



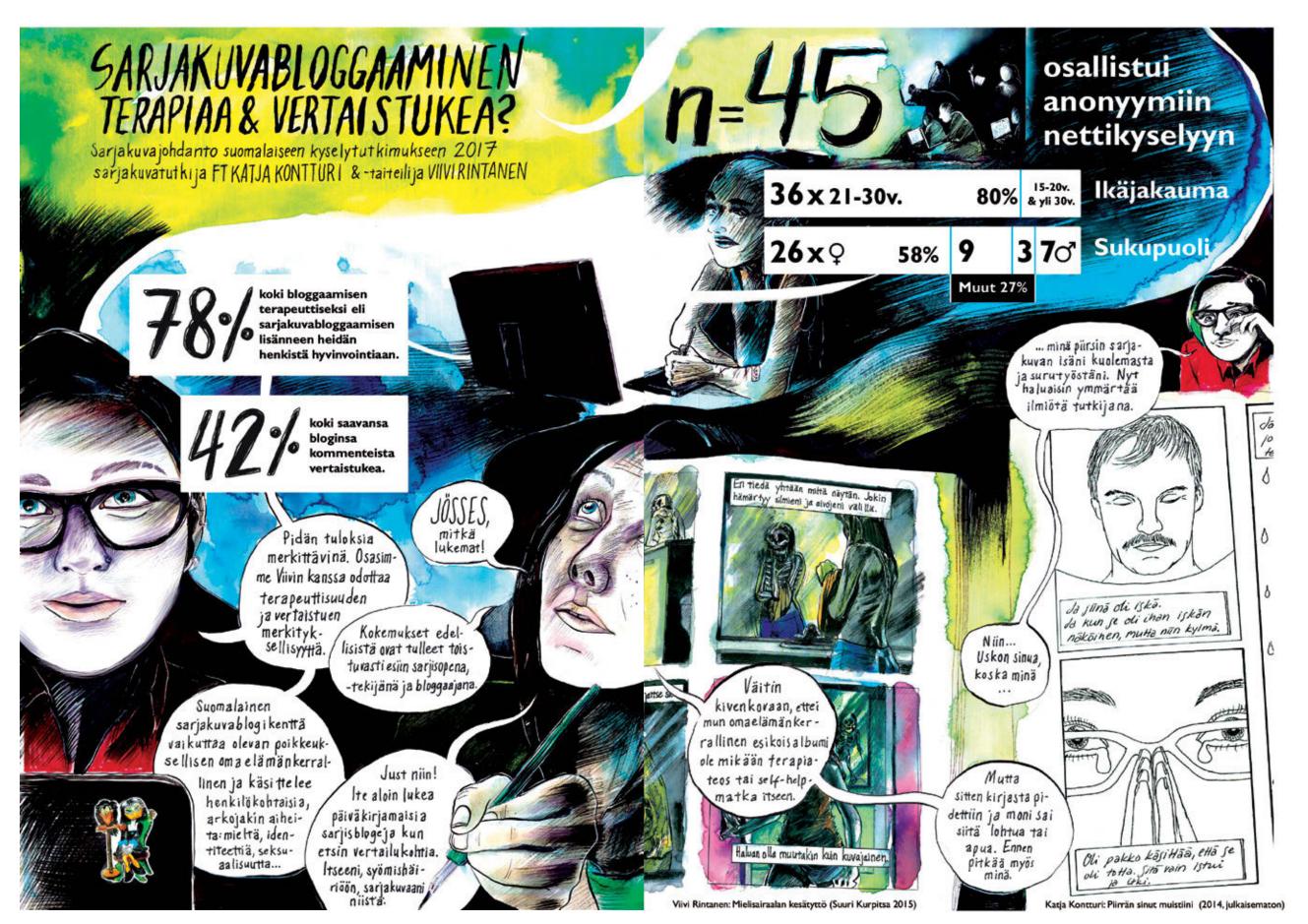
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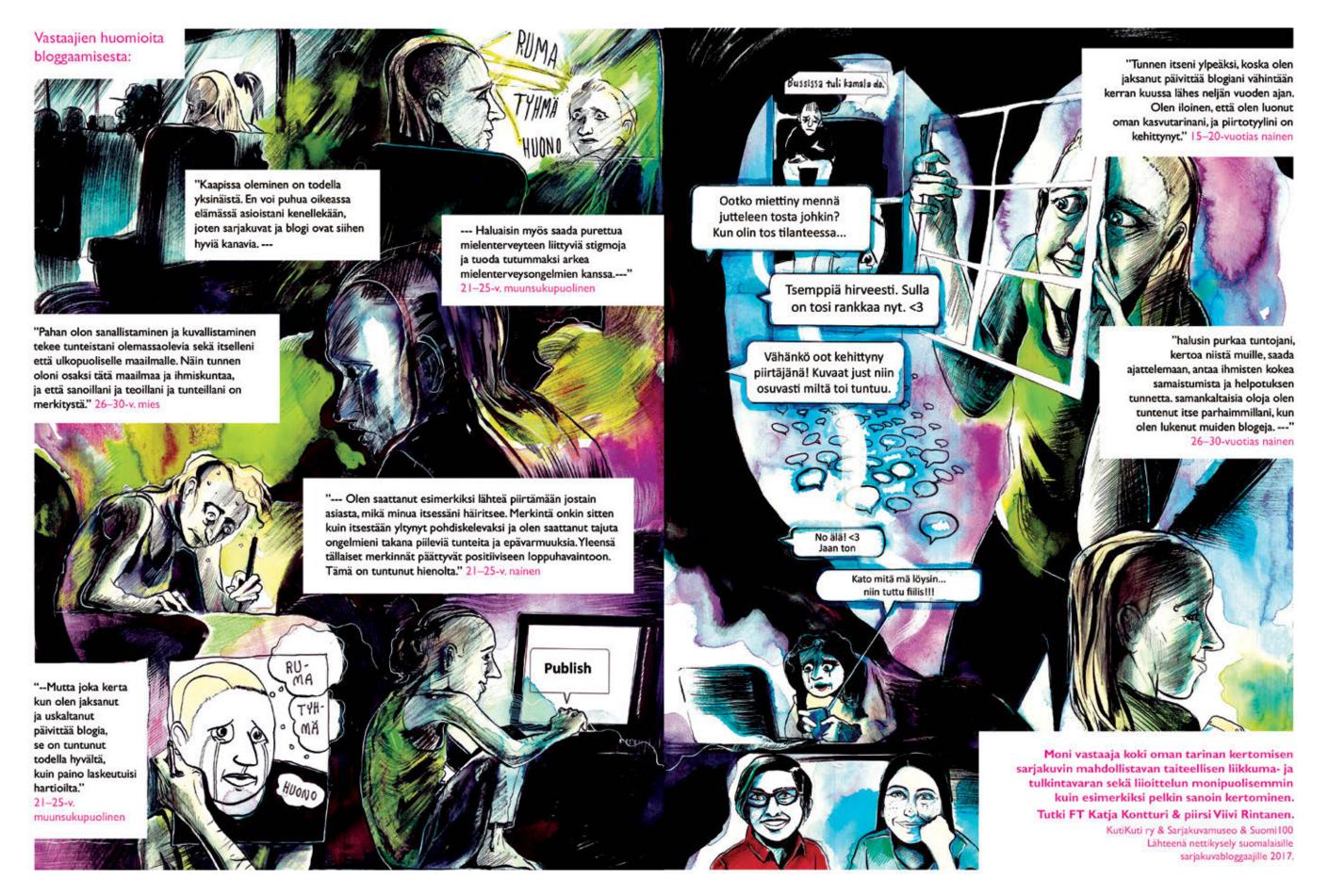
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**Katja Kontturi & Viivi Rintanen: Webcomic blogs: therapy and peer support?** A foreword to a 2017 survey on Finnish webcomics. / 45 webcomic bloggers took part in an anonymous web-based survey. / Breakdown of the participants by age and gender (see the graph on the upper right): 80 % were 21–30 years old; 20 % younger or older. / 58 % female, 27 % non-binary and 15 % male. / The survey's main findings (upper left): 78 % saw blogging as a therapeutic aid, which suggests a positive effect on mental health. 42 % felt that comments left by readers provided peer support. / Viivi (right): Jeez! Look at those numbers! / Katja (left): These are significant findings. Viivi and I knew to expect that these two factors would stand out. / V: I come across this all the time working as a comics educator, artist and blogger. / K: The Finnish webcomic blogging scene appears to be particularly focused on autobiographical content. The subjects are mostly personal, often delicate: the psyche, identity, sexuality...

