic and constitutional erosion. They shape constitutional subjectivity, circumscribe democratic participation, and constrain the practical accessibility of rights. By examining these practices across linguistic, multimodal, legal, and institutional domains, the chapters collectively reveal how the erosion of democracy and constitutionalism unfolds through language, not only through formal and informal constitutional change. Although the effects described in this volume take the form of democratic and constitutional erosion in democratic settings, they also appear in authoritarian contexts such as China. There, they intensify existing structures of ideological control and institutionalized exclusion. The mechanisms we analyze, therefore, operate across regime types, even as their institutional consequences differ. While the original intention was to focus on the far-right, the chapters reveal that verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility, drawing on the identified shared mechanisms, extend beyond formal far-right political communication and permeate legal, institutional, and bureaucratic settings. Thus, the book treats “far-right” in an analytically broad sense to capture exclusionary and anti-pluralist discourses that undermine equality, democratic participation, and rights protection, while recognizing that anti-gender hostility often exceeds its boundaries.

The following section identifies the cross-cutting themes that emerge across the contributions and outlines the conceptual architecture that ties them together.

Cross-cutting themes emerging from the chapters

This Introduction identifies recurring discursive and institutional mechanisms across contexts as diverse as Brazil, Germany, Italy, Poland, China, and international and European human rights law. By examining how verbal and

symbolic aggression and hostility toward women and LGBT+ individuals operate across these settings, the chapters collectively show that such practices function as cross-contextual mechanisms that contribute to democratic and constitutional erosion.

The impoliteness framework as a generative analytical lens across the volume

While not all contributions adopt impoliteness theory directly, the opening three chapters provide a conceptual (Oliveira and Drinóczi, 2027, Oliveira, Drinóczi, and Miranda, 2027) and methodological foundation (Miranda et al., 2027) that reverberates throughout the volume. The volume demonstrates that impoliteness – understood as intentional face-attacking behavior with political consequences – helps explain how far-right actors weaponize language to undermine dignity, recognition, authority, and equal participation.

Paulo Roberto Gonçalves-Segundo (2027) extends the framework into multimodal political communication, showing how short-video formats intensify impoliteness through ridicule, proximization, and eristic confrontation. Platform affordances, he argues, amplify “entertained hostility”, creating new technico-affective forms of impoliteness.

Knappe and Bös (2027) corroborate the volume’s central insight that impoliteness is a strategic political resource rather than merely a spontaneous interpersonal deviation. Their multimodal analysis shows how verbal, visual, graphic, kinesic, and cinematic cues perform exclusionary and face-attacking work by constructing LGBT+ people as an out-group. Their systematic inventory demonstrates how digitally mediated political communication embeds hostile messages into everyday visual consumption.

Although Schröder (2027), Górski (2027), Spigno (2027), and Scotti and Morra (2027) do not explicitly use impoliteness theory, their chapters deepen the framework’s implications. Schröder shows that impoliteness-like mechanisms – shaming, purity anxieties, derogatory categorization – can travel into bureaucratic and administrative discourse under the radar of explicit extremism. Górski’s doctrinal analysis illustrates that even scholarly and juridical discourse participates in discursive hostility by marginalizing feminist and queer perspectives and redrawing the boundaries of legitimate participation. Scotti and Morra (2027) demonstrate how anti-gender hostility is converted into party rhetoric, policy framing, and legal mobilization, thereby transforming discursive aggression into a driver of democratic backsliding. Spigno highlights that hostile discourse may also become legally invisible due to doctrinal asymmetries, adding a crucial institutional dimension to the framework by identifying where law itself fails to register discursive harm. Balogh (2027) further refines the analytical vocabulary by distinguishing impoliteness from criminal threats, deepfakes, and doxxing. She suggests situating impoliteness within a broader taxonomy of online abuse by clarifying its conceptual limits and showing why a broader regulatory perspective is needed to capture and avoid threats against women in politics.

Some chapters confirm that online hostility often follows a reciprocal interactional logic: impolite attacks invite mocking or ironic counter-attacks, triggering spirals of escalation and creating solidarity among in-groups (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2022). In the German debates on self-determination law and the in-house sauna regulations, commenters describe trans women as “men” seeking illegitimate access to women’s spaces; queer users reply with satirical inversions and ironic commentary, including observations about potential paradoxical scenarios in which trans men would have access to the same spaces. It then provoked renewed moral panic and intensified accusations (Schröder, 2027).

