

Odd One Out: Writers Addressing Othering and Exclusion in Finland

Tarja Tantt & Tuulikki Kurki
University of Eastern Finland

Abstract

This article examines how authors with migrant backgrounds address 'othering' and exclusion and the consequences of these processes in Finland. The article elicits various viewpoints on the so-called insidious trauma and explicates harmful interaction in everyday encounters that may give rise to insidious trauma. The research material includes three autobiographical works, one novel, and one collection of short stories. The material was analyzed through qualitative content analysis. In the material, othering appears as exoticization or categorization of 'the other,' based on any difference or assumption of difference. The means of exclusion can be direct or indirect; rejection, silence or silencing, ignoring, language exclusion, microaggressions, and institutionalized exclusionary discourses. The repetitive and continuous experiences of othering and exclusion may cause an insidious trauma and hinder the development of agency, cultural citizenship, and belonging for people entering new communities.

Keywords: insidious trauma, othering, exclusion, migration, harmful interaction, cultural citizenship, Finland

Introduction

What can be done, for example, with ice? While we may approach it in a spirit of friendship, as we do the country we now call home, it pins us down. It leaves us bruised, hurting, and fearful. And if, in the end, it opens itself up to us, it does so only to swallow us up and drown us. (*Sinut*, 63)¹

The above extract describes how a person who, upon emigrating to Finland, compares settling in their new home country to encountering ice. It causes bruising, pain, and fear until it finally gives way to them, swallowing them up and drowning them. On a broader level, this example suitably describes a situation in which an individual attempts to achieve agency in their new home country, integrate into a new society, and embody a cultural citizenship in which their difference is recognized. In this example, the attempt is unsuccessful and the experience is negative, harmful, and even violent.

According to the EU-MIDIS-II (2017) survey, immigrants, their descendants, and ethnic minorities experience discrimination in Europe in all aspects of their lives. The survey was completed by 25,515 people of whom 38% had experienced discrimina-

tion based on their migrant background during the last five years or in more than one area of their everyday life (EU-MIDIS-II 2017, 13–14, 21). Discrimination occurred in professional settings, access to housing, interacting with educational administrators, or when accessing public and private sector services (Ibid). Furthermore, 24% of respondents had experienced hate-motivated harassment (ibid., 16). The majority experienced harassment in the form of offensive or threatening comments, offensive gestures or inappropriate staring, or, for example, harassment online.

The report states that discrimination and harassment diminish the trust minorities and migrant groups place in their societies. Moreover, these experiences reduce the likelihood of these people participating in their local labor markets, education systems, and general society (EU-MIDIS-II 2017, 18). In Finland, individuals with migrant backgrounds face similar problems (e.g., Heponiemi et al. 2018; Liebkind et al. 2016; Makkonen 2000; Rastas 2005; 2007; Öblom & Antfolk 2017). According to a national survey published in 2019, approximately 40% of the population with a foreign background had experienced discrimination in Finland (Rask and Castaneda 2019, 229, see also summary in English ibid., 272).

Repetitive and continuous discrimination, bullying, or other harmful forms of interaction, such as various forms of microaggression (Sue et al. 2007; Nadal et al. 2015), can negatively impact a person's wellbeing, their ability to work, and their feelings of self-worth (e.g., Nadal et al. 2015, 158–59; Hawker & Boulton 2000; Rigby 2001). For example, exclusion – or the persistent threat of it – causes individuals to experience quantifiable social pain (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 3). At worst, the prolonged presence of these kinds of stressors in a person's life, coupled with the person's attempts to adjust to a stressful situation, can lead to the so-called insidious trauma (Kaplan 2007, 143; Facemire 2018, 9–10; Witte 1996, 13–22; Perez Foster 2001; Brunnet et al. 2020). Traumatic experiences may hinder the development of agency, participation, and feelings of belonging in traumatized individuals further complicating the construction of cultural citizenship.