V: That's right! I started reading comic blogs to find perspectives on my own life, eating disorders, the comics I wrote about them. / At first I would insist that my autobiographical debut comic was not in any way a therapeutic aid or a self-help style journey into the Self. / But the book was received really well, and many found comfort and relief in my story. Eventually, so did I. / K: Yes... I can really identify with that... / ... I myself made a comic about the death of my father and coping with loss. Now I'd like to look into the phenomenon from a scientific perspective. / Excerpts (left): I have no idea what I look like. Everything gets blurred going from my eyes into my brain. / I want to be more than just a reflection. (Viivi Rintanen: Mielisairaalan kesätyttö) / (right) And there he was. Dad. And he looked just like dad, but he was so cold. / I had to accept the fact that it was true. I just sat there and cried. (Katja Kontturi: Piirrän sinut muistiini (unpublished)).

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Comments about blogging from the participants: "Being in the closet is really lonely. In real life, there is no one I can talk to about my problems, so comics and blogging offer a welcome outlet. --- / UGLY / STUPID / USELESS / --- Another thing I'd like to do is to help destigmatize mental health issues and share with others what it's like to live with mental health problems. --- 21-25 yrs., non-binary / "By putting my misery into words and pictures I can make my feelings more real, to myself and to the outside world. In this way, my feelings become part of this world, and humanity, and my words and actions gain meaning." 26-30 yrs., male / "... Sometimes I'll start drawing about some part of myself that bothers me. These entries tend to evolve in an introspective direction which has helped me grasp some of the feelings and insecurities that underlie my problems. So the outcome is usually positive. It feels great." 21-25 yrs., female / "--- But every time I have had the strength and the courage to do an update, it has felt really good, like a weight falling off my shoulders." 21-25 yrs., non-binary / UGLY / STUPID / USELESS / Publish.

[Two people texting: Look what I found... I so know how that feels!!! /Totally! <3 I'm sharing this] / [Comments: Your drawings just keep getting better and better! You've really captured the way that feels. / Have you thought about talking this over with someone? When I was in your situation.../ I wish you all the strength. You're going through a really rough time. <3] // Participants: "I'm proud to have made new entries at least once a month for almost four years. I'm glad to have documented my personal growth and to have improved my drawing style." 15–20 yrs., female / "I needed to vent out my feelings, share them with others, make people think, give them something to identify with, give them relief. Give back what I've gained from reading other people's blogs. ---" 26–30 yrs., female / Many of the participants felt that documenting their life through comics allowed for more artistic freedom, more room for open-endedness and accentuation than plain writing. Source: web survey with Finnish webcomic bloggers, 2017.

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