Check for updates

Received: 22 September 2022 | Revised: 23 August 2023 | Accepted: 20 October 2023

DOI: 10.1111/gwao.13088

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

Telling a supervisor about experiences of gendered dismissal: Problems of documentation, tellability, and failed authority

Melisa Stevanovic[1] | Antero Olakivi[2] | Henri Nevalainen[1] | Pentti Henttonen[2] | Niklas Ravaja[2]

[1]Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

[2]University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Correspondence
Melisa Stevanovic, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Tampere 33013, Finland.
Email: melisa.stevanovic@tuni.fi

Funding information
Academy of Finland, Grant/Award Number: 339263

Abstract

Difficulties of documentation characterize many problematic experiences of social interaction. Here, we study such difficulties by analyzing a case in which an employee tells her supervisor about the gendered dismissal that she has experienced at work. Using video-recorded performance appraisal interviews as data and conversation analysis and positioning analysis as methods, we examine how the experience of gendered dismissal lends itself to a documentable issue. We describe the process by which the problem that the employee initially described as an organizational leadership issue became redefined as a personal matter, which was not the responsibility of the supervisor. We show how this happened by the supervisor refraining from treating the employee's problem as "tellable" on its own terms, which led to the employee repeatedly changing her storyline. We argue that the persistence of inequalities in organizational interactions may be due to documentation difficulties, which are anchored in cultural expectations that bias the tellability of events in ways that promote gender inequality.

KEYWORDS
conversation analysis, deontic authority, gender inequality, performance appraisal interviews, storytelling, tellability

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2023 The Authors. Gender, Work & Organization published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

1 | INTRODUCTION

For over four decades, scholars have argued that workplace organizations are gendered in multiple ways (e.g., Acker, 1990, 2006, 2011; Britton, 2000; Cranford, 2012; Halford & Leonard, 2001; Kanter, 1977; Korvajärvi, 1998; Martin, 1997, 2006; Rodrigues, 2018; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Most prominently, Joan Acker (1990, 2006) has argued that organizations valorize men's bodies and lives and that the organizational processes, including communicative interactions between and among women and men, create systematic advantages for (particularly white) men over women. Subsequently, an ever-growing body of literature has demonstrated how gender inequalities may be produced through subtle interactional processes that often go unnoticed (e.g., Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Britton & Logan, 2008; D'Enbeau, 2017; Fletcher, 1999; Gill et al., 2017; Halford & Leonard, 2001; Keisu & Brodin, 2023; Korvajärvi, 2011; Martin, 1992, 2001, 2003; Nentwich & Kelan, 2014; Olakivi & Wrede, 2019; Reskin, 2003; Ridgeway, 1997; Veijola & Jokinen, 2008). Despite their subtlety, these interactions still effectively exclude and undermine female and nonbinary workers at the same time as their experiences thereof exhaust them and impair their identities, self-esteem, and confidence (Cockburn, 1988; Cohn, 1985; Collinson & Collinson, 1996; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Martin, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2006; Pierce, 2002).

The problematic experiences of gendered interactional processes have been argued to be often difficult to "document" (Acker, 2006, p. 451). We conceive the notion of "documentation" metaphorically, as referring to all interactional practices through which organizational actors may factualize their experiences to others, including both formal written complaints and spoken narrative accounts of the problematic events given in informal settings. As documentation is essential for others to be able to evaluate the situation and intervene if needed, all documentation difficulties effectively promote the persistence of gender inequalities (Acker, 2006). Yet, the precise interactional mechanisms that underlie the problems of documentability have not yet been much researched. Previous feministic organizational literature has emphasized the complexity and hopelessness of the organizational processes associated with attempts to address problems of gender and inequality, as people end up having to talk about the same things over and over again, in different ways and to different people, while still practically heading nowhere (see, e.g., Ahmed, 2021). In addition, it has been suggested that the experiences of gendering might come across as too petty or trivial to raise (Krefting, 2003; Valian, 1999)—at least without risking being labeled "oversensitive or smallminded" (Morley, 1999, p. 2) or unable to just accept "how workplaces are" (Gill et al., 2017, p. 1). To be able to "connect the dots" between these different explanations for the same phenomenon, we need to have a deeper understanding of the precise interactional mechanisms that underlie the problems of documentation.

In this paper, we maintain that the reproduction of gender inequalities in interaction is anchored not only in the primary disempowering interactions (e.g., undervaluation) that women experience in the workplace but also in the "meta interactional" events in which women *try to tell others* about their (primary) disempowering experiences of gendering. Here, we will consider this type of "communicative labor" (Ahmed, 2021, pp. 34–35, 81) on a micro scale as it realizes *within a single telling episode*. In our explication of the series of troubles that a teller faces when trying to offer a convincing and plausible account of her experiences of gendering, we will draw from both conversation analysis (Clift, 2016; Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007) and a strand of discursive research called positioning analysis (Davies & Harré, 1990). This combination of discursive approaches allows us to address both *how* problems of documentation show in the turn-by-turn unfolding of the telling episode (conversation analysis) and *why* this happens—that is, what are the social threats that the tellers seem to be motivated to avoid at each moment (positioning analysis). In this way, we will gain new understanding of the precise interactional mechanisms by which problems of documentability operate and how they serve the maintenance of inequalities.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

2 | GENDERED DISMISSAL AS FAILED AUTHORITY

The undervaluation of women and their work is a well-examined phenomenon, which can be evidenced, first and foremost, in the gender pay gap (see e.g., Korvajärvi, 1998; Koskinen Sandberg, 2017; Steinberg, 1990). According to much feminist research on organizational communication (see e.g., Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Britton & Logan, 2008; D'Enbeau, 2017; Fletcher, 1999; Gill et al., 2017; Korvajärvi, 2011; Martin, 1992, 2001, 2003; Nentwich & Kelan, 2014; Reskin, 2003; Ridgeway, 1997; West & Zimmerman, 1987), this undervaluation is constantly reproduced in the "interactions between women and men, women and women, men and men, including all those patterns that enact dominance and submission" (Acker, 1990, p. 146–147).

The social and interactional processes surrounding gender inequalities concern not only the unjust treatment of low-status women but also very specifically concern women in management and higher executive positions. First, according to gender stereotypes, when a woman seeks high authority over others, it is doubtful that she is a warm and caring person, which tends to trigger resistance and hostility in those around her (Ridgeway, 2011; Rudman et al., 2012). Thus, female leaders are caught in a double bind: if they are effective leaders, they are considered too masculine and aggressive, but if they adhere to the cultural norms of femininity, they are perceived as too indecisive and weak to be a good leader (e.g., D'Enbeau, 2017; Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1992; Pierce, 1995; Ridgeway, 2011; Rudman et al., 2012). The double bind is also related to the cultural phenomenon of the glass ceiling—a "socially constructed process" (Buzzanell, 1995) in which gendered patterns of interaction devalue women and their work (D'Enbeau, 2017; Rodrigues, 2018; Ross-Smith & Kornberger, 2004). Furthermore, although women have been able to improve their organizational standing by acting collectively against gender-based discrimination, those who seek higher managerial and supervisory positions often have to face their struggles alone (Burstein, 1989; Gray, 2003; Rodrigues, 2018). In other words, for women in managerial positions, such undervaluation may take on its own special tone. The problem consists of others refraining from endorsing the woman's dominant position. It is this specific type of *gendered dismissal* that we investigate in this paper.

To elucidate the concrete interactional practices of gendered dismissal enacted at the level of the turn-by-turn sequences of interaction, we draw on the notion of *deontic authority*. Deontic authority refers to the right of a person to determine action and expect compliance from others (Stevanovic, 2018, 2021; Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). It may be not only based on a person's structural position in a hierarchy but also be modified by people's gendered, ageist, and racist perceptions of each other's levels of knowledge-based expertise (e.g., Acker, 1990, 2006). It has been argued that social interaction—not least in organizational contexts—is filled with implicit contestations of deontic authority and that people constantly negotiate their professional, cultural, and social identities in and through these subtle power plays (Stevanovic, 2018). As a result, the violations of a person's legitimate domain of deontic authority rights are also often very intricate. This idea affects the understanding of gendered dismissal, which will be here—for the purposes of this study—conceptualized as a *lack of endorsement of deontic authority, driven by gendered presuppositions and ideologies*. This specific type of gendered dismissal may be assumed to be something that women managers in particular are likely to encounter in interactions with various others (i.e., not only men). In addition to "hostile sexism," these behaviors could incorporate forms of "benevolent sexism," which has been found to damage gender equality (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1997; Krefting, 2003; Rudman & Fetterolf, 2014; Rudman & Glick, 2008). The idea of gendered dismissal as a lack of endorsement of deontic authority is also in line with the argument that the interaction practices that reproduce gender inequalities are often routine, pervasive, and nearly invisible, even to their practitioners (Fletcher, 1999; Gherardi, 1994; Martin, 2001; Rogers, 1992).