These engagements demonstrate that the theory of impoliteness provides a generative conceptual reference point for comparative inquiry. It enables the identification of resonant mechanisms of aggression and hostility across linguistic, multimodal, legal, and institutional modalities, clarifying how this type of discourse contributes to the erosion of democracy and constitutionalism.

Verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility and far right as umbrella terms

Across the chapters, “verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility” appears as an umbrella concept capturing practices that degrade, humiliate, exclude, or delegitimize individuals and groups. The term brings together four analytically distinct but empirically intertwined dimensions across chapters. Aggression denotes intentional acts aimed at humiliation, face-attack, or reputational damage, whereas hostility operates as a broader attitudinal, institutional, or structural mode of exclusion, manifested through legal framing, administrative practice, doctrinal silence, or the cumulative effect of public narratives. Verbal form refers to explicit linguistic acts, such as insults, ridicule, irony, slurs, doxxing, and eristic confrontation, that directly target a person’s face, dignity, or credibility. Symbolic action encompasses non-verbal and multimodal forms, such as memes, edited images, short-video mockery, metaphors of contamination, symbolic erasure, and bureaucratic classifications, which communicate exclusion without always naming it explicitly.

Across the volume, these modalities appear in varied configurations: from edited images and mockery directed at Brazilian women in politics to bureaucratic suspicion and monitoring practices in Germany to doctrinal omissions in ECtHR jurisprudence and to symbolic erasure in Poland. Several chapters illustrate that such practices do not merely harm individuals but also influence constitutional meaning-making. For example, the intensification of misogynistic and homophobic “lynching” campaigns in Poland, as Górski shows, paradoxically forced feminist and queer perspectives into legal and scholarly visibility, even as they deepened social polarization and legal precarity. Likewise, Spigno demonstrates how the ECtHR’s silence on misogynistic hate speech – despite clear jurisprudence on homophobic hate speech – constitutes a form of institutional hostility that normalizes gender-based verbal aggression

through under-protection rather than explicit rejection. Scotti and Morra's analysis of the Italian anti-gender politics shows how party rhetoric, legal framing, and narrative strategies such as pink-washing and semantic appropriation are used as tools for legitimizing gender-based exclusion without overt verbal aggression.

This phenomenon is analyzed in this volume in two partially overlapping environments: far-right political communication and broader anti-gender discursive fields. This reflects the empirical reality of the volume: not all exclusionary practices originate with the far right, yet they draw on a similar repertoire and produce comparable effects. While many chapters examine actors traditionally classified as far-right (Oliveira and Drinóczi, 2027; Gonçalves-Segundo, 2027; Scotti and Morra, 2027), others deal with anti-gender movements and rhetoric (Górski, 2027), social media dynamics (Schröder, 2027; Knappe and Bös, 2027), and legal, institutional, and social mechanisms that produce exclusionary effects reproduce similar exclusionary logics without belonging to far-right ideology (Balogh, 2027; Górksi, 2027; Scotti and Morra, 2027; Spigno, 2027; Yin and Unger, 2027).

These analyses show that “far-right” in this volume functions as an analytically broad descriptor for exclusionary and anti-pluralist discourses that undermine equality, democratic participation, and rights protection, while recognizing that the mechanisms identified extend beyond formally far-right actors and permeate legal, institutional, and bureaucratic settings.

Purity, nativism, and protection narratives as verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility

Across the volume, purity, nativism, and protection narratives emerge not only as ideological tropes but as mechanisms of verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility. By constructing certain individuals or groups as contaminants or threats, these narratives redefine who counts as a legitimate subject and who may participate safely and equally in public or institutional spaces and discourses. In doing so, purity and nativist logic restrict the practical enjoyment of rights and contribute to democratic and constitutional erosion.

