

## Introduction

**Lúcia de Freitas & Micheline Tomazi**

Universidade Estadual de Goiás, Brazil &  
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Brazil

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This special issue on “violence against women” which as Brazilian university-based researchers we were proud to edit, involved very particular perspectives that we will present in this Introduction. The first is the theme itself, *violence against women*, in the plural. We know that the forms of violence to which women are subjected are very plural and vary in degree and intensity depending on economic, social, regional, generational, racial, sexual, etc. factors. The call we launched in 2019 presented such plurality and invited the scientific community to present “violence against women” oriented research from a Language and Law perspective. In addition to taking this first perspective by providing a list with a variety of violent practices, we also reinforced the broad character of the category “woman”, here represented in the plural “women”, as we wrote in the call: “cisgender women, trans, LGBTQIA+.” Plurality, therefore, is central to this issue.

In addition, the social-political context is also a reference. Despite the call being launched in 2019, the proposal had been in development since 2018, shortly after the #MeeToo movement mobilized thousands of exchanges on social networks and generated a multitude of reports and discussions about sexual harassment, a very recurrent type of violence against women. Even before #MeeToo acquired such proportions in 2017, movements demanding more significant guarantees of women’s rights had swelled worldwide. In 2016, there was the American women’s demonstration the day after President Donald Trump’s inauguration, when thousands of protesters took to the streets of Washington, and more than 20 other American cities, to demand respect for those women’s rights that had been hard-won over decades. In addition, there were demonstrations in Germany, France, Sweden, and Spain, among others.

In Brazil, less than a year before these demonstrations, there were several feminist marches which were labelled “The Feminist Springs” by the mainstream media. In recent years, a movement of Mexican women to fight gender violence, especially the escalating numbers of femicides, also received the same name. In fact, throughout Latin America, combating violence against women, which culminates in femicide, is a priority agenda on the continent, where the rates are extremely high. This was the context

from which we started to plan this special issue, mainly because in 2021, when the publication would be published, the Brazilian ‘Maria da Penha’ law would complete 15 years. This law is a legal statute widely referenced as an institutional model for combating domestic and family violence against women in many countries. In 2021, we would also celebrate in Brazil the first five years of enactment of the Law on Femicide, considered an achievement of the women’s movement in a country where femicide has pandemic proportions.

All these were taken into account when we planned this issue. However, at that time we could not foresee that in 2020 we would experience a pandemic that would put the world into an indefinite quarantine. Suddenly, our homes had to be converted into workspaces, classrooms, and, in some cases, hospitals. Every author featured in this issue has a personal account of the time when they produced their manuscripts, while everyone was living the so-called ‘new normal’. While, for us in academia, it has always been ‘normal’ to work at home, especially reading, thinking, and writing, for the vast majority of people, working from home brought different types of problems, especially for women.

Feminist literature and statistics show to what extent the domestic environment can become a risk factor for women, and make them more susceptible to physical, psychological, and sexual violence. It is not surprising that, now, at the end of 2021, almost two years into the pandemic, we have seen media outlets report an increase in cases of violence against women, although these are still under-reported. In November 2021 the President of Portugal lamented the negative impact of covid-19, noting that increased “isolation, the breakdown of contacts and the absence of alternatives, sentenced many victims to suffering in silence and isolation” (<https://pt.euronews.com/2021/11/26/dia-internacional-pela-eliminacao-da-violencia-contra-as-mulheres>).

As we said at the beginning, the organization of this issue took place during a scenario of very particular perspectives. We believe that this brief recapitulation allows us to better situate readers within the articles. The ten articles carefully selected for this special issue of *Language Law / Linguagem e Direito* bring together a diversity of reflections on the central theme, “violence against women,” in dialogue with the fields of law and language, including literature.

Thus, articles address the theme in various social practices, ranging from using social networks as evidence in legal proceedings, undertaking analyses of discursive strategies and linguistic structures of discursive movements in defense of women victims of violence. We point to the microanalysis of judicial sentences and the structuring prejudices rooted in this textual genre which identify linguistic structures that cause exclusion and silencing. We also emphasize how the original case of ‘Maria da Penha’ has fostered a change in legislation from the effusiveness of the surrounding discourses in society. As we have said, there is plenty of room for the discussion between literature and law, demonstrating, for example, the way the domination structures enmesh in literary language. These aspects should be identified and fought. Let us now proceed to the details of each of the articles.

The issue opens with an article by Janet Ainsworth titled *When police discursive violence interacts with intimate partner violence: Domestic Violence as a risk factor for police-induced false confessions*. The study reflects on the parallels between American-

style police interrogation psychology and the psychodynamics of domestic violence. The author argues that victims of domestic violence may respond to police interrogation with the same coping strategies – accommodation and acquiescence – that they resort to in attempting to avoid battering. She discusses how this dynamic can potentially lead to false confessions and points out that collaborative research by linguists and psychologists is necessary to mitigate this possibility of miscarriage of justice.