3 | TALKING ABOUT (PROBLEMATIC) INTERACTIONAL EXPERIENCES

When a woman has experienced gendered dismissal in the form of a lack of endorsement of her deontic authority, she may seek to tell others about that problematic interactional experience. To be later able to appreciate the

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

challenges that a teller may face in this endeavor, we will first discuss how "meta interactional" events have been approached in various lines of discursive research. Below, we will provide a brief overview of these bodies of literature, focusing on those studies that are particularly relevant to our considerations.

First, conversation analytic research on *storytelling* has shed light on the moral obligations of the storytellers and recipients. Storytellers need to be able to create an environment for an extended period of talk without interruptions (Hall & Matarese, 2014; Sacks, 1992). As telling a story takes a relatively long time, the teller needs to ascertain that the story is *tellable* (e.g., Ochs & Capps, 2001)—telling a story without a relevant point constitutes a loss of the teller's face (Norrick, 2005). The recipients, in turn, are expected to *affiliate* with the emotional perspective conveyed in the telling (Stivers, 2008). If recipients do not respond adequately, tellers typically pursue a better response (Jefferson, 1978; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2012; Selting, 2010; Stivers, 2008), which suggests that they experience the situation as stressful (Koskinen, 2021; Peräkylä et al., 2015; Stevanovic et al., 2019). However, the tellers seldom explicitly voice the lack of response as a problem; instead, they modify their storyline to offer the recipients new slots to respond (Jefferson, 1978). In this paper, we propose that affiliation and tellability are interconnected: the recipient affiliation immediately validates the tellability of the story, whereas a lack of such affiliation suggests that the story potentially lacks tellability.

Second, the "meta interactional events" in which a speaker describes prior interactional encounters frequently involve *reported speech* (e.g., Bangerter et al., 2011; Couper-Kuhlen & Klewitz, 1999; Drew, 1998; Heinrichsmeier, 2021; Holt, 1996, 2000; for an edited volume, see Holt & Clift, 2007). Dramatizing the events of a story through reporting the speech of a prior speaker enhances the story's vividness, authenticity, and entertainability, and in this way, also its tellability (Van De Mieroop & Clifton, 2013). However, when the story is about a problematic interactional experience, reported speech can also serve as an implicit criticism (Günthner, 1997; Haakana, 2007; Holt, 2000; Ruusuvuori & Lindfors, 2009). Reported speech enacts the problem instead of merely describing it (Benwell, 2012), while the manner of imitation draws attention to the complainant's stance toward that speech as a violation (Drew, 1998, p. 321).

Third, in conversation analysis, stories about misconduct have often been analyzed as *complaints* (e.g., Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005; Günthner, 1997; Haakana, 2007; Heinemann & Traverso, 2009; Heinrichsmeier, 2021; Ruusuvuori et al., 2019; Ruusuvuori & Lindfors, 2009; Selting, 2010; Whitehead, 2013). Studies have described complaining as a delicate activity that requires carefully managing the degree of the self that is invested in the complaint. A complaint may easily cast the complainer in a negative light (Edwards, 2005; Whitehead, 2013), which is why complainants work to distance themselves from the negative dispositional identities of a moaner, whiner, habitual complainer, or an otherwise irrational and oversensitive person (e.g., Clift, 2013; Edwards, 2005; Symon, 2005). Thus, while using reported speech, enactment, and imitation to embellish an account of misconduct may well enhance its tellability, all these may become problematic if the account is to be taken seriously as an objective "document" of events. In the context of a work organization, the employee's problem is taken seriously when the supervisor not only validates their emotional experience but also treats it as something relevant to management and organizational leadership. Thus, to be able to call for intervention, the complainants need to keep their accounts credible. It is possible, however, that the more implicit the reported misconduct is, the more difficult it is for the teller to cast it as a tellable story without embellishing it with such detail that draws attention to the teller's own moral and psychological disposition (e.g., Tholander, 2019). If this is the case, a "better" story may—paradoxically—serve as a "worse" call to take the problem seriously.

Fourth, and finally, research in positioning analysis (Davies & Harré, 1990) allows us to consider how tellers continually adjust their unfolding stories to meet social concerns. As any story, accounts of problematic interactional experiences involve "storylines," which refer to "strips of life unfold[ing] according to narrative conventions" (Harré & Dedaic, 2012, p. 51). These storylines, in turn, position individuals or reaffirm their positionings (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999)—that is, the rights and duties that the momentary storyline implies for the actors (Kayi-Aydar, 2021). The irresistible nature of storylines becomes emphasized when an unfolding storyline positions a participant in an unfavorable way, which they nonetheless feel obliged to conform with (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 40). Here, we

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

suggest that one crucial reason why a storyline might prevail—despite the unfavorable positions that it imposes on a participant—is to secure the tellability of the story in the face of recipient behavior that has cast doubt on its relevance.

4 | RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this paper, we analyze a case drawn from a performance appraisal interview, in which a female employee tells her male supervisor about the gendered dismissal that she has experienced from her subordinates. Drawing on a combination of conversation analysis (Clift, 2016; Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007) and positioning analysis (Davies & Harré, 1990), we will analyze the series of social concerns, troubles, and face threats that the employee teller encounters when trying to document her experiences of gendered dismissal. Our analysis is guided by the following three research questions:

- How does the experience of gendered dismissal lend itself to a documentable event? (RQ1)
- How does the employee manage the tellability of her account in response to her supervisor's conduct? (RQ2)
- How are gendered presuppositions made relevant and reinforced in and through the telling sequence? (RQ3)

5 | DATA AND METHOD

In this study, we draw on a data corpus of 125 video-recorded performance appraisal interviews in organizations in various fields (e.g., education, banking, and the media). A performance appraisal is the process by which supervisors evaluate their subordinate employees' performance to determine pay rises, promotions, or training needs (Grote, 2011). Critical literature commonly conceives performance appraisals as governmental techniques through which supervisors produce reflexive, self-governing, and enterprising employees (Fejes, 2008; Du Gay et al., 1996). However, supervisors can practice equality in performance appraisals (Asmuss, 2013) and act as leaders who take responsibility for solving the employee's organizational problems (Dessler, 2012). Therefore, the performance appraisal is not an inevitably individualizing technique—whether it is the employee or the supervisor who adopts responsibility over the discussed problem, is, to an extent, negotiated in situ and thus an empirical issue.

The performance appraisal interviews in our data were between a supervisor and one of their subordinate employees. The corpus contained 84 supervisors (42/42 females/males) and 122 subordinates (69/53 females/males) altogether (gender based on self-identification). The mean age of the supervisors was 43.7 (SD = 8.7) years and the subordinates 44.2 (SD = 9.7) years. In the recruitment process, the supervisors were contacted first and asked to recruit one or two of their own subordinates.

Data collection took place at the premises of the participating organizations either in a meeting room or the supervisor's own office. The participants were seated at a table, and a stand for two video cameras was placed between them. In each case, the supervisor conducted a typical performance appraisal interview, in accordance with their organization's guidelines—in the same way as they would have done if they had not participated in the study. The researcher waited in an adjacent room or in the hallway during the recordings. On average, the discussions lasted 51 min (SD = 13 min) with a maximum duration of 1 h 2 min and a minimum duration of 15 min.

The study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Finnish Advisory Board on Ethical Integrity. All the participants gave their written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Methodologically and conceptually, the study draws from the tradition of conversation analysis, a qualitative method for studying how language and embodied behaviors are used to construct sequences of initiating and responsive actions (Clift, 2016; Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). The data analysis involves scrutiny of stretches of talk,

which focuses on the ways in which participants design specific actions and thereby create or delimit opportunities for action for their co-participants. The analysis proceeds on a case-by-case basis and is typically accompanied by detailed transcription (for conventions, see Hepburn & Bolden, 2017; Schegloff, 2007, pp. 265–269). The transcription process increases the researcher's sensitivity to details of interaction (Jefferson, 1985), whereas the inclusion of transcripts in publications allows readers to check the validity of the analytic claims made in the study (Peräkylä, 1997). However, the analysis itself is conducted based on the original recordings with the videos allowing the researcher to simultaneously consider both verbal and embodied features of interaction.

In addition, to explore the malleable nature of the unfolding accounts of interactional experiences, we draw on positioning analysis (Davies & Harré, 1990), focusing on the ways in which a teller seeks to evade the unfavorable positions that the emerging storylines impose on them (Harré & Dedaic, 2012; Kayi-Aydar, 2021; Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999).