Purity and nativist logic operate across contexts and modalities. In the Chinese gaming communities, queer inclusion is framed as ideological “contamination”, producing gatekeeping, moral panic, and exclusion. English-language far-right memes are recontextualized to align with Chinese nationalist concerns about cultural purity and foreign interference (Yin and Unger, 2027). In Germany, administrative practices such as *Sichtkontrolle* operationalize purity concerns through bodily verification (Schröder, 2027). Knappe and Bös (2027) show how national purity, heroic masculinity, and stylized imagery construct hostile in-group/out-group boundaries and frame LGBT+ identities as threats to the social body. The chapters on Brazil illustrate how purity logics inform gendered body-policing through ridicule, shaming, and appeals to naturalness and moral order (Oliveira, Drinóczi, and Miranda, 2027). The

Italian chapter illustrates how purity narratives structure legal-political mobilization. “Gender ideology” is framed as a moral and biological threat to the nation, legitimizing campaigns that restrict gender equality protections and cast minority rights as dangers to the social order (Scotti and Morra, 2027).

Digitally mediated aggression and hostility, its amplifying effects, and enemy construction

While aggressive and offensive verbal behavior is not new, its mass amplification through digital platforms is unprecedented. Several chapters show how digital environments transform misogyny, sexism, and homo-transphobia into scalable, networked, and coordinated attacks. Meme culture, image manipulation, and multimodal shaming accelerate aggression and hostility by embedding it into the aesthetics and rhythms of online communication.

Brazilian datasets show high rates of impoliteness (31.3% of 6,653 posts, in Miranda et al., 2027). Short-video platforms illustrate how platform-specific affordances, such as speed, emotional compression, and eristic staging, intensify hostility and transform political communication into affect-driven confrontation (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2027). Knappe and Bös (2027) demonstrate similar multimodal amplification in Germany, where camera work, music, and visual effects create hostile environments that normalize exclusionary narratives. Even within a censored environment, online exclusionary practices flourish through playful aesthetics and stylized shame (Yin and Unger, 2027). Together with Balogh’s chapter (2027), it shows that online violence is a global and structural phenomenon, not confined to far-right environments, and that it spans verbal aggression, multimodal hostility, and disinformation.

Far-right discourse relies on shamelessness, disruption, and inversion, including victim/perpetrator reversal: portraying majoritarian aggressors as victims and minorities as dangerous transgressors. Impoliteness becomes a form of political “newspeak” – in the metaphorical sense used in recent scholarship (Zottola and Borba, 2022; MacAdams and Piccolo, 2023) – where terms like “family”, “gender”, or “freedom” are strategically redefined to support exclusion.

Górski shows how this logic plays out in Poland’s parliamentary and online debates about civil partnerships and abortion; Knappe and Bös identify similar mechanisms in German campaigns, and Scotti and Morra in Italian party and strategic discourse. Yin and Unger find analogous patterns in the gaming context, where queerness is framed as ideological contamination through playful mockery and aestheticized shame. These confirm that shamelessness and inversion are central mechanisms in constructing political enemies.

Hostility across legal, institutional, and digital domains

A key insight across many contributions is that the boundaries between online and offline spaces are porous: practices of humiliation, exclusion, and verbal and symbolic violence migrate seamlessly between them.

Schröder (2027) shows how legal reforms and administrative rules, such as *Sichtkontrolle*, become flashpoints for online debate, which intensify purity and safety concerns in response to these practices. Scotti and Morra (2027) demonstrate how similar anti-gender narratives are taken up within party platforms and legal-political strategies, showing how discursive hostility is translated into institutional politics rather than remaining confined to online controversy. Yin and Unger (2027) reveal a further layer of this dynamic: online hostility becomes intertwined with censorship regimes, state ideology, and familial structures. It shows how digital spaces reproduce and, at times, intensify offline hierarchies. Spigno (2027) then highlights what happens when these dynamics reach the level of rights adjudication: pervasive misogynistic hostility persists, while legal doctrine remains selectively silent, which allows gender-based verbal aggression to go largely unaddressed.

It thus becomes evident how aggression and hostility toward women and LGBT+ people operate through recurrent mechanisms that span digital, multimodal, legal, and institutional domains. These mechanisms collectively erode dignity, visibility, pluralistic norms, and protection of rights, contributing to a broader discursive erosion of democracy.

