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Insults in Storytelling

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in Storytelling in Organizations: Facts, Fictions, and Fantasies

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This chapter seeks to provide an introduction to the psychology of insults, through the medium of organizational stories. It charts different forms of insulting behaviour such as exclusion, stereotyping, obliteration of significant entity details, ingratitude, scapegoating, rudeness, broken promises, or ignoring; even more potent insults may involve the defamation or despoiling of idealized objects, persons, and ideas. The chapter then examines different interpersonal dynamics and different outcomes of insults, including a resigned tolerance, the request of an apology, and a retaliation. While the chapter explores the social and psychological dimensions of insults, it also places them within political discourses of organizations, suggesting ways in which they reflect, sustain and challenge underlying power relations.