"It's Okay since He's Canadian:" TV Show Membership Categorization, Framing, and Morality

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1. INTRODUCTION

When nationality is brought up in conversations, such as referring to someone as *Canadian* the implication is that this person belongs to a specific social group and shares the cultural norms of that group. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, such as in TV talk-show discourse, the same category may be subtly deployed for particular interactional purposes or to imply certain moral responsibilities a given member should possess. Furthermore, participants may deploy categories to frame their interactional activities. The motivation for this study comes from a TV show, wherein a Taiwanese TV host deploys the term *Canadian* to categorize a *non-Canadian* (Taiwanese) assistant host at a specific moment. This caught my attention and prompted me to ask, "Why that now?" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). This study aims to examine how the membership category device of culture or nationality, frame, and moral responsibility are socially invoked and constructed by *non-members* for TV show entertainment. Moreover, the flexibility to play with culture or nationality in order to achieve specific interactional ends will be delineated in this study.

2. BACKGROUND

Membership categorization analysis (MCA) (Sacks, 1992) is an approach that examines how participants make sense of each other with membership categorization devices (MCD) – practices of referring to a person with a set, or sets, of categories and application rules (Schegloff, 2007a). One such rule is the economy rule: when a category is used from an MCD to refer to a person, that category is considered adequate (Sacks, 1992). Under such circumstances, a membership category will be inference-rich; that is, it contains common-sense knowledge shared by people without a need for further explanation (Schegloff, 2007a). For example, when we refer to someone as *Japanese* or *Canadian*, our common-sense knowledge will make sense of these categories. However, there is, as of yet, no research regarding whether a membership category is set against an inference-rich feature in interaction.

Another rule about membership categories and their associated activities or attributes is "knowledge protected against induction" (Sacks, 1992, p. 336). If a person contradicts a

category, instead the category being revised, that person may be categorized as an outsider. However, there is a situation where the person can be a phoney (Sacks, 1992), or categorized as a non-member of the category. When all of the initial hints refer to a person as belonging to a certain membership category (e.g., Japanese), but later hints about that person turn out to be inconsistent with the initial category, then that person becomes a phoney. However, there seems to be little attention given as to how a category may be deployed by a phoney, and how the category is used by other participants, for certain interactional purposes. Moreover, a membership category in interaction may prescribe that person's moral responsibility adhere to related norms (e.g., Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011). As for Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig, "if we are to understand how speakers manage issues of agreement, affiliation and alignment…, we must understand the social norms surrounding epistemic access, primacy and responsibility" (p.24). The relationship between moral responsibility and membership categorization is thus one point of interest in this study.

Goffman's (1974) frame analysis holds the idea that contexts are defined by the surrounding frames. Gordon (2008) further illustrated frame blending in parent-child interaction when play and family work intertwine. Blending refers to multiple frames' co-occurrence, such as a mother singing the procedure of putting on her daughter's tights (play) while doing it for her (work). While framing reflects participant orientation, few discussions seem to focus on how a blended frame may be accomplished through membership categorization. This study aims to fill the gap by demonstrating how participants make sense of each other through membership categories, framing, and morality as well as the relationship among them. Guided by the theoretical and methodological framework of MCA and frame, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How is nationality or culture deployed by participants on a TV show?
2. What does membership categorization achieve in interaction?
3. How is moral responsibility observable from membership categorization?

3. DATA AND METHOD

The data was extracted from a renowned Taiwanese variety-comedy talk-show, Kangsi Coming (2004-2016), in 2011. One of the key features of its success was the humorous interactions played out among the three hosts. In this episode, 10 speakers from different countries are invited to share and discuss their family life in Taiwan. There are five participants in the current study: Lai (Japanese guest speaker), Xia (Canadian guest speaker; off screen), Chen (Taiwanese assistant host), S (female Taiwanese host), and Tsai (male Taiwanese host). Lai and Xia are frequent TV show guest speakers in Taiwan, and Xia is well known for his exaggerative behaviors. Chen usually plays the role of a present guest speaker or a celebrity in an exaggerated manner on the show for entertainment. Chen's character in this episode is the role-played Xia. S makes fun of Chen all the time in the talk show. Chen's jester character and misery after S' teasing or scolding is a crucial source of the audience's laughter. Tsai's stance is more flexible; sometimes he teases Chen together with S, and sometimes he speaks for Chen. Mandarin Chinese, the official language in Taiwan, is used in the current data. Data was transcribed following Jeffersonian (2004) transcription conventions. This study adopts MCA (e.g., Sacks, 1992) and frame analysis (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974) to obtain a better understanding of how nationality is manipulated by participants within their constructed frame. This case study focuses on a single case where a rebuke and joke are simultaneously invoked by participant's membership categorization through the participant's orientation and co-construction.