On this basis, we can now identify the core lessons that emerge across the chapters: interdisciplinary insights into how these practices drive democratic and constitutional erosion.

Lessons learned

This volume brings together a diverse set of cases – Brazil, Italy, Poland, Germany, China, and the European human rights system – to illuminate how verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility function within contemporary far-right and anti-gender political environments. Despite substantial contextual differences, the chapters converge on a set of shared mechanisms and effects. These insights reveal that digitally mediated verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility are not an assortment of isolated messages or spontaneous outbursts, but a shared mechanism of democratic and constitutional erosion. What follows is a synthesis of the core lessons learned across the contributions.

Discursive hostility operates according to global structural patterns

Across the chapters, the first lesson learned is that verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility follow global structural patterns. It means that the same rhetorical devices, emotional registers, and multimodal techniques recur across settings as diverse as democratic states, authoritarian and hybrid political regimes, and the international and European human rights system.

What is distinctive in this volume is that these mechanisms appear across multiple domains simultaneously: in different media ecologies (short videos, memes, gaming forums, parliamentary debates), across institutional domains (political and party narratives, bureaucratic rules, constitutional doctrine,

ECtHR jurisprudence), and through multiple semiotic modes (linguistic, visual, legal, and administrative). Mechanisms such as victim/perpetrator inversion, purity, nativist, and protection narratives, moral panic, symbolic erasure, and institutional delegitimization surface with regularity across these divergent contexts. This convergence indicates a transnational repertoire of aggression and hostility, which travels through digital infrastructures, multimodal aesthetics, and anti-gender networks, but also embeds itself in bureaucratic practices (Schröder, 2027), constitutional meaning-making (Górski, 2027), doctrinal silence (Spigno, 2026), party politics and strategies and pink washing techniques (Scotti and Morra, 2026), and even gaming cultures under authoritarian censorship (Yin and Unger, 2026).

Recognizing these global structural patterns clarifies why similar discursive dynamics now shape democratic and constitutional debates in places that otherwise differ dramatically in political structure, culture, and institutional design.

Discursive pathways to democratic and human rights erosion

The second central insight emerging from this volume is that discursive aggression and hostility do not simply mirror political and legal tensions but actively produce and restructure them, reshaping the conditions of democratic life and the enjoyment of human rights by eroding their communicative foundations. On the one hand, it distorts deliberation, undermines mutual recognition, delegitimizes institutions, and narrows who counts as a credible and equal participant in public debate. On the other hand, these practices weaken dignity and equal status, normalize misogyny and LGBT-phobia, and discourage participation.

These dynamics confirm that law and discourse co-produce constitutional meaning: bureaucratic practices, judicial reasoning, doctrinal silences and under-enforcement, and public rhetoric mutually reinforce the boundaries of rights, identity, and inclusion. While legal overreach in the name of protecting vulnerable groups may itself threaten rights when weaponized by far-right actors, legal underreach reinforces existing structural hierarchies and leaves vulnerable groups vulnerable.

Recognition of this dynamic is crucial because it shows that the erosion of democracy and constitutionalism, including the weakening of human rights protections, often begins not with formal or informal constitutional change, but with earlier discursive transformations that shape whose voices are heard, which claims appear legitimate, and how equality and participation are interpreted and experienced in public life.

Studying multimodal aggression and hostility requires an integrative, interdisciplinary analytical model

A further lesson of this volume is that contemporary verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility operate in a multimodal way, unfolding simultaneously

across linguistic, visual, party political, legal, and institutional domains. This discourse is not limited to insults or textual aggression; it is also enacted through memes and short videos, administrative practices and bureaucratic scrutiny, doctrinal silences and constitutional and legal reasoning, and aesthetic forms that circulate rapidly across digital platforms and offline domains. This multi-level configuration reveals that contemporary aggression and hostility are as much semiotic as political: they work through words, images, political and legal classifications, and institutional signals that mutually reinforce exclusion. Because no single discipline can capture this complexity, an integrative analytical model becomes essential. Linguistic pragmatics, critical discourse studies, media and platform analysis, gender and queer theory, political science, and constitutional and human rights law each illuminate different dimensions of how aggression and hostility are produced, legitimized, and scaled. Bringing these perspectives together allows us to see more clearly how multimodal aggression and hostility can operate within a wider ecosystem of practices that shape public debate, social norms, and constitutional meaning, even if they are not the sole drivers of such change.