We examined the data corpus, searching for instances of "meta interactions," in which the employee told their supervisor about a problematic interactional experience. In our first analysis round, we searched for references to interaction problems with colleagues, realizing that almost all such accounts referred to past interactional events in a very abstract manner (e.g., *I am excluded//They control situations//There is no dialog*), without the tellers quoting their own or each other's utterances verbatim. As we became aware that concrete turn-by-turn unfolding quotations from the problematic interactions were extremely rare (e.g., *He said… and then I said…*), we began to focus our investigation on these. Knowing that such accounts are relatively common in everyday interactions (see e.g., Bangerter et al., 2011; Couper-Kuhlen & Klewitz, 1999; Drew, 1998; Heinrichsmeier, 2021; Holt, 1996, 2000), we were surprised at their rarity in the performance appraisal interviews. Although some accounts involved verbatim quotations of other people's utterances, these utterances did not constitute the core of the teller's problem, which is why we excluded them from further investigation. Finally, we concluded that the rarity of these accounts was an important phenomenon in itself, as it suggested that in this context, tellers may orient to these detailed accounts of interaction as inherently problematic. Next, we present the clearest case that we found in the data, which may also shed the most light on the documentation difficulties described above.

We transcribed the participants' original Finnish speech using conversation analytic conventions, subsequently translating it into English. Below, we will also present video frames of the participants' embodied conduct at those moments of interaction that are specifically relevant for our analysis, the timing of the conduct in relation to participants' speech being indicated in the transcripts (see the labels Frame1, Frame2, etc.). Due to space limitations, we will show only the English translations of the data extracts analyzed here. The original Finnish transcripts can be obtained from the corresponding author on request.

6 | ANALYSIS

Our analysis examines an account of gendered dismissal given by an employee (Lisa) to her supervisor (John) in a media organization. The analysis is divided into eight sections, each of which describes one phase of the unfolding telling sequence. Overall, the episode begins with Lisa presenting the general problem and ends with her backing off from her complaint. Our analysis seeks to explain *why* this happens.

6.1 | Presentation of the general problem

In Extract 1, Lisa presents the problem as something that occurs to her "by the way" (line 1). She complains about some people engaging in "strange commenting" (line 3).

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Extract 1 (C65_26:20)

```
01 Lisa: but (.) what is quite interesting by the way (.) is that
02       (0.5) on the part of some people (.) there has been some
03       strange, (0.8) strange umm, (2.5) commenting by a few
04       which makes me wonder if it is clear to them, (0.5) that
05       as I see it, (0.2) th that (.) .hh we together
06       (.) like (.) you you are kind of in charge of the overall [look]
07 John:                                                           [yes,]
08 Lisa: and I'm in charge of the images, (3.0) so we do it like
09       together, (0.5) and, (0.5) in this way, (0.3) uhh (.)
10       the whole thing in a way remains coherent,
11 John: mm,
12 Lisa: and of course (.) I find it smart that you too
13       like utilize my (.) .hh Frame1 thoughts in
14       the overall [de]velopment so? we sort of do it as a team.
15 John:             [mm].
16 John: yes.
17 Lisa: .hhh so umm there has been a few who (0.4) have (.) been
18       like (.) just go ask the Frame2 ad designer.
19 John: mm.
20 Lisa: something like that, Frame3 (0.4) or the like (.)
21       so I don't really know if they think that hey
22    -> (.) that is it just a random Frame4 hey little girl, (0.5) what
23       are you doing here or (.) I don't really know what Frame5 how to
24       react to that.
```

Lisa displays a great deal of difficulty producing the account as indicated by the multiple silences in lines 1–6. In this way, she positions herself as unwilling to make a complaint about her coworkers. She presents the problem as something that may not be "clear to them" (line 4), which implicitly justifies her decision to mention the matter to John. Lisa also presents herself as a team worker (lines 8–9, 14) and someone whose insights are worth listening to (lines 12–14). Finally, she describes the problem, which is that some people told her to "just go ask the ad designer" (i.e., another authority at the workplace). In its context, the utterance can be understood as a complaint that others did not treat what she said as authoritative enough and suggested that she ask another person's approval.

John responds only minimally (line 19), after which Lisa expands her description with an increment ("something like that", line 20), which obscures the precise form of the violation, but nevertheless—most importantly—provides John with a new slot to affiliate with Lisa's problem presentation. However, John still refrains from responding (see Figure 1).

Given John's lack of uptake, Lisa upgrades her description of the problematic behavior by referencing the violator's thoughts ("Hey little girl what are you doing here," lines 22–23). In this way, Lisa makes it clear that the problem she is describing concerns not only the violator's words per se but the gendered (and ageist) presuppositions and attitudes that their words reflect—they do not allow her to act as an efficient leader with deontic authority to determine action (see, e.g., D'Enbeau, 2017; Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1992; Pierce, 1995; Ridgeway, 2011; Rudman et al., 2012). Only when Lisa displays her inability to cope with the problem ("I don't really know how to react to that," line 24) does John react: he changes the position in which he is sitting, orienting to an emerging shift in the ongoing activity (see Figure 2).

In sum, in her original presentation, Lisa frames the problem at hand as concerning both her and her supervisor. They have agreed on a certain distribution of labor (the employee being "in charge of the images"), but as some employees appear not to respect this "agreement," both Lisa and John are targets of the violation. However, by withholding his response, John prompts Lisa to explicate her own interpretation of the problem and its gendered (and ageist) dimensions.

6.2 | Recipient's request for more detail

In response to Lisa's presentation of the problem involving gendered dismissal, John requests more detail (line 34). In doing so, he makes Lisa accountable for her complaint.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

FIGURE 1 Extract 1: Frames 1–3.

Extract 2 (C65_27:36)

```
29 Lisa: so I [let's sa]y that I was really, (0.2) is that true
30 John:      [what,   ]
31 Lisa: but then I just said that it will just be like this (.)
32       that I didn't like [take] any further position on it.
33 John:                    [yes,]
34    -> what (.) kind of like things have they been like (.)
35       [in which situations],
36 Lisa: [↑it was ↑like      ], (0.8) mt I had made the template that
37       included these new graphics,
38 John: yes.
39 Lisa: and there was one like, (1.0) a point where there is one, (0.6)
40       one possibility to write a line in a slightly different font.
41 John: yes.
```

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

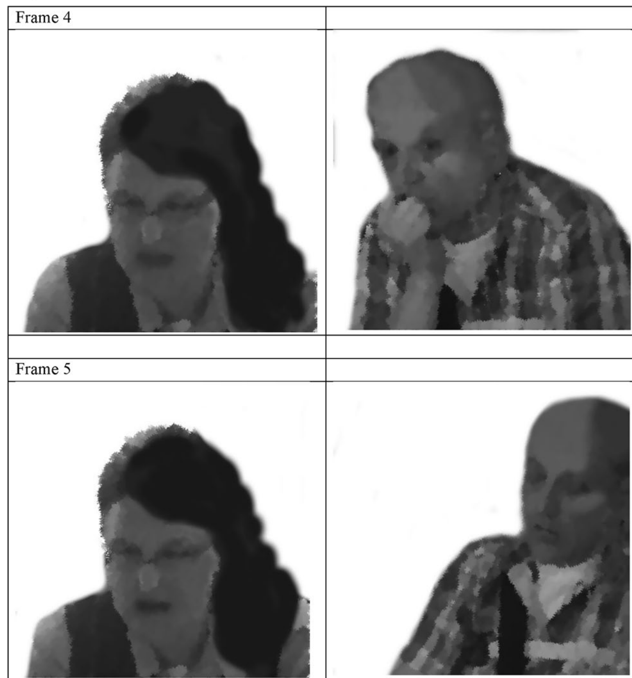

FIGURE 2 Extract 1: Frames 4 and 5.

Responding to a telling by asking a question is an inherently ambiguous action (Koskinen et al., 2021). A question involves a display of interest, which allows the teller to elaborate, but it may also allow the recipient to redirect the focus away from the complaint (Heritage, 2011: 164–168). In this case, the mere asking of the question creates an immediate shift in the teller's and recipient's positions in the activity—the telling takes place in response to a question. As a result, the teller cannot complain about the problem in general terms, but is made accountable to provide concrete examples to support her complaint.