4. ANALYSIS

I will first introduce one excerpt and delineate how a national identity category and a frame are invoked and managed in talk-in-interaction. Thirty-nine seconds before (1), Lai describes the importance of keeping an appropriate personal distance between other Japanese people based on how tall the other person is, especially with regard to one's seniors, or based on the length of his/her shadow. His statement provides a background for the excerpt's culture invocation and negotiation. Right before this excerpt takes place, Lai shifts his gaze towards Chen's direction with laughter while talking about serving alcohol in Japan (L1). At the same time, Tsai is distracted (L3-4) by S' summons (L2). Since the excerpt contains the television opaque projector (telop), I have bracketed the telops and their associated utterances, with a screenshot of the former at the bottom. Telops are used by TV producers at specific moments and scenes as a running commentary to secure the audience's attention (Sasamoto et al., 2017). The bolded plus sign (+) shows the occurrence of the telop during interaction.

(1)   Excerpt 1 (00:29:11:28).

Lai: Japanese guest speaker; S: Female Host; Tsai: Male host; Chen: Assistant host
Tier 1: Transliteration; Tier 2: English gloss; Tier 3: Idiomatic English translation

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                                        *Gazes at Chen's
                                        direction
        lai          +>dàbùfèn dōu sì<[=hh *hehe     ]
01      Lai             majority  all  COP
                     Most of the time it's hh hehe


                                      [°ài chén hàn-°]
02      S                              PRT Chen  Han
                                       Hey, Chen-


                                      [nǐ  zài       ]
03      Tsai                           2SG  LOC
                     gànma=
04                   doing what
                     What are you doing?


                      *Gazes at and LH gestures toward
        lai            Chen's direction
05      Lai          =*hehe=


06      Tsai         =HEHE
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07	Telop	 **+**Q: rìběnrén zài cānzhuō shàng yǒu 　　　Japanese　at dining table LOC　have yángé lǐshù; yīqiè dōu shì qiánbèi strict　etiquette everything all　COP　senior yōuxiān? first Q: Japanese have strict etiquette at the table; everything is seniors first?

08	Tsai		**+**[hehe]
09	S	→	**+**[nǐ cǎi]dào　wǒ de 　　2SG step COMP　I POSS
10		→	yǐng[zi le　la] 　shadow　PFV　PRT You've stepped on my shadow!

11	S Telop	**+**nǐ　cǎidào　wǒ de yǐngzi la 　2SG　step COMP　I POSS shadow　PRT You've stepped on my shadow!

12	Chen	[A ↑A >AAa<] 　Ah ah aaah!
13	Tsai	HAHA=

14	Tsai		=HAHA°ha°
15	S	→	[méiyǒu°lǐ<u>mào</u>　a°] 　　no　politeness PRT It's/You're impolite.
16	Chen	→	[　　　　　DUÌBÙQî:][::] 　　　　　　　sorry I'm sorry.
17	?		[HE]HEHE
18	Tsai	→	tā jiānádà He　Canadian
19		→	[rén méiyǒu guān°x(h)ì°] person　no　　relationship It's okay since he's Canadian.
	s		*smiley face　　　　　→*
20	S		[*.HH　　　　　hehe]he*

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21    Tsai        .h >suǒyǐ nǐ< nǐ  lái
                     so   2SG 2SG come
22                >táiwān yǐhòu< juédé hěn fàngsōng
                  Taiwan  after    feel  very  relax
                  So you- you felt relaxed after
                  coming to Taiwan.
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I will explore each participant's actions through membership categorization and frame analysis in the following analysis starting from S' action. S addresses Chen, the assistant host, by calling his Chinese name as a summons and cuts off before finishing stating his full name in line 2. Her summons functions as a pre-scolding device (Schegloff, 2007b) for her scolding, *nǐ cǎidào wǒ de yǐngzi le la* 'you've stepped on my shadow', to Chen in lines 9-10. If looking at S' scolding in isolation, it would not have been reasonable to consider the action of stepping on one's shadow (L9-10) as being impolite (L15). The non-shadow stepping etiquette belongs to Japanese members, but neither S nor Chen is Japanese. Nonetheless, S adopts Lai's shadow-stepping metaphor and categorizes both herself and Chen as *Japanese* in this excerpt. She implicitly invokes a "temporary alternative category membership(s)" (Stokoe, 2012, P. 295) of *Japanese* tied to a category-bound attribute of Japanese people not stepping on their superior's shadows. This categorization has consequential effects in the TV show.