Discursive repair depends on institutional and structural support

A final lesson emerging from the volume is that discursive repair – the ability of democratic systems to counteract aggression and hostility – requires social, institutional, and structural support. Counter-speech, social mobilization, education, and shifts in public narrative can open space for feminist and queer perspectives. However, these gains remain fragile unless they are embedded in political determination, legal doctrine, bureaucratic practice, and institutional design. The chapters show that courts, administrative bodies, and human rights institutions play a decisive role in determining whether emerging claims to dignity and equality are recognized or remain vulnerable to exclusion. Doctrinal development, inclusive adjudicatory practices, and institutional attentiveness to symbolic harm are essential for rendering previously invisible forms of exclusion legally legible. Conversely, doctrinal gaps, administrative fragmentation, and under-recognition of misogynistic hostility hinder repair and allow structural inequality to persist. Thus, democratic repair cannot rely on discourse alone but also requires institutional infrastructure capable of translating discursive inclusion into durable legal protections and sustained equality.

This volume demonstrates that systematic, multimodal, and transnational discursive practices drive contemporary far-right and anti-gender politics. These practices strategically target women, LGBT+ persons, and democratic institutions, reshaping the boundaries of participation, authority, and citizenship. Hostility circulates through language, imagery, legal classification, and institutional practice, generating an environment in which dignity, equality, and recognition are continuously contested and unevenly distributed. The chapters show that such dynamics cannot be understood through any single

disciplinary lens: they require an integrative, comparative, and multimodal approach capable of capturing the interactions among discourse, law, and institutional behavior. Recognizing these mechanisms is essential not only for diagnosing democratic erosion but also for developing responsive legal frameworks and strengthening the communicative foundations on which constitutional democracy depends.

Advancing impoliteness theories

In digital networks, users often replicate impoliteness when assessing (or commenting on) the impolite verbal behavior of others. The findings in this volume thus support the idea of reciprocity as a form of symbolic accumulation, analogous to the accumulation of material resources. Such symbolic accumulation is crucial for the concept of civilization and sociability as we understand them today, both of which rely on maintaining a symbolic balance of payments - or, at its core, the practice of “tit for tat”. It is therefore possible to conclude that, when impoliteness takes the front seat, verbal attacks on those considered “beneath” become a trend. These findings further suggest that speakers experience pressure to reciprocate impoliteness, thereby conforming to the Principle of Impoliteness Reciprocity (Culpeper and Tantucci, 2021). At the same time, it appears that employing verbal shamelessness as a posting practice in public speeches and on social media is not merely a tactic to propagate misogyny and transphobia. It also serves as an effective smokescreen, designed to divert public attention from critical issues, such as social inequality, impoverishing the political debate. Hence, one implication of the works presented in this volume is that they have made the case that the gradual erosion of democracy walks hand in hand with an increase in verbal impoliteness, which is used as a routinized strategy to threaten perceived opponents and deepen the gap between “us” and “them” – as an essential feature of polarized scenarios. Another implication is that verbal attacks are correlated strongly with processes of online cancellation. They display a type of disproportional reactive aggression of users, endorsed as a means of moral condemnation (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2022). As such, these reactions mirror the polarized political debate, in which expressing other condemning emotions implies the moral quality of the in-group.

Directions for future research: impoliteness and marginalized groups

As discussed in this book, impoliteness functions as a key mechanism through which power relations are enacted, negotiated, and contested. In targeting women and LGBT+ people through ridicule, delegitimization, and moral condemnation, impolite language reinforces gendered and sexual hierarchies and renders symbolic exclusion. It also operates as a disciplinary strategy to regulate bodies, identities, and forms of belonging. At the same time, impoliteness also has the potential to disrupt dominant power structures when deployed to contest inequality, expose injustice, and demand recognition on equal terms.

From this standpoint, future research can examine whether and how impoliteness can be justified when used to challenge oppressive norms, assert marginalized subjectivities, and provoke dialogue aimed at social transformation. As the burden of impoliteness cannot be placed solely on those positioned as superior, investigating how vulnerable groups and their supporters challenge hierarchies and actively work to transcend them is a question that merits further empirical investigation.