6.3 | Reporting the violator's speech

Extract 3 shows the ways in which Lisa responds to John's request to specify the problem. She assumes a "no-nonsense" approach, in which she describes a concrete, single incident in great detail. Her account entails multiple instances of reported speech, in which the alleged violator is quoted as saying something problematic.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Extract 3 (C65_28:41)

```
51 Lisa: and then I go there and, (0.3) .hh s/he says
52    -> (.) ↑@what is this graphic here@ hh (.) or something
53       (.) then I said (.) oh well it is this kind of like
54    -> (.) well (.) uhh (.) wh- ↑@what is this@ (.) in this way (.)
55       and uhh (.) like (.) it is now, (0.3) like this
56       there is such a possibility (.) to use such a font
57       which we may use elsewhere too, (0.2) the rest of the font
58       is not yet quite developed, (0.3) and nowadays
59       it has certainly been used li- (.) like (.) so uhh (.)
60    -> ↑@well you should go ask the ad designer@
61       ↓then I was like, (1.0) uh huh? (1.0) like (.) look this will
62       be like t(h)his [now,  .hhh]
63 John:                 [ye-es ye-e]s,
63 Lisa: so this is kind of strange (.) strange
65    -> (.)
66 Lisa: there's also another ano(h)ther lik- (.) like strange (.)
67       strange incidence umm like (.) when trying to cooperate like
68    -> hey what should we do (.) ↑@I don't know, (0.3) decide yourself@
69       (0.3) so .hh things like this .hhh it's strange
```

Lisa does a great deal of interactional work to report the precise exchanges of turns that have taken place. As if assuming the position of a witness in court, Lisa orients to a need to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." However, the salient irritated tone of voice which Lisa uses in the verbatim quotations of the fellow co-worker's utterances underlines the co-worker's hostility toward her ("What is this graphic here?," line 52; "What is this?," line 54; "Well, you should go ask the ad designer," line 60; "I don't know, decide yourself," line 68). In contrast, Lisa presents her own utterances in a neutral and friendly tone of voice, thereby constructing an impression of patience with which she has explained the matter to her co-worker (lines 55–59). Lisa also refers to her own actions as cooperative (line 67). Only once (lines 61–62) does she present her own conduct as relatively assertive. Her display of assertiveness does not, however, encompass the tone of voice and it is also accompanied by laughter, which reflects an orientation to the display as delicate. Thus, even if the core problem in Lisa's original problem presentation was the other's lack of recognition of her deontic authority, here Lisa—in line with the female gender stereotype (Ridgeway, 2011; Rudman et al., 2012)—avoids giving the impression of having dominated the depicted encounter.

John still gives no proper response to Lisa. Instead, when a recipient response seems due, there is a considerable silence (line 65). Lisa orients to the lack of his response as an indication that her prior account was missing something and starts telling him of another analogous event (line 66), enhancing the documentability of the reported violation by making it about *several* such events, and not just about one (cf. Gill et al., 2017; Krefting, 2003, p. 265).

6.4 | Further reporting of the violator's thoughts

Next, Lisa again embellishes her account with references to the violator's thoughts (Extract 4). As in the instances of reported speech described above, the utterances of reported thoughts (lines 45–46, 88, 90) are also produced with an emotionally salient tone of voice.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Extract 4 (C65_27:15)

```
42 Lisa: and uhh, (0.5) then (.) there is (.) eeh (.) one particular
43       employee who is a bit like .th (.) how would I say (.) ehhm
44       (2.5) ehm (.) ve- (.) very self-respecting, (2.0)
45    -> ehm, (2.0) how would I say, (2.0) .h ee ↑I am here and
46       I know and and s/he makes like a little botch-up there
         ((lines 47-86 removed))
87 Lisa: .hhh so it's a bit strange maybe it's good to be aware of
88    -> that they are a bit like @I'm the king@
89 John: yes.
90 Lisa: and then (.) wh- @what are you doing there@,
91       (.)
92 Lisa: as I think more in the way that hey it is like everyone's
93       cooperation like hey I have an idea of how to handle this (.)
94       then somehow we're doing it like together (.) but then again
95       some feel like I am entering their territory or their patch.
```

In Extract 4, Lisa describes the violator's thoughts as involving an extensive amount of dismissal ("I am here and I know," lines 45–46; "I'm the king," line 88; "What are you doing there," line 90). She also makes indirect references to the violator's assumption that Lisa is "entering their territory or their patch" (line 95). In this sense, given that private thoughts are inaccessible to others, Lisa deviates from her previous court-like, no-nonsense style of documentation (Extract 3). However, she displays much difficulty in providing this type of description, as apparent in her multiple silences, displays of hesitation, and word searches (lines 42–45). In other words, Lisa manages to boost the tellability of her account, simultaneously presenting herself as unwilling to think the worst of her co-workers.

The references to the violator's thoughts provide a practical way for Lisa to describe the existence of gendered presuppositions and attitudes. However, such a move is a double-edged sword. As the violations are mere thoughts, they become increasingly difficult to document.

6.5 | Upgrading the description of the violator's behavior

Thus far in the episode, John has refrained from providing a substantial response to his employee's telling. Now, Lisa returns to the overt violator behavior, describing it as much more dramatic than it seemed in the original problem presentation (see Figure 3).

Extract 5 (C65_33:06)

```
123 Lisa: in my opinion it's always great ↑comments are great and
124       (.) and like reflections but the matter of .hh (.) Frame6
125       hysterically screaming like (.) like some, Frame7
126       (0.3) offended queen th[ere,]
127 John:                        [yes.]
128       (.)
129 Lisa: like this ((makes gestures)) that makes you feel
130       @oh god@ ((E rolls her eyes))
131 John: yeah has it been something like this.
132       (0.5)
133 Lisa: yes that that's what came to my mind first (.) so,
134 John: yes. (.) but was there something like this really like (.)
135       .hh use of a loud voice or [something. ]
136 Lisa:                            [eh (.) yes.] there was
137       (.) after all she is a very dramatic [pers]on (.) this
138 John:                                      [yes.]
139 Lisa: particular person she is certainly a bit of th[e kind] .hhhh
140 John:                                               [yes.  ]
```

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

FIGURE 3 Extract 5: Frames 6 and 7.

Lisa describes the violator as "hysterically screaming" (line 125), uses strong metaphors ("like some offended queen," lines 125–126) and expressive gestures (line 129), reports her own critical thoughts (lines 129–130), and rolls her eyes (line 130). In and through these practices, Lisa draws from the entertaining discourse of everyday complaining, sharing, and gossiping. In this way, she finally manages to draw John's attention: John raises his gaze from his paper (lines 125–126) and requests confirmation of the accuracy of the described events (line 131). This indicates that Lisa has now described something newsworthy to John. However, in Lisa's new account, the "king" has become a "queen": In other words, the inappropriate behavior is that of a (possibly older) *female* colleague who has engaged in extreme forms of emotional expression—something that is clearly against the "conventional control of emotions that pervades work and organizational processes" (Acker, 1990, p. 152).

From the perspective of finally getting John's attention, Lisa's answer to his question (line 131) is unexpected. Instead of orienting to this question as being about the objective features of the violator's behavior, Lisa refers to her own initial thoughts as the basis for her previous description ("that's what came to my mind first," line 133). Subsequently (lines 134–135), John challenges the relevance of Lisa's description of her thoughts by making his question more precise: he does not ask about her interpretation of the violator's behavior, but about the publicly observable characteristics of this behavior—that is, the use of a loud voice, which is something that Lisa's previous phrase "hysterically screaming" has indicated. Lisa answers John's question by referring to her female coworker's drama-prone personality as the source of the misconduct (lines 136–137), which serves as evidence for the credibility of the account. In drawing attention to the extraordinariness of the antagonist, the case becomes framed as an isolated exception to everyday organizational routines.

6.6 | Invoking the recipient's responsibility

Next, Lisa invokes John's responsibility for the current problem. She draws on the idea of cooperation, which is something that leadership can enable.

Extract 6 (C65_35:08)

```
141 Lisa: .hh I thought that it may be good, (0.5)
142       mm (.) to know that, (0.5) if there's something like
143       that there will be like no such cross-communicat[ion] (.)
144 John:                                                 [mm,]
145 Lisa: that my (.) my opinion does not need to be listened to
146       [or  ] something like th[at      ].
147 John: [yeah],                  [yeahyeah] yes.
148 Lisa: I thought that (.) that (.) that there should't be l-like
149       any i-ideas th[at ] like suddenly
150 John:               [mm,]
151 Lisa: there are terrible kin- kings and queens like,
152       (0.5) performing a terrible show [and n]othing works out.
153 John:                                  [yeah.]
154 John: yeah
155 Lisa: so, (0.8) in a way they have a really good and
156       valuable job and I think (.) that cooperation
157       would be the most important thi[ng,]
158 John:                                [mm,]
159 Lisa: so that (.) like ↑for me that's like the be-all and end-all,
160 John: yes for sure.
161 Lisa: so umm that's al- always (.) but ↑certainly it may be
162       that one is not used to (.) that that type (.) of behavior.
```

In Extract 6, Lisa first implies that the problem she has been describing is something that John may not have been aware of and thus cannot be held responsible for, but that simultaneously the problem may be a symptom of a larger problem of "cross-communication," which is certainly something that John should be interested in. Lisa highlights the devastating consequences of the problem for the entire organization ("a terrible show and nothing works out," line 152). This depiction of a horror scenario involves both "kings and queens" (line 151) who should accept their roles as employees who are led by their superiors. However, instead of topicalizing the matter of her (lack of) deontic authority, Lisa displays a strong commitment to the moral values and virtues of cooperation and a distribution of labor in which everyone respects each other's field of responsibility and expertise (lines 155–157). In this way, she is again emphasizing her subscription to the feminine stereotype, creating a maximal distance to the masculine stereotype of a power-hungry leader (Buzzanell, 1994).