First, S' implicit *Japanese* categorization seems to frame her scolding as a joke and thus entertain the audience. Her subsequent smiley face with laughter in line 20 serve as a meta-message to frame her previous feigned rebuke as not serious. Arguably, Lai and Tsai's laughter (L1, 5, 6 and 8) prior to the rebuke already anticipates something laughable. This suggests that meta-messages may reinterpret a presupposed frame depending on the meta-message's orientation (Bateson, 1972). Tsai's subsequent loud laughter in lines 13-14 in the middle of S' rebuke also supports the joke frame. When this rebuke takes place in a TV talk-show with participant's laughter, this scolding frame co-exists with a joke frame (Gordon, 2008). Furthermore, since the rebuke is effective in generating participant's laughter, S' implicit *Japanese* categorization of Chen and herself seems to align with the institutional expectation: making the audience laugh by exhausting all means possible. The humor is grounded in the joke frame, and the frame is triggered by the implicitly invoked category of *Japanese*.

Second, S seems to reinforce the power imbalance between her and Chen. Participant's physical position in (2) supports the power difference. Chen (left) as an assistant host usually stands or squats, whereas S and Tsai (right) as the main hosts usually sit upon a podium.

(2)   Three hosts' physical positions (from left to right): Chen, S, and Tasi.

As mentioned earlier, S exaggerates her dissatisfaction (L9-10) about Chen's close physical distance and categorizes his shadow-stepping action as impolite (L15) despite both of their non-Japanese identities. It is reasonable to argue that S takes advantage of her institutional role which is superior to Chen's. Joke and power also seem to be mutually

influenced. On the one hand, S' rebuke appears to be a humorous act assisted by the animated telop and pervasive laughter. On the other hand, her deployment of Japanese culture brought up by Lai is contingent and tactical as a way to underline her power as an experienced superordinate to Chen. The non-shadow-stepping etiquette is one of the resources S utilizes as an immediate resource to display her power over Chen. With this in mind, the scolding frame is not overridden by the joke, but rather reflects how power is displayed by S. The scolding leads to Chen's stepping back while shouting out in line 12 and his subsequent apology in line 16. The next turn proof procedure (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) indicates that S' reclaiming her authoritative power in interacting with Chen is granted by Chen's responsive actions. Note that looking at S' assessment of Chen's "shadow-stepping" in line 15 being impolite, this kind of negative assessment seems common coming from speakers to someone with an equal or inferior status, but not from a subordinate to their superior. This type of scolding situation happens pervasively between S and Chen, and this excerpt is one of the typical examples presenting their regular interaction to provoke laughter from the audience. Observing the verbal and non-verbal interaction between S and Chen, the power imbalance seems to be perpetuated as a social activity rather than as a unidirectional imposition; moreover, S' implicit *Japanese* categorization seems to be useful in re-emphasizing the power imbalance between Chen and herself. Again, the power imbalance exaggeration is one of the features in the joke frame constructed by the participants. This appears to be part of the institutional goal—generating humor—which they are orienting to.

Third, one of the consequences is that S' implicit membership categorization leads to her out-of-the-blue demand for Chen's apology, which is made for entertainment purposes. This morality imposition is effective in winning audience laughter (L13, 14, and 17) in this joke frame. Therefore, none of the following is the main concern: whether Chen does indeed step on S' shadow, whether he is an actual member of the Japanese cultural community, or whether he is familiar at all with the shadow-space relation. Instead, what matters is whether the audience is attracted and entertained by S' moral supervision.