While this volume focuses primarily on the far right, we recognize that impolite and exclusionary discourse circulates across a broader political spectrum. Future research would benefit from systematic comparative analyses of how actors across different political positions, including some far-left actors, deploy verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility, and the democratic consequences of this deployment. Such work would help identify which mechanisms are ideologically specific and which reflect broader transformations in contemporary political discourse. Similarly, although this book centers on women and LGBT+ communities, it is crucial to extend this line of inquiry to other axes of vulnerability, including race, ethnicity, religion, and social class, all of which shape the political instrumentalization of verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility. We hope that the analyses offered here provide a useful starting point for such broader inquiry.

Emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, introduce additional methodological and conceptual layers to the study of verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility. AI systems can amplify hostile content and may reproduce the biases embedded in training data. Yet they also provide helpful tools for large-scale corpus construction, textual and visual classification, and the detection of multimodal patterns that would otherwise remain inaccessible. For scholarly analysis, however, these computational techniques could be embedded within frameworks that preserve contextual nuance and interpretive depth. Effective research, therefore, requires a balanced approach that complements AI-assisted methods with sustained human oversight, theoretical grounding, and domain expertise in linguistics, discourse analysis, gender studies, law, and political science, among other fields. Because the communicative effects of the digital sphere are still evolving and not yet fully understood, it remains important to investigate both the behaviors that technologies enable and those they constrain. The abundance of online discourse also provides opportunities to scale up not only the size of the dataset but also its representativeness and generalizability. In this vein, researchers could identify other specific yet significant phenomena that can make a distinct and valuable contribution, for example, by critically engaging with understudied communicative practices that shape online interaction, such as online forums and instant messaging apps. Ultimately, methodological choices should be driven by research questions rather than by the limitations of available tools or entrenched methodological habits.

Looking ahead, collaborative, interdisciplinary networks – bringing together scholars of impoliteness, discourse and communication studies,

political science, human rights, democracy, and AI specialists – will be essential for developing robust analytical frameworks, methodological approaches, and ethical research practices. Such collective efforts can generate practical resources to map evolving forms of digital and institutional hostility and to strengthen democratic resilience in the face of rapidly changing communicative landscapes.

Roadmap of chapters

The chapters in this volume approach verbal and symbolic aggression and hostility from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, including linguistics, critical discourse studies, constitutional law, gender studies, media studies, and digital culture. They show that hostility toward women and LGBT+ people is neither episodic nor confined to specific political contexts. Instead, it forms part of a patterned, multimodal, and adaptive repertoire that appears across diverse media environments and institutional settings, yet relies on shared logics of exclusion, fear, and identity construction.

The volume's structure reflects this trajectory. Part I develops the conceptual and empirical foundations of the book through analyses of Brazilian political discourse, offering both theoretical framing and multimodal evidence. Part II expands the scope to global, digital, and constitutional contexts, illustrating how similar mechanisms operate across distinct political systems and communicative environments. Part III returns to Europe to show how hostility becomes embedded in law, institutional practice, and political culture. Across these contributions, authors engage – each through their own disciplinary lens – with the central question guiding the volume: how digitally and institutionally mediated impoliteness contributes to the erosion of discursive, democratic, and constitutional norms, and how it affects the visibility, dignity, and rights of women and LGBT+ people. Despite their different methods and contexts, the chapters converge on the insight that discursive aggression and hostility play a constitutive role in reshaping democratic norms and practices. The following roadmap synthesizes how each chapter advances this inquiry.

The opening chapter of Part I – “Models of linguistic impoliteness: a theoretical framework for digitally mediated far-right discourse” by Ana Larissa Oliveira and Tímea Drinóczi – develops the book's analytical foundation by arguing that models of linguistic impoliteness offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how digitally mediated far-right discourse uses conflict language to undermine pluralism, institutional legitimacy, and rights. Drawing on impoliteness pragmatics, the authors show how the normalization of verbal aggression – through shamelessness, deep disagreements, and shifting thresholds of acceptable speech – functions as a strategic resource in populist and authoritarian communication. While primarily theoretical, the chapter prepares the ground for the empirical analyses that follow, demonstrating why impoliteness is well-suited to explain online misogyny, sexism, transphobia, and attacks on the judiciary, and how these discursive practices contribute to democratic erosion.