Finally, Lisa refers to the issue of inappropriate behavior per se. In a conciliatory spirit, she admits her unfamiliarity with such behavior (lines 161–162). In so doing, she is invoking the subjective side of the complaint, mitigating the accusatory tone of her previous telling. Simultaneously, however, she implies that this type of behavior is uncommon at least in the organizations in which she has previously worked. This highlights the importance of the matter from an organizational and leadership perspective and draws attention to the supervisor's responsibilities regarding the organization's atmosphere.

6.7 | Recipient uptake

Invoking organizational and leadership relevance appears to work as an effective way of eliciting a response. For the first time, John provides a substantial response to Lisa's telling.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Extract 7 (C65_35:20)

```
161 Lisa: so umm that's al- always (.) but ↑certainly it may be
162       that one is not used to (.) that that type (.) of behavior.
163 John: yes, (0.3) but [that] kind of behavior is not particularly
164 Lisa:                [yes,]
165 John: (.) is by no means anyway (.) .hh particularly desirable
166       what (.) [what] I of course (.) understand quite well is that
167 Lisa:          [yes.]
168 John: (.) we have days and we have [days] and (.) [and wel]l
169 Lisa:                              [yeah].        [yes.   ]
170 John: (.) some days are better than [other]s
171 Lisa:                               [yes. ]
172 John: but like, (0.7) but somehow, (0.4) the way to present
173       thing[s t]o discuss (.) [dis]cuss them in order to
174 Lisa:      [yes].             [yes].
175 John: get something d[one t]ogether (.) that doesn't s[ound] like
176 Lisa:                [yeah.]                          [yes.]
177 John: in that sense like the best possi[ble (--)]
178                                        [no no no]
```

John acknowledges the problem in the coworker's reported behavior. However, he uses litotes, a rhetorical figure that describes the object through the negation of the opposite (e.g., saying "not bad" instead of "excellent"). The key feature of a litotes involves understating what is being referred to, which in this case works to undermine the importance of Lisa's problem ("is by no means anyway particularly desirable," line 165). The word "anyway" implies that the assessment is something generic to all human life and not specifically tied to the values of the organization. John's next utterances also draw from the same general wisdom of life in which engaging in problematic behavior may vary according to the situation ("we have days and we have days," line 168; "some days are better than others," line 170). Subsequently, however, John also refers to the specificities of the work organization as he acknowledges that the problem might interfere with "getting something common done' at work (lines 172–173, 175). However, in stating this, John is again resorting to a litotes ("that doesn't sound like in that sense like the best possible," lines 175, 177), which avoids naming the problem, thus displaying a kind of caution and defensiveness (Bergmann, 1992, p. 150). Furthermore, John's use of the phrase "in that sense" emphasizes that his negative assessment should not be considered a rule, but something that only applies to this specific situation in which something should be done together.

The supervisor's line of action thus emphasizes a need to understand people who occasionally behave in inappropriate ways. Paradoxically, by invoking the notion of people having "good days' and 'bad days," the supervisor may even be considered as speaking *against* masculine practices that condemn strong expressions of emotion in organizations. However, in casting the employee's problem in this way as a petty fight between two potentially irrational women in the organization, the supervisor is not treating it seriously enough to call for intervention by the organizational leadership to remedy it. Whatever the problem is, it is not his responsibility to solve it. Emotions are part of the organizational sphere, but only the private and unofficial sphere.

6.8 | Self-deprecation

At this point, John's stance toward Lisa's problem has become clear. If the problem exists, it is not relevant to management and organizational leadership. In response to John, Lisa assumes yet another entirely new approach to the issue.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Extract 8 (C65_36:23)

```
183 Lisa: yes this kind of stuff but that (.) yes (.) I've just
184       thought like that (.) .hh that just for that
185       it is kind of an occasional excess so (.) I won't start
186       like to (.) grab them by the lapels like you
187       meant the[re or anything becau]se I've thought
188 John:          [oh no,              ]
189 Lisa: that .hh let that dust settle in peace
190       they should just try to hang in there here now I'm just
191       growling to you but no (.) I haven't growled a[bout] it to others
192 John:                                               [yes,]
193 Lisa: either because it's no-one [else]'s business .hh and
194 John:                            [yes,]
195 Lisa: I've thought that it (.) it will resolve itself over time
```

Several times, Lisa strongly displays awareness that the problem is not worth an active intervention, but she also highlights her rational approach to the problem and thus distances herself from the negative, gendered position of an oversensitive woman (Morley, 1999). In doing so, she calls into question why she brought up the violation in the first place—indeed, dealing with this problem has taken up a relatively large proportion of the performance appraisal interview. Lisa deals with this problem by invoking a "therapeutic" storyline that highlights the psychological importance of the discussion to her ("Now I'm just growling to you," lines 190–191) and thus serves to legitimize the time spent discussing the issue. However, to distance herself from the negative position of someone gossiping about other employees' problematic behaviors, Lisa immediately adds that she has not "growled" about the problem to others (line 191), mentioning that "it's no-one else's business" (line 193). This statement is in stark contrast to the initial storyline, in which she cast the problem as one that concerns everyone in the organization and was thus calling for the organizational leadership to intervene. Instead, she now frames the problem as strictly personal, beyond any need for collective action.

7 | DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Given the omnipresence of gender inequalities in organizational life (Acker, 1990; 2006, 2011; Britton, 2000; Cranford, 2012; Halford & Leonard, 2001; Kanter, 1977; Korvajärvi, 1998; Martin, 1997, 2006; Rodrigues, 2018; Rudman & Glick, 2008), it is not surprising that women may experience what we have here referred to as "gendered dismissal." In this paper, we asked *how an experience of gendered dismissal lends itself to a documentable event* (RQ1). Our analysis has shown that despite the commonality of the problem, it is a challenging interactional endeavor to talk about it in a way that leads a supervisor to embrace the problem as relevant to management and organizational leadership. Calling for an organizational intervention seems to require detailed information about the specific problem that needs remedying (Acker, 2006), but—in line with what has been pointed out in prior literature (Clift, 2013; Edwards, 2005; Gill et al., 2017; Krefting, 2003; Morley, 1999; Symon, 2005; Tholander, 2019; Valian, 1999)—such information is not always easy to provide in a convincing manner without the teller coming across as irrational, morally questionable, or ignorant about workplace realities. As pointed out by Sara Ahmed (2021, pp. 34–35), when trying to address problems of gendering in organizations, "blockages can occur through conversations." This study has contributed to this body of literature by explicating a central interactional mechanism that underlies the problem of documentability, which is the teller's need to secure recipient affiliation for their story during their attempts at documentation. This fundamental need appears to be strong enough to even trump the teller's original agenda—the concern that motivated the telling in the first place.

Documentation difficulties arise also from teller's attempts to describe their problems in a way that would make sense culturally, and this is where people's orientations to "tellability" (Norrick, 2005; Ochs & Capps, 2001) become critical. Thus, in our second research question, we asked *how the employee manages the tellability of their account in response*

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

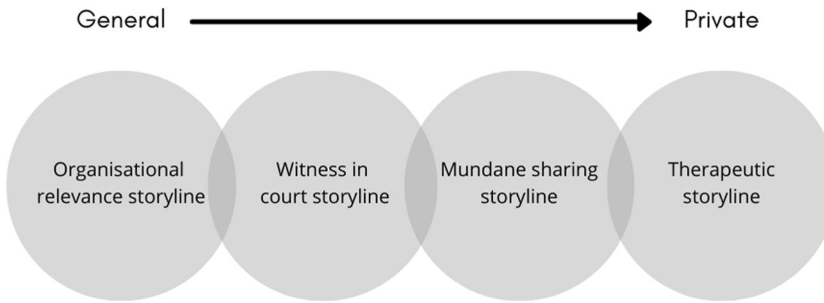

FIGURE 4 Shifts of storyline in the employee's account.

to their supervisor's conduct (RQ2). In this paper, we showed how the employee's constant shifts in her developing account could be clarified with reference to problems of tellability, for which each new "storyline" (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Dedaic, 2012) could offer a potential remedy (see Figure 4). The employee started by describing the problem as relevant to the entire organization. In response to this *organizational relevance storyline*, the supervisor requested more detail, which led the employee to refocus her description on behavioral detail. This *witness in court storyline* revolved around an objective description of the precise turn exchanges that had taken place. To counteract the apparent triviality of the reported incidents, the employee started embellishing her account with increasingly dramatic and extreme depictions of the violator's conduct, invoking a *mundane sharing storyline*. However, the more the teller dramatized a single interactional exchange, the more she presented her case as an isolated exception to everyday organizational routines. To paraphrase Acker (2006), the actions of others were now made "visible," but they appeared as isolated and private rather than organizationally "illegitimate," and the telling of such isolated and private actions started to seem like an act of organizationally illegitimate "gossiping" about co-workers. The shift from the mundane sharing storyline to the *therapeutic storyline* nonetheless gave the teller the opportunity to cast her telling in a more civilized and legitimate form. The account was simply about the employee unburdening her heart—something that would help her cope with a personal problem (Jian, 2011). Thus, what began as a general matter for management and organizational leadership became a strictly personal matter. As has been postulated in feminist organizational research, gender inequality is constantly reinforced by separating public and private worlds (see, e.g., Acker, 1990; Rodrigues, 2018). From this perspective, our study has thus revealed a new arena in which such a separation may be routinely reconstructed. In the case analyzed, this separation was formed implicitly, as part of the employee's and the supervisor's distinct ways of constructing the problematic incidence as belonging to either the official (public) or the unofficial (private) sphere of the organization. Much of this happened as if by itself, by the supervisor simply refraining from validating the tellability of the employee's problem on its own terms, which led to the employee modifying her storyline to the extent that she practically erased the original problem (failed deontic authority based on gendered dismissal) from her account.