The telop, *nǐ cǎidào wǒ de yǐngzi la* 'You've stepped on my shadow!', in line 11 also seems to actively participate in constructing the blended joke and scolding frame. Its special font, flash effect, vibration, and grey/green gradient coloring seem to portray itself as an attention grabber compared to other plain captions. In addition, its animated demonstration appears to be a kind of communication demonstrating "we are kidding around," thus co-constructing the play frame with other participants. On the other hand, the telop appears to make it explicit to everyone that S is not only getting the floor of speakership, but also reminding Chen and all other participants of her authoritative power on this TV show. At the same time, S' moral demand has been exaggerated by the animated telop.

In summary, the implicit categorization of *Japanese* by S demonstrates the following functions: Blending her scolding with a joke frame to align with institutional expectations, reinforcing a power imbalance by wielding her authority to Chen, and imposing moral responsibility on Chen by demanding his apology. All of these functions have been assisted by the use of the telop.

In the sequential organization of (1), Chen's implicit categorization of another category, *Canadian*, as a response to S' rebuke is delineated as follows. Chen's subsequent apology, *DUÌBÙQî:::* 'I'm sorry', in line 16 seems to be an enactment of his role-played Canadian guest speaker, Xia (see (3)). It is evident from his high volume, elongated sound in the last syllable of each utterance, an exaggerated way of speaking, and his hand gesture of holding

two forearms out in front of his chest when emphasizing his talk. Xia is well-known for such exaggerative behaviors when appearing on TV shows in Taiwan. Hence, it seems obvious that Chen is apologizing from his enacted Canadian identity. I defined the categorization as "implicit" simply due to the fact that the word *Canadian* is not literally uttered by Chen.

    (3)   Chen (left) and Xia (right) in the same episode.

First, similar to S's scolding, Chen's enacted apology by implicitly categorizing himself as *Canadian* is for an entertainment purpose, as can be observed in the partially overlapped loud laughter from one of the participants in line 17. Recalling S' summons of Chen, not by calling his role-played name, *Xia Yi-Tiao*, but by initiating his original name, *chén hàn-* (L2), it is inferable that S is treating Chen as Taiwanese in her pre-scolding. She then imposes a *Japanese* category on him by creating the shadow-stepping drama (L9-10 & L15). Instead of responding with his imposed *Japanese* category or original Taiwanese identity, Chen apologizes by enacting his Canadian role, thus implicitly invoking the category of *Canadian* in his apology to align with the skit as well as the scolding frame. Suffice it to say that Chen is faithful in playing the role of a Canadian guest speaker. Compared to an actual apology, this over-exaggerated action seems to frame Chen's apology without the seriousness with which it was meant to be delivered. In conducting his apology in the joke frame, Chen appears to orient to the institutional expectation as well.

The second function for Chen's implicit *Canadian* self-categorization is that he plays along with S in perpetuating their power imbalance. As mentioned earlier, S' demonstration of her authoritative power (L9-10 and L15) is granted by Chen's follow-up stepping back (L12) and exaggerated apology (L16). Interestingly, when S imposes the Japanese cultural norm on Chen in the blended joke and scolding frame, Chen aligns with her instead of questioning her imposition. Similar to S' action, Chen's apology seems to indicate the interplay of joke and power. On the one hand, this playing-along reaction may further confirm the power difference reinforcement sequence embedded in the blended frame. On the other hand, the joke is based on S' random and somehow unreasonable blame for Chen's personal distance invasion, but Chen obediently apologizes for whatever he is scolded for. This shows that a power imbalance is embedded in what S is authorized to make and what Chen is obligated to obey when co-constructing the skit.

Third, Chen's *Canadian* self-categorization lies in the idea that he might be excusable due to his category as *non-Japanese*, meaning no moral obligation to accept blame when stepping on a superior's shadow. While Chen aligns with S' action of categorizing him as *Japanese*, his self-categorization embedded in his animated apology (L16) is not *Japanese*, but a mimicked Canadian guest speaker. Chen's implicit choice of using *Canadian* in contrast to *Japanese* seems to create an opportunity for Tsai to explicate this category in his follow-up statement *tā jiānádà rén méiyǒu guān°x(h)ì°* 'It's okay since he's Canadian', in lines 18-19, to exempt him from S' scolding. This will be further analyzed later. In other words, Chen is able to be excused for not following Japanese shadow-space cultural etiquette since he is *Canadian,* or *non-Japanese*. Chen's self-categorization of *Canadian* shows his innovative way of taking moral responsibility. On the one hand, he plays along with S by offering an apology. This shows that he does not reject the moral obligation

imposed on him. On the other hand, his "Canadian" style apology clearly reveals that he is strategically evading full responsibility by clarifying his *non-Japanese* identity. In short, through implicit *Canadian* categorization, Chen apologizes as a morally responsible person for breaking the Japanese norm, not as *Japanese*, but as a *non-Japanese* person who is not familiar with this form of etiquette and is thus morally excusable.

