

## **Ethnicity-based categorization as an interactional resource in narrating experiences of problematic encounters**

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In encounters between a country's majority population members and people who have migrated across national borders, ethnicity-based categorization can result in Othering practices. This can manifest as overt racist harassment, but also as subtle, essentializing assumptions about a person's characteristics based on their presumed background (Rawls & Duck 2020). Drawing societal attention to such problematic encounters and practices requires people with migration backgrounds to share their experiences with majority group members. In these storytelling interactions, topicalizing the ethnicities of oneself and others serves many functions, from explaining conflict between story characters (De Fina 2003, 139–180) and determining group-appropriate behaviour (Day 1998) to co-constructing group identities and challenging – or reinforcing – societal power dynamics (Day 1998; De Fina 2003; Van de Weerd 2019; Forsman & Hummelstedt-Djedou, 2014). These diverse functions and outcomes make topicalizing ethnicities in storytelling interaction a complex activity.

In this presentation, I analyze ten audio-recorded focus group conversations with people with migration backgrounds (n=23) and Finnish majority population members (n=8). The groups of two to four participants independently discussed their experiences of problematic encounters in Finland. In their discussions, ethnicity-based categories were spontaneously produced without prompting from researchers. Utilizing Membership Categorization Analysis, I examine *how ethnicity-based categorization is used as a resource in storytelling interaction about problematic encounters*.

The analysis shows that participants topicalize ethnicity-based categories in storytelling interaction to 1) explain problematic encounters, 2) highlight the problematic nature of the story antagonist's actions, and 3) establish moral expectations between and within categories. The results contribute to understanding the means and outcomes of ethnicity-based categorizations in social interaction. This allows for critical examination of how such categories are used in inclusionary and exclusionary ways in everyday social encounters.