This movement from the general, public, and collective organizational sphere toward the private and personal sphere of the individual is linked to our third research question: *How does the telling sequence reinforce the gendered presuppositions and make them relevant* (RQ3)? To answer this question, it is central to consider what might have motivated the employee to erase the original problem from her account. As pointed at the beginning of this paper with reference to the notion of the "double bind," a lack of power to determine action may stigmatize a female manager in two different ways: on one hand, it may be embarrassing for a young female superior to admit such a problem−−that she has no authority or respect−−as this could be interpreted as supporting the stereotype according to which women are too weak to act as effective leaders (e.g., Acker, 2011; Kanter, 1977; Krefting, 2003; Martin, 1992; Ridgeway, 2011). On the other hand, it may be equally embarrassing for her to deviate from the stereotypical female commitment to the moral values and virtues of cooperation and to align with the masculine stereotype of the power-hungry leader with a desire for authority and respect (e.g., Buzzanell, 1994). Our analysis has contributed to the understanding of this double bind by showing how the navigation between, and avoidance of, the two

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

stigmatizing positions takes place in and through the sequences of action within a single telling episode. Intriguingly, at one point during the telling episode analyzed in this article, the employee *herself* ended up displaying considerably sexist attitudes toward one of her female colleagues. Instead of being a curious exception, we maintain the possibility that the paradoxical phenomena like this may even be quite common in situations in which the accounts of dismissive behavior are difficult to support with waterproof evidence. To highlight the generic structural nature of the problem within the given organization or community, the teller may be motivated to leave the precise target of the complaint initially underspecified. Thus, when the emerging storyline has placed the teller in an unfavorable position, the initial underspecification of the complaint target allows the teller to shift the non-present target of the complaint so that it comes across as legitimate for both the complainant and the recipient of the complaint. In this case, the casting of the target of the complaint as a "hysterical drama queen" enables the emergence of such alignment, allowing the teller to take distance from both the "weakness" (cf. hysteria as incapacity) and "power-hungriness" (cf. queenliness) poles of the double bind.

8 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we have shown that the reproduction of gender inequalities in interaction is anchored not only in the primary disempowering interactions that women experience at the workplace but also—and specifically—in the "meta interactional" events in which the primary disempowering experiences take place. In other words, the bases of organizational relevance may be undermined not only through the acts of dismissal themselves, but also through the ways in which the tellings of the experiences of dismissal are received. We argue that the interactional phenomena that cannot be talked about or "documented" (Acker, 2006) do not lose, but—on the contrary—gain relative significance, effectiveness, and influence to manage social relations in comparison to those that can be introduced as a topic of reflective meta-level discussion.

One might assume that a performance appraisal interview—an institutional context that is designed for the discussion of organizational problems and obstacles to performance—enables employees to voice their problematic interactional experiences at the workplace. Performance appraisal interviews therefore serve as a "critical case" (Flyvbjerg, 2006) for the study of problematic interactional experiences in organizational contexts. If it is difficult to tell one's superior about an experience of gendered dismissal in a way that highlights its relevance for organizational management and leadership in such interviews, similar difficulties may exist in more spontaneous workplace contexts between employees and supervisors. Alternatively, one might conceive performance appraisals as a particularly difficult context for documenting problematic experiences in a managerially relevant manner as performance appraisals tend to highlight employees' personal responsibilities (Fejes, 2008; du Gay et al., 1996). Our empirical example demonstrated how documentation difficulties can reinforce the individualizing dynamics of performance appraisals as governmental techniques.

It has been shown to be the women in higher managerial and supervisory positions in particular who are often left to deal with their experiences of gendering alone (Burstein, 1989; Rodrigues, 2018). It is thus easy to see how the mechanisms described in this paper effectively strengthen the persistence of organizational gender inequalities. Similar negative positionings and respective dilemmas are likely to shape the interactional practices of racialized minorities and others who differ from the norm of white, middle-aged men (e.g., Healy et al., 2011). However, people may not have the same opportunities to articulate the specific types of negative experiences that intersectionally characterize their gender, age, or race/ethnicity. Future empirical research should shed light on such nuances from an intersectional perspective.

As feminist organizational scholars have pointed out, the prevailing social order can only change if attention is paid to what has previously been obscured or invisible (see e.g., Acker, 2006; Fletcher, 1999; Krefting, 2003). In this case, people in organizations should increase their awareness of the problems of documentability surrounding the specific experiences of women in higher supervisory positions. To emphasize the broader significance of their problems for the organization, the tellers may systematically want to stick to the more abstract and generic descriptions

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

of the problematic interactional events. However, as we show in this paper, problems occur when the supervisor is not satisfied with this abstract and generic level of description but seeks "hard" behavioral evidence for the existence of a problem. This is because an exclusive focus on behavioral detail can only be provided with reference to *single* problematic incidents, which draws the attention away from the systematic structural problems that underlie the problematic experience. This leads us to suggest that it is not only organizational practices that are gendered but that this holds also more widely for the general cultural resources and mechanisms of interaction, which certainly underlie and enable all organizational practices. Thus, our understanding of the cultural resources of telling needs to be exposed to political imagination, utopian thought, and alternative futures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research of this study was supported by the Academy of Finland (grant no. 339263).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Henri Nevalainen https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6899-1061

REFERENCES

Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society* 4(2): 139–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002.

Acker, Joan. 2006. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations." *Gender & Society* 20(4): 441–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499.

Acker, Joan. 2011. "Theorizing Gender, Race, and Class in Organizations." In *Handbook of Gender, Work & Organization*, edited by Emma L. Jeanes, David Knights and Patricia Y. Martin, 65–80. Chichester: John Wiley.

Ahmed, Sara. 2021. *Complaint!*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ashcraft, Karen, and Dennis K. Mumby. 2004. *Reworking Gender: A Feminist Communicology of Organization*. London: Sage.

Asmuß, Birte. 2013. "The Emergence of Symmetries and Asymmetries in Performance Appraisal Interviews: An Interactional Perspective." *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 34(3): 553–570. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831x13489045.

Bangerter, Adrian, Eric Mayor, and Simona Pekarek Doehler. 2011. "Reported Speech in Conversational Storytelling during Nursing Shift Handover Meetings." *Discourse Processes* 48(3): 183–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853x.2010.519765.

Benwell, Bethan. 2012. "Common-sense Anti-racism in Book Group Talk: The Role of Reported Speech." *Discourse & Society* 23(4): 359–376. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926512441106.

Bergmann, Jörg. 1992. "Veiled Morality: Notes on Discretion in Psychiatry." In *Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings*, edited by Drew Paul and John Heritage, 137–162. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Britton, Dana M. 2000. "The Epistemology of the Gendered Organization." *Gender & Society* 14(3): 418–434. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124300014003004.

Britton, Dana M., and Laura Logan. 2008. "Gendered Organizations: Progress and Prospects." *Sociology Compass* 2(1): 107–121. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00071.x.

Burstein, Paul. 1989. "Attacking Sex Discrimination in the Labor Market: A Study in Law and Politics." *Social Forces* 67(3): 641–665. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/67.3.641.

Buzzanell, Patrice M. 1994. "Gaining a Voice: Feminist Organizational Communication Theorizing." *Management Communication Quarterly* 7(4): 339–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318994007004001.

Buzzanell, Patrice M. 1995. "Reframing the Glass Ceiling as a Socially Constructed Process: Implications for Understanding and Change." *Communication Monographs* 62(4): 327–354. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759509376366.

Clift, Rebecca. 2013. "No Laughing Matter: Laughter and Resistance in the Construction of Identity." In *Studies of Laughter in Interaction*, edited by Glenn Phillip and Elizabeth Holt, 223–236. London: Bloomsbur.