In Chapter 2, “Methodological approaches and data: A Brazilian case study”, Monique Miranda, Ana Larissa Oliveira, Tímea Drinóczi, and Isabel Santos operationalize the volume’s conceptual framework by describing the construction of the Corpus of Digital Impoliteness, a large dataset of online comments directed at Brazilian women and LGBTQ+ public figures. Using computational tools (Google Developer’s API) combined with linguistic annotation and qualitative analysis, the authors map recurring patterns of verbal aggression – including misogynistic, sexist, and homophobic attacks – and identify the impoliteness strategies through which far-right digital communities undermine recognition and democratic participation. Methodologically, the chapter demonstrates the value of mixed methods for capturing the scale and variation of online aggression and hostility, and it contributes to the volume by providing a useful empirical benchmark.

The third contribution, “Online verbal attacks on women in power: A Brazilian case study”, written by Ana Larissa Oliveira, Tímea Drinóczi, and Monique Miranda, deepens the empirical investigation through a qualitative multimodal analysis. With a documented impoliteness rate of 31.3%, the chapter shows how insults, edited images, body-shaming, and moralized aggression converge to construct women and LGBTQ+ people as illegitimate political actors. The analysis reveals how multimodal hostility – textual and visual – operates simultaneously to reinforce the discursive erosion of democracy and the emergence of the “new normal”.

Shifting from comments to short-form video ecosystems, Paulo Roberto Gonçalves-Segundo’s chapter, “the era of the short political video clips: antiprogressive rhetoric in the Brazilian new-right social media ecology”, examines how Instagram and TikTok are engineered to stage eristic confrontation. Focusing on São Paulo councilman Lucas Pavanato, the analysis shows how insults, ridicule, proximization, and fallacious reasoning are embedded in visually engaging narratives that portray feminists and LGBTQ+ activists as incoherent or dangerous. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies and impoliteness pragmatics, the chapter offers the clearest evidence in the volume that multimodal hostility is amplified algorithmically, transforming political debate into perpetual agonistic spectacle and normalizing attacks on marginalized groups.

As the first contribution to Part II on “from digital hostility to institutional power: global, legal and political perspectives”, Lídia Balogh in “female politicians as targets of cyberviolence: exploring international discourse on response strategies” shifts the focus from a single country to a global comparative review of online violence against women in politics. She provides a global, meta-level account of online violence against female politicians, broadening the Brazilian case by comparing international reports, soft-law standards, and NGO findings. While affirming the democratic importance of women’s participation in public life, she interrogates the potential inferences implicit in the first three chapters, namely that hostility is primarily far-right-driven and that regulatory suppression should be the apparent response. Her synthesis shows

that gendered digital hostility is a structural phenomenon that far-right actors may draw on, but that is not limited to them. By differentiating impoliteness from criminal abuse, visual manipulation, and doxxing, she highlights a central dilemma for democratic states: over-criminalization may be counterproductive or vulnerable to authoritarian misuse. Her chapter, therefore, introduces a normative caution into the volume and connects discursive hostility to political participation and the vulnerabilities of democratic inclusion.

In the chapter “how chinese players respond to queerness in video games: right-wing discursive attacks in chinese online gaming communities”, Yue Yin and Johann Wolfgang Unger analyze queerphobic hostility in Chinese gaming communities, showing how queerness is constructed as ideological contamination and used to police masculinity, morality, and national identity. Combining Discourse-Historical Approach, multimodal analysis, and insights from impoliteness theory, they examine how insults, metaphors, euphemisms shaped by censorship, and visual mockery operate as ideological resources of exclusion. Their chapter expands the volume’s comparative scope by demonstrating that far-right-style discursive logics emerge even in authoritarian environments without explicit far-right actors, confirming that gender- and sexuality-based hostility follows transnational patterns and operates through multimodal, platform-specific forms.