Chen's implicit categorization of *Canadian* contains three functional features: perpetuating the blended joke and scolding frame as well as sticking to his institutional role, playing along with S in confirming his power inferiority, and highlighting his *non-Japanese* identity in order to be morally excused from S' blame. Following the sequential organization of the interaction, I will now focus on Tsai's explicit categorization of Chen as *Canadian*.

Tsai's explicit deployment of *Canadian* has delicately achieved several functions. First, Tsai's categorization legitimizes Chen's *Canadian* category as morally excusable in breaking from the Japanese cultural norm. Tsai's comment, *tā jiānádà rén méiyǒu guān°x(h)ì°* 'It's okay since he's Canadian', in lines 18-19 aligns with Chen's enacted apology and defends the latter's *Canadian* category. It is because Chen is *Canadian*, or *non-Japanese*, that he can be forgiven for stepping on S' shadow. One implication is that since Canadian does not have such a cultural norm as Japanese, Tsai sanctions Chen to be forgiven for his invasion.

Different from the previous *Japanese* categorization, the categorization of *Canadian* does not bear a similarly inference-rich feature. The only relevant inference of "he is Canadian" is "he is not Japanese." On the other hand, *Japanese* indexes different attributes: it is impolite for Japanese to intrude on other's personal space by stepping on their shadow, they are sensitive about personal space, their hierarchical relationships are strict and rigid (off script), and so forth. Since the *Canadian* category is invoked to make Chen's shadow-stepping action excusable, any ethnic category would have fit in the category as long as the category is not *Japanese*. Therefore, whatever is inferable from *Canadian* except for *non-Japanese* is not relevant to this categorization in (1). From the *Canadian* category deployed by Chen and Tsai, we can see that: a category does not need to stick to its inference-rich feature, but rather can be used as a means to achieve particular interactional purposes.

The second function of the categorization is that, similar to S and Chen, Tsai is orienting to the blended joke and scolding frame and therefore the institutional expectations. His word choice of "Canadian" in lines 18-19 over "not Japanese" is a contingent and strategic move; if he said, "it's okay since he is not Japanese," the entertainment effect would not have been as productive. His embedded laughter (L19) implies a collusion with others to co-construct the skit. Furthermore, I argue that it is both Chen's Canadian-invoking apology and appearance that lead to Tsai's endorsement of deploying the *Canadian* category to excuse Chen from the scolding frame. Therefore, Tsai's categorization of Chen as *Canadian* functions in two ways: One is to offer a legitimate excuse for Chen to evade S' scolding, and the other is to maintain the blended frame and institutional goal. When Tsai has forgiven Chen on behalf of S and immediately retrieves the topic of Lai's experience (L21-22), this then echoes Tsai's role as a mediator between S and Chen as well as that of a host directing the conversation back to the original topic. At the same time, it is noticeable that S' laughter (L20) and lack of further pursuit support the idea that her scolding is not serious.

The third function of Tsai's explication of *Canadian* seems to confirm the power difference between S and Chen. S' scolding seems to be a random act supported by Tsai's sidetracked question for her, *nǐ zài gànma* 'What are you doing?' in lines 3-4. Rather than

questioning S' out-of-the-blue rebuke, Tsai acts as a mediator to calm both S and Chen down by categorizing Chen as *Canadian/non-Japanese*. In other words, he colluded with both participants in this power-determined rebuke. Therefore, whereas the blended frame is filled with laughter, power is simultaneously invoked and maintained.

From Tsai's categorization, we can see how he has made Chen exit from S' imposed moral obligation, how a joke is collaborated among him and the other two participants with a strategic ending, and how power and joking are represented in the blended scolding and joke frame. I have explored each member's membership categorization, the functions embedded in the actions, and involved morality. In the next section, I will discuss the connection between the analysis and my research questions.