Clift, Rebecca. 2016. *Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cockburn, Cynthia. 1988. *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men, and Technical Know How*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Cohn, Samuel. 1985. *The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing: Clerical Labor in Great Britain*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Collinson, David, and Jeff Hearn. 1994. "Naming Men as Men: Implications for Work, Organization, and Management." *Gender, Work and Organization* 1(1): 2–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.1994.tb00002.x.

Collinson, Margaret, and David Collinson. 1996. "'It's Only Dick': The Sexual Harassment of Women Managers in Insurance Sales." *Work, Employment & Society* 10(1): 29–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017096101002.

Cranford, Cynthia J. 2012. "Gendered Projects of Solidarity: Workplace Organizing Among Immigrant Women and Men. Gender." *Work & Organization* 19(2): 142–164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2011.00585.x.

Davies, Bronwyn, and Rom Harré. 1990. "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20(1): 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.9.4.03kle.

Davies, Bronwyn, and Rom Harré. 1999. "Positioning and Personhood." In *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action*, edited by Rom Harré and Luk Van Langenhove, Vol. 32–52. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

D'Enbeau, Suzy. 2017. "Gender and Organizing." In *The International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication*, edited by Craig R. Scott and Laurie Lewis. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118955567.wbieoc085.

Dessler, Gary. 2012. *Human Resource Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Drew, Paul. 1998. "Complaints about Transgressions and Misconduct." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 31(3–4): 295–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.1998.9683595.

Du Gay, Paul, Graeme Salaman, and Bronwen Rees. 1996. "The Conduct of Management and the Management of Conduct: Contemporary Managerial Discourse and the Constitution of the "Competent" Manager." *Journal of Management Studies* 33(3): 263–282. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.1996.tb00802.x.

Edwards, Derek. 2005. "Moaning, Whinging and Laughing: The Subjective Side of Complaints." *Discourse Studies* 7(1): 5–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605048765.

Fejes, Andreas. 2008. "Governing Nursing through Reflection: A Discourse Analysis of Reflective Practices." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 64(3): 243–250. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2008.04800.x.

Fletcher, Joyce. 1999. *Disappearing Acts: Power, Gender, and Relational Practice at Work*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2): 219–245. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608191.d33.

Gherardi, Silvia. 1994. "The Gender We Think, the Gender We Do in Our Everyday Organizational Lives." *Human Relations* 47(6): 591–610. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679404700602.

Gill, Rosalind, Elisabeth K. Kelan, and Christina M. Scharff. 2017. "A Postfeminist Sensibility at Work." *Gender, Work and Organization* 24(3): 226–244. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12132.

Glick, Peter, and Susan T. Fiske. 1997. "Hostile and Benevolent Sexism: Measuring Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes toward Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 21(1): 119–135. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00104.x.

Gray, Ann. 2003. "Enterprising Feminity: New Modes of Work and Subjectivity." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 6(4): 489–506. https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494030064003.

Grote, Richard C. 2011. *How to Be Good at Performance Appraisals: Simple, Effective, Done Right*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Günthner, Susanne. 1997. "Complaint Stories: Constructing Emotional Reciprocity Among Women." In *Communicating Gender in Context*, edited by Helga Kotthoff and Ruth Wodak, 179–218. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Haakana, Markku. 2007. "Reported Thought in Complaint Stories." In *Reporting Talk: Reported Speech in Interaction*, edited by Elizabeth Holt and Rebecca Clift, 150–178. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Halford, Susan, and Pauline Leonard. 2001. *Gender, Power and Organisations*. Huondmills: Palgrave.

Hall, Cristopher, and Maureen Matarese. 2014. "Narrative." In *Analysing Social Work Communication: Discourse in Practice*, edited by Christopher Hall, Kirsi Juhila, Maureen Matarese, and Carolus van Nijnatten, 79–97. London: Routledge.

Harré, Rom, and Mirjana Dedaic. 2012. "Positioning Theory, Narratology, and Pronoun Analysis as Discursive Therapies." In *Discursive Perspectives in Therapeutic Practice*, edited by Andy Lock and Tom Strong, 45–64. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Healy, Geraldine, Harriet Bradley, and Cynthia Forson. 2011. "Intersectional Sensibilities in Analysing Inequality Regimes in Public Sector Organizations." *Gender, Work and Organization* 18(5): 467–487. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2011.00557.x.

Heinemann, Trine, and Véronique Traverso. 2009. "Complaining in Interaction." *Journal of Pragmatics* 41(12): 2381–2384. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.10.006.

Heinrichsmeier, Rachel. 2021. "Who Gets to Speak: The Role of Reported Speech for Identity Work in Complaint Stories." *Journal of Pragmatics* 174: 43–54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.12.017

Hepburn, Alexa, and Galina B. Bolden. 2017. *Transcribing for Social Research*. London: Sage.

Heritage, John. 1984. *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Heritage, John. 2011. "Territories of Knowledge, Territories of Experience: Empathic Moments in Interaction." In *The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation*, edited by Tanya Stivers, Lorenza Mondada, and Jakob Steensig, 159–183. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Holt, Elizabeth. 1996. “Reporting on Talk: The Use of Direct Reported Speech in Conversation.” *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 29(3): 219–245. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327973rlsi2903_2.

Holt, Elizabeth. 2000. “Reporting and Reacting: Concurrent Responses to Reported Speech.” *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 33(4): 425–454. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327973rlsi3304_04.

Holt, Elizabeth, and Rebecca Clift. 2007. *Reporting Talk: Reported Speech in Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jefferson, Gail. 1978. “Sequential Aspects of Storytelling in Conversation.” In *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*, edited by Jim Schenkein, 219–248. New York: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.19022.hor.

Jefferson, Gail. 1985. “An Exercise in the Transcription and Analysis of Laughter.” In *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Teun A. vanDijk, Vol. 3, 25–34. London, UK: Academic Press.

Jian, Guowei. 2011. “Articulating Circumstance, Identity and Practice: Toward a Discursive Framework of Organizational Changing.” *Organization* 18(1): 45–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508410373672.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

Kayi-Aydar, Hayriye. 2021. “A Framework for Positioning Analysis: From Identifying to Analyzing (Pre)positions in Narrated Story Lines.” *System* 102: 102600. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102600.

Keisu, Britt-Inger, and Helene Brodin. 2023. “Postfeminism as Coping Strategy: Understandings of Gender and Intragroup Conflict Among Swedish Welfare Workers.” *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 31(1): 76–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2022.2080256.

Klewitz, Gabriele, and Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen. 1999. “Quote—Unquote? the Role of Prosody in the Contextualization of Reported Speech Sequences.” *Pragmatics* 9: 459–485. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.9.4.03kle.

Korvajärvi, Päivi. 1998. “Reproducing Gender Hierarchies in Everyday Work: Contradictions in an Employment Office.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 5(1): 19–30. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0432.00043.

Korvajärvi, Päivi. 2011. “Practicing Gender Neutrality in Organizations.” In *Handbook of Gender, Work and Organization*, edited by Emma L. Jeanes, David Knights, and Patricia Yancey Martin, 19–30. Chichester: John Wiley.

Koskinen, Emmi. 2021. *Storytelling, Self, and Affiliation: Conversation Analysis of Interactions between Neurotypical Participants and Participants with Asperger Syndrome*. PhD dissertation. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Koskinen, Emmi, Melisa Stevanovic, and Anssi Peräkylä. 2021. “Affiliation, Topicality, and Asperger's: The Case of Story-responsive Questions.” *Journal of Interactional Research in Communication Disorders* 11(1): 52–77. https://doi.org/10.1558/jircd.20903.

Koskinen Sandberg, Paula. 2017. “Intertwining Gender Inequalities and Gender-Neutral Legitimacy in Job Evaluation and Performance-Related Pay.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 24(2): 156–170. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12156.

Krefting, Linda A. 2003. “Intertwined Discourses of Merit and Gender: Evidence from Academic Employment in the USA.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 10(2): 260–278. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0432.t01-1-00014.

Martin, Patricia Yancey. 1992. “Gender, Interaction and Inequality in Organizations.” In *Gender, Interaction, and Inequality*, edited by Cecilia Ridgeway, 208–231. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Martin, Patricia Yancey. 1997. “Gender, Accounts, and Rape Processing Work.” *Social Problems* 44(4): 464–482. https://doi.org/10.2307/3097218.

Martin, Patricia Yancey. 2001. “Mobilizing Masculinities: Women's Experiences of Men at Work.” *Organization* 8(4): 587–618. https://doi.org/10.1177/135050840184003.

Martin, Patricia Yancey. 2003. “‘Said and Done’ versus ‘Saying and Doing’: Gendering Practices, Practicing Gender at Work.” *Gender & Society* 17(3): 342–366. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243203017003002.

Martin, Patricia Yancey. 2006. “Practicing Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 13(3): 254–276. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2006.00307.x.