Turning to Poland, Marcin Górski (“How the far-right silencing and subsequent lynching mainstreamed the feminist and queer perspectives of Polish constitutionalism and what to do with it”) shows how far-right and ultra-conservative actors have long marginalized and attempted to erase feminist and queer constitutional perspectives. He argues that recent waves of misogynistic and homophobic hostility have paradoxically accelerated the mainstreaming of feminist and LGBT+ legal arguments. Using doctrinal analysis of constitutional case law alongside discursive readings of parliamentary debates and public rhetoric, he traces how constitutional meaning is co-produced by hostility, institutional maneuvering, and resistance. For this book, his chapter offers a constitutional-level account of anti-gender politics, demonstrating how exclusionary discourse both erodes rights in practice and forces new inclusive interpretations into the constitutional mainstream.

Valentina Rita Scotti and Emilia Morra’s contribution, “anti-gender politics and strategic pink-washing in contemporary Italy”, examines how far-right and conservative political actors integrate anti-gender ideology into party discourse, legal argumentation, and public communication strategies. Drawing on interdisciplinary analysis of political rhetoric, legal frameworks, and media narratives, the authors show how Italian right-wing parties deploy a dual strategy: mobilizing hostility against feminism and LGBT+ rights through the language of “gender ideology”, while simultaneously engaging in selective “pink-washing” to present themselves as defenders of liberal values. Their chapter demonstrates how discursive aggression does not remain confined to online environments but becomes institutionalized through party platforms,

legislative debates, and constitutional framing, thereby transforming cultural hostility into a tool of political governance and rights restriction. In the context of this volume, the Italian case reveals how anti-gender discourse functions as a bridge between symbolic aggression and concrete political power.

Part III discusses aggression and hostility in law, politics, and public culture. In their examination of social media discourse produced by Members of the European Parliament's Europe of Sovereign Nations party, Xandra Knappe and Birte Bös ("maintaining social order through exclusion: multimodal impoliteness and LGBTQ+ marginalisation in radical right social media") compile a systematic account of multimodal impoliteness in far-right political communication. Using a mixed-methods multimodal analysis of 115 Facebook and X posts, they show how insults, mockery, symbolic co-optation, visual staging, camera effects, and sound design construct LGBTQ+ people as a collective out-group and legitimize exclusion under the guise of national protection. Their chapter contributes a detailed inventory of multimodal hostility. It demonstrates how digitally mediated political communication strategically embeds anti-gender rhetoric in affective, entertaining, and nationalist frames, thereby normalizing exclusion and reinforcing the broader argument that hostility is a constitutive mechanism of democratic erosion.

Rieke Schröder, in her chapter, "from self-determination to *sichtkontrolle*: leakiness, law, and the governance of trans bodies in Germany", turns to Germany and analyses how administrative practices associated with the implementation of the 2024 Self-Determination Law, particularly monitoring requirements and discretionary assessments in public facilities such as saunas, may generate dignity burdens and inconsistent procedural treatment for individuals seeking to exercise newly recognized rights. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis, she shows how bureaucratic rules provoke suspicion, purity concerns, and dignity-undermining narratives in digital spaces. Her contribution reveals how institutional design can unintentionally generate discursive hostility by supplying categories, cues, and justifications that circulate far beyond the administrative context.

Irene Spigno offers the volume's other doctrinal analysis in her contribution, "how to deal with misogynistic speech? lessons from the ECtHR's case law on homophobic hate discourse". She traces how the ECtHR has progressively developed a jurisprudence on homophobic hate speech while leaving misogynistic hate speech largely unaddressed. Through close reading of the key cases – Vejdeland, Lilliendahl, and Lenis – she shows how the Court has moved from minimal recognition to applying Article 17 of the European Convention of Human Rights to the most extreme forms of homophobic hostility, establishing a model based on content, speaker authority, and dissemination context. Methodologically grounded in comparative jurisprudence and doctrinal interpretation, the chapter demonstrates that misogynistic hate speech satisfies the same criteria but lacks legal recognition due to cultural normalization and doctrinal inertia. Its contribution to the volume is twofold: it exposes the institutional dimension of symbolic

aggression – how law itself reproduces asymmetries in the protection of women and LGBT+ people – and it offers a replicable legal framework for treating misogynistic hate speech with the same seriousness as other forms of group-based hostility.

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