In the article “*Ele vai negar tudo*”: *O estudo interacional de uma história de Violência Doméstica contra a mulher narrada em entrevista de pré-mediação familiar judicial*, the authors Paulo Cortes Gago, Maria do Carmo Leite de Oliveira, Áida Silva Penna, Maria de Lourdes Pereira and Vanderlei Andrade de Paula present the narrative produced by a woman victim of gender violence interviewed in a judicial process for the custody of her children. In qualitative research work, applying Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis, they analyze moments in the narrative concerning the ‘Maria da Penha’ law and the cycle of violence. The results point to a complex network of personal and institutional relationships that deal with violence against women. Everyone is an actor, whether in combat or in the perpetuation of the cycle of violence.

The article *Writing up or writing off crimes of domestic violence? A transitivity analysis of police reports*, by Patricia Canning, explores whether the linguistic choices made by police officers on judicial reports of DV in England and Wales reflect implicit attitudinal biases, that in turn, can potentially pre-empt out-of-court case disposals of DV cases. The article concludes by arguing that how police present agency, participant roles, and circumstantial elements in reports to prosecutors can encode a ‘preferred outcome’, resulting in more lenient charging decisions.

Then, in *WhatsApp e o contexto discursivo como prova de violência contra a Mulher*, Rosângela Carreira focuses on the use of social networks as a tool for reporting cases of violence and abuse against women. Based on a case study of a femicide with vast national repercussions, the article analyzes the stylistic discursive marks present in WhatsApp messages exchanged between the victim and her best friend in which she denounced the violence. Through Discourse Analysis applied in a forensic context, the author discusses the importance of the discursive context as evidence in the judicial process.

Violeta Magalhães’ article entitled *O Movimento #MeToo: Argumentação, enviesamento e negação polêmica* provides a forensic analysis of the most relevant argumentative mechanisms produced by the #MeToo Movement in opinion articles. It highlights the linguistic strategies that most contribute to the defense of a point of view (in favor or against the movement) in a selected corpus of 28 opinion articles published in the *Expresso*, *Observador* and *Público* newspapers between October 2017 and February 2020. The article affirms discourse as a place of power and reiterates the role of language as forensic evidence of the mental and social schemata that precede argumentation.

A discussion of the main changes in the Brazilian legal system in combating domestic and family violence against women is the objective of Geisa Oliveira Daré’s article entitled *A transformação do ordenamento jurídico brasileiro após o caso ‘Maria da Penha’*. The author reports the historical context that led to the condemnation of Brazil by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights based on the struggle undertaken by Maria da Penha to assert her rights after years of domestic violence by her husband.

Next is the article *A violência de gênero na jurisprudência da Corte Interamericana de Direitos Humanos: Um estudo do caso González e Outras (“Campo Algodoeiro”) vs. México*, by Brisa Libardi. Based on a case study, the article discusses the extent to which the Inter-American Court of Human Rights interprets gender violence in its jurisprudence and how up-to-date this concept is. The results show that the IACHR has been carrying out an updated analysis of gender violence, emphasizing the characterization of crimes perpetrated as femicide.

The eighth article in this collection, “*O evangelho segundo Jesus, a rainha do céu*”: *O expurgo social da mulher travesti através de uma decisão judicial*, signed by Glenda Ferreira and Virgínia Colares, analyzes, with support from Critical Discourse Analysis, a court decision by the Court of Justice of Pernambuco on a concrete case of exclusion and prejudice against a transvestite woman. The authors reflect on the social context in which freedom of artistic expression has caused discomfort and how the arguments used to limit it reinforce exclusion and prejudice against transvestite women.

The penultimate article is “*Você me paga, bandido!*”: *Cruzamentos dialógicos entre narrativa literária e judicial de violência doméstica*, by Lúcia Gonçalves de Freitas and Maria Eugênia Curado, whose objective is to let the dialogue flow between literary and judicial discourses. They draw parallels between the short story “*Você me paga, bandido!*”, by the Brazilian author, Dalton Trevisan, and narrative excerpts from the Superior Court of Justice rulings on the ‘Maria da Penha’ law. The analyses explore the most recurrent dialogic links permeating the narratives, such as guilt relief, power games, notions of jealousy, honor, drunkenness, male dignity, female insubordination, and the trivialization of violence.

The final article also discusses the dialogue between Law and Literature. It discusses Clarice Lispector’s novel in relation to legislative texts and empirical data. *Romance “A Hora da Estrela”, de Clarice Lispector: Reflexões sobre violência de gênero no Brasil*, by Gisleule Maria Menezes Souto, investigates how the interdisciplinary relationship not only contributes to the understanding of gender violence, but also creates more effective mechanisms for combating and punishing crimes of this nature.

We want to make one final observation. We know that there is discourse in its varied uses far beyond the numbers of physical violence against women, which are terrifying enough. Not only does what is said hurt, but it also diminishes and batters victims for years on end. Moreover, these verbal aggressions are far from being unique to physically violent partners. They are evident in various discourses in society, naturalizing and transforming such occurrences into stable forms of domination. Therefore, this collection is crucial in that the observations work to discourage such diminishing, domesticating, and raping discourse. Furthermore, it highlights a route towards linguistic change and, consequently, a change in society. We believe these articles can also serve as a tool for opening new paths of critical analysis and inspiring other look at discourse from the perspective of unveiling violence against women in a symbiotic relationship with several discursive practices.

Lúcia de Freitas & Micheline Tomazi  
Universidade Estadual de Goiás & Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo  
Brazil