Morley, Louise. 1999. *Organising Feminisms: The Micropolitics of the Academy*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Nentwich, Julia C., and Elisabeth K. Kelan. 2014. “Towards a Topology of ‘Doing Gender’: An Analysis of Empirical Research and its Challenges.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 21(2): 121–134. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12025.

Norrick, Neal R. 2005. “The Dark Side of Tellability.” *Narrative Inquiry* 15(2): 323–343. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.15.2.07nor.

Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps. 2001. *Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Olakivi, Antero, and Sirpa Wrede. 2019. “Early-Career Doctors and in/Justice in Work: The Invisibility of Gender in a ‘Male’ Profession.” In *Gender, Age, and Inequality in the Professions*, edited by Marta Chorozewich and Tracy L. Adams, 24–40. New York: Routledge.

Peräkylä, Anssi. 1997. “Validity and Reliability in Research Based on Tapes and Transcripts.” In *Qualitative Analysis: Issues of Theory and Method*, edited by David Silverman, 201–220. London, UK: Sage.

Peräkylä, Anssi, Pentti Henttonen, Liisa Voutilainen, Mikko Kahri, Melisa Stevanovic, Mikko Sams, and Niklas Ravaja. 2015. “Sharing the Emotional Load: Recipient Affiliation Calms Down the Storyteller.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 78(4): 301–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272515611054.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Peräkylä, Anssi, and Johanna Ruusuvuori. 2012. "Facial Expression and Interactional Regulation of Emotion." In *Emotion in Interaction*, edited by Anssi Peräkylä and Marja-Leena Sorjonen, 64–91. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pierce, Jennifer L. 1995. *Gender Trials: Emotional Lives in Contemporary Law Firms*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pierce, Jennifer L. 2002. "'Not Committed?' or 'Not Qualified?': A Raced and Gendered Organizational Logic in Contemporary Law Firms." In *An Introduction to Law and Social Theory*, edited by Reza Banakar and Max Travers, 123–144. London: Hart.

Reskin, Barbara F. 2003. "Including Mechanisms in Our Models of Ascriptive Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 68(1): 1–21. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088900.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 1997. "Interaction and the Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment." *American Sociological Review* 62(2): 218–235. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657301.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2011. *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rodrigues, Fátima. 2018. "Gender Impacts on Career Paths." *Superavit* 3: 7–30. https://doi.org/10.26358/srgivol3ar31.

Rogers, Mary F. 1992. "They All Were Passing: Agnes, Garfinkel, and Company." *Gender & Society* 6(2): 169–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124392006002002.

Ross-Smith, Anne, and Martin Kornberger. 2004. "Gendered Rationality? A Genealogical Exploration of the Philosophical and Sociological Conceptions of Rationality, Masculinity and Organization." *Gender, Work and Organization* 11(3): 280–305. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2004.00232.x.

Rudman, Laurie A., and Janell C. Fetterolf. 2014. "How Accurate Are Metaperceptions of Sexism? Evidence for the Illusion of Antagonism between Hostile and Benevolent Sexism." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 17(3): 275–285. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430213517272.

Rudman, Laurie A., and Peter Glick. 2008. *The Social Psychology of Gender: How Power and Intimacy Shape Gender Relations*. New York: Guilford Press.

Rudman, Laurie A., Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, Julie E. Phelan, and Sanne Nauts. 2012. "Status Incongruity and Backlash Effects: Defending the Gender Hierarchy Motivates Prejudice against Female Leaders." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(1): 165–179. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.10.008.

Ruusuvuori, Johanna, Birte Asmuß, Pentti Henttonen, and Niklas Ravaja. 2019. "Complaining about Others at Work." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 52(1): 41–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2019.1572379.

Ruusuvuori, Johanna, and Pirjo Lindfors. 2009. "Complaining about Previous Treatment in Health Care Settings." *Journal of Pragmatics* 41(12): 2415–2434. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.09.045.

Sacks, Harvey. 1992 In *Lectures on Conversation*, edited by Gail Jefferson, Vol. 1 & 2. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. 2007. *Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Selting, Margret. 2010. "Affectivity in Conversational Storytelling: An Analysis of Displays of Anger or Indignation in Complaint Stories." *Pragmatics* 20(2): 229–277. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.20.2.06sel.

Steinberg, Ronnie J. 1990. "Social Construction of Skill: Gender, Power, and Comparative Worth." *Work and Occupations* 17(4): 449–482. https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888490017004004.

Stevanovic, Melisa. 2018. "Social Deontics." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 48(3): 369–389. https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12175.

Stevanovic, Melisa. 2021. "Deontic Authority and the Maintenance of Lay and Expert Identities during Joint Decision Making: Balancing Resistance and Compliance." *Discourse Studies* 23(5): 670–689. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614456211016821.

Stevanovic, Melisa, Pentti Henttonen, Emmi Koskinen, Anssi Peräkylä, Taina Nieminen von-Wendt, Elina Sihvola, Pekka Tani, Niklas Ravaja, and Mikko Sams. 2019. "Physiological Responses to Affiliation during Conversation: Comparing Neurotypical Males and Males with Asperger Syndrome." *PLoS One* 14(9): e0222084. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222084.

Stevanovic, Melisa, and Anssi Peräkylä. 2012. "Deontic Authority in Interaction: The Right to Announce, Propose, and Decide." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(3): 297–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.699260.

Stivers, Tanya. 2008. "Stance, Alignment, and Affiliation during Storytelling: When Nodding Is a Token of Affiliation." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 41(1): 31–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351810701691123.

Symon, Gillian. 2005. "Exploring Resistance from a Rhetorical Perspective." *Organization Studies* 26(11): 1641–1663. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840605054626.

Tholander, Michael. 2019. "The Making and Unmaking of a Bullying Victim." *Interchange* 50: 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-019-09349-1.

Valian, Virginia. 1999. *Why So Slow? the Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT press.

Van De Mieroop, Dorien, and Jonathan Clifton. 2013. "Enacting Power Asymmetries in Reported Exchanges in the Narratives of Former Slaves." *Discourse Processes* 50(1): 52–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853x.2012.738967.

Van Langenhove, Luk, and Rom Harré. 1999. "Introducing Positioning Theory." In *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action*, edited by Rom Harre and Luk Van Langenhove, 14–31. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Veijola, Soile, and Eeva Jokinen. 2008. "Towards a Hostessing Society? Mobile Arrangements of Gender and Labour." *NORA—Nordic journal of feminist and gender research* 16(3): 166–181. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740802279901.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1(2): 125–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002.

Whitehead, Kevin A. 2013. "Managing Self/Other Relations in Complaint Sequences: The Use of Self-Deprecating and Affiliative Racial Categorizations." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 46(2): 186–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2013.780342.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Melisa Stevanovic is a tenure track researcher in social psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tampere University. She has conducted empirical research on social interaction in various contexts to investigate specific interactional phenomena, such as joint decision making, power, and authority using qualitative, mostly conversation analytic, research methods. In her current Academy of Finland funded project "Accounting for interactionally troublesome exchanges: Paradoxes, biases, and inequalities in storying, perceiving, and countering problematic social experiences," she examines people's possibilities to address the types of trouble that they encounter in their everyday lives.

Antero Olakivi is a postdoctoral researcher in the Center of Excellence in Aging and Care at the University of Helsinki, Finland. His research examines the constitution of ethical and moral selves, identities, and agency in different contexts of everyday life, including workplace interactions. He has published his research in journals, such as Sociology of Health and Illness, Current Sociology, and Journal of Professions and Organization.

Henri Nevalainen is a master's student in social psychology at the University of Helsinki. He also contributes to Melisa Stevanovic's Academy of Finland funded "Accounting for interactionally troublesome exchanges: Paradoxes, biases, and inequalities in storying, perceiving, and countering problematic social experiences" project as a research assistant.

Pentti Henttonen is a cognitive scientist specializing in psychophysiological research and dyadic statistical methods. His past research has focused on two-person conversational interaction in natural settings, during performance reviews in workplace context, and involving non-neurotypical and narcissistic individuals. His current research topics include emotional responses to conversational ambivalence, the role of empathy in interactions between acquainted dyad members and development of a scale instrument measuring beneficial and harmful effects of mental fortitude, also known as the Finnish cultural concept of "Sisu."

Niklas Ravaja is a professor of eHealth and well-being at the University of Helsinki. He is interested in mediated and non-mediated social interaction, and he is an expert on using psychophysiological measures to study emotional processes during social interaction.

How to cite this article: Stevanovic, Melisa, Antero Olakivi, Henri Nevalainen, Pentti Henttonen, and Niklas Ravaja. 2024. "Telling a Supervisor about Experiences of Gendered Dismissal: Problems of Documentation, Tellability, and Failed Authority." *Gender, Work & Organization* 31(2): 554–75. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13088.

14680432, 2024, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gwao.13088 by Tampere Universitaet Foundation, Wiley Online Library on [14/02/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License