

Abstract

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Yes, But Is It Racism?

Increased immigration has aroused vigorous discussions over space in European countries. And media has an essential role in the tone these discussions take.

In my doctoral dissertation I compare the way Finnish newspapers and magazines wrote about the refugees and the asylum seekers during the years 2015-2017 to the way they wrote about the Jews during the years 1872-1939. Working title of my thesis is "racism in the Finnish press."

My choice to use of the word "racism" has raised a lot of eyebrows, questions and objections. I have been told not to make presumptions of finding racism in the media texts before conducting the study. Seems logical enough - but is it?

According to many researchers, racism is still a part of today's societies' norms, culture and practices. If these researchers are not grossly mistaken, why should one not expect to find racism in Finnish norms, culture and practices? And how could it then not be in our media texts?

Finnish researchers have, however, preferred to talk about othering. The same has been recommended to me. I have been told that even if I would find something in the media texts, it would not be racism. It could be othering. Or maybe xenophobia. Or, perhaps, prejudice. Maybe even discrimination. But not racism.

In my presentation, I want to examine these terms. What are the meanings they convey? The meanings they rather not convey?