5. DISCUSSION

I will focus on responding to the research questions based on the above analysis. First, national/cultural identity appears to be deployed to make scolding and a joke co-exist in TV show interaction through membership categorization. There have been two categories under the MCD of national/cultural identity in play—*Japanese* and *Canadian*—in the blended frame co-constructed by the participants and the telop. Note that the actual Japanese and Canadian speakers, Lai and Xia, are not engaged in the discussed frame; yet their national or cultural identity is made relevant by the three non-members, S, Chen, and Tsai, acting out their scolding-apology-forgiveness sequence as something laughable for everybody. Therefore, we have seen the flexibility of manipulating national/cultural identity to construct a blended frame via membership categorization. Furthermore, if observing the same situation without taking local context into consideration, the co-construction of the blended frame might not be perceivable. It is because of member's own categorization and local resources (pervasive laughter, the animated telop, TV talk-show context, etc.) that scolding deliberately occurs simultaneously with a joke. The blended frame is hence a collaborative and discursive accomplishment made by the participants.

Second, the participants deploy national identity in their actions to achieve multiple functions. Three shared functions of membership categorization in the current data involve the institutional expectation of laughter, power perpetuation, and moral responsibility negotiation. Especially for the first two functions, we can see how humor and power are intertwined in interaction. Since the scolding-apology-forgiveness sequence and power execution are co-occurring within the frame, they are reinterpreted as not to be taken seriously. At the same time, since the joke is created by the leading host's (S) authoritative execution, along with the other two members' (Chen and Tsai) accommodation, we can see how power is executed under the guise of the joke and through participant's laughter. In addition, the frame and participant's action seem to be mutually affected. For instance, participant's orientation towards the joke and scolding blended frame is supported by member's meta messages and the telop's emphasizing effect. Hence, the frame is invoked and perpetuated through membership categorization, and all category deployment occurs within the blended frame. On the other hand, it is sufficient to argue that members are guided by the blended frame. For instance, it is probably through the existence of the scolding and joke blended frame that Tsai's choice of *Canadian* categorization is determined. This shows the mutual influence between member's action and the frame. In short, through membership categorization, we can see the three overarching functions: entertainment, power, and morality, in action. The interplay between joke and power as well as the mutual influence of frame and participant's action will not be observable without a detailed analysis of participant's interaction.

Third, category-bound moral responsibility appears to be observable from participant's actions. S' implicit *Japanese* categorization imposes the moral responsibility on Chen to apologize since he is breaking a Japanese cultural norm, even though Chen does not belong to the Japanese cultural community. Chen enacts the *Canadian* character as a way to implicitly shy away from any moral obligation regarding the Japanese shadow-stepping culture. Chen's strategy is endorsed by Tsai with his explicating the *Canadian* category to make Chen morally excusable from being scolded and to help him out. With this in mind, moral responsibility seems to be a dexterously utilizable and socially negotiable concept visible in participant's membership categorization.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a preliminary finding for how membership categorization, frame practice, and morality interact with each other in social interaction. This study contributes to a better understanding of how a joke on a TV show is sequentially accomplished by phonies/non-member's deployment of national or cultural identity through membership categorization. This extends the possibilities of how a blended frame can be constructed through microanalysis on interaction (e.g., Gordon, 2008). With participant's meta-messages (e.g., enacted *Canadian* category, laughter, etc.), a blended frame is a discursive and collaborative accomplishment (Bateson, 1972; Gordon, 2008). Telops are worth investigating since they play an indispensable role in frame construction. Furthermore, local context has to be taken into consideration for membership categorization and frame blending in order for them to make sense to the members and outsiders. Inference-rich features (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007a) may be selectively relevant for participants to achieve particular interactional purposes, as can be seen in how *Canadian* has been utilized for a specific reason – making a speaker excusable from a *Japanese*-related category-bound rebuke. Regarding the moral responsibility to follow the Japanese cultural norm as a category-bound predicate, whereas *Japanese* appears to be invoked to tie to the responsibility of knowing the shadow stepping taboo, *Canadian* is deployed as a *non-Japanese* category to dodge the category-bound moral obligation. This implies that moral responsibility becomes a socially negotiable concept through membership categorization (Stivers et al., 2011). Overall, through participants themselves, culture, nationality, frame, and morality appear to be socially negotiable and grounded in talk-in-interaction. This opens the possibility of playing with culture or nationality to achieve specific interactional ends in different settings. Further work leans towards investigating similar situations in different contexts to extend the current findings.

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