This article² examines how migrant narrators address othering (otherizing) and exclusion in their works and how these processes affect their sense of belonging and constructions of cultural citizenship in their new home country, Finland. This article seeks to answer two main research questions: 1) What kinds of experiences of othering and exclusion do authors with migrant backgrounds in Finland address in their work? 2) How are experiences of othering and exclusion reflected in the narrators' sense of self and belonging? Through these questions this article attempts to elicit perspectives on insidious trauma and explicate the potentially harmful experiences of othering and exclusion in everyday encounters.

The aim of this article is to consider the possible connection between the processes of othering and exclusion and the development of insidious trauma. As Burge (2020) has noted, literature can provide an essential perspective on the lives, cultures, and identities of migrating people that contributes to the overall understanding of contemporary migration and its history.

This article is not an examination of migrant literature but an attempt to shed light on the phenomenon of insidious trauma through literary works written by migrant

and border crossing authors in the context of Finland. Nevertheless, the subject of this article is situated in the larger context of the so-called migrant literature (“migration literature,” “migrant writing”), which has been recognized as one of the significant new literature genres in the 21st century (Glesener 2016). According to Glesener (2016), migrant literature has been called “new world literature” that reflects peoples’ everyday experiences in contemporary multicultural and multilingual contexts in a globalized world.

Glesener finds migrant literature also reflects many themes linked to feelings of exclusion and othering that represent a global condition of migrating and border-crossing people. Therefore, the works analyzed in this article do not only reflect migrants’ experiences in the context of Finland, but also the experiences of many migrating people in today’s world. Furthermore, the works analyzed in this article could also be characterized by concepts of ‘transnational literature’ and ‘cross-border literature’ that, according to Nissilä (2018, 115), do not stress the national background of the authors but promote conceptual thinking outside national frames.

Plenty of research has been published on migrant literature and different types of traumas, especially traumas that often result from violence, war, terror, catastrophe, and similar large-scale traumatizing events. Other types of traumas, such as insidious trauma, CPTSD³, repetitive, everyday encounters, such as othering and exclusion, that are traumatizing to some groups of people, have also been discussed in recent literature and film research (Bekers, Helff & Merolla 2009; Wang 2016), however, significantly less than the first type of trauma.

Theoretical Background and Key Concepts

The theoretical background of this article lies at the intersection of multidisciplinary trauma research, communication studies, and multidisciplinary research into borders and mobilities, including migration research. In the field of multidisciplinary trauma research, the article is situated within the new wave of trauma research that began in the 1990s and started to evolve towards increased multidisciplinary (Caruth 2016, Afterword, 1–3; Kaplan 2005, 25). At the same time, new alternative conceptualizations of trauma were formulated, and the so-called insidious trauma, experienced by many ethnic and other minorities, became recognized as a research topic (Brown 1991: 128). In the 2000s, the focus of multidisciplinary trauma research shifted from the psychology of trauma toward the cultural and societal contexts of trauma, its language, and, for example, the power relations that control and regulate the narration of trauma (Balaev 2014, 2–6).

In the context of communication and interaction studies, the article is connected to research on harmful interaction from the perspective of the asymmetrical and harmful use of power (Herkama 2012; Monks & Coyle 2011; Pörhölä 2009; Salmivalli & Peets 2018, 303). In the field of multidisciplinary research into borders and mobilities, the article centers on the debate around the encountering and crossing of different societal and cultural borders, various bordering processes (Wilson & Donnan 2012; Van Houtum & Van Naerssen 2002), the construction of cultural citizenship, and the participa-

tion and agency of migrants in their new home countries (Jensen 2011; Andrew et al. 2005; Ong 1996; Rosaldo 1994). Within this theoretical framework, the key concepts in this article are the processes of othering and exclusion, insidious trauma, and cultural citizenship, which are fundamentally connected to the concepts of agency and inclusion.

In this article, othering and exclusion are understood as forms of asymmetric or abusive use of power and as a form of oppression between individuals and groups (Facemire 2018, 9). More broadly speaking, othering refers to situations in which a person or group of people are seen as being fundamentally or naturally different or alien. Through the processes of othering, a person or a group of people are represented through stereotypes and are objectified and essentialized, sometimes in simplifying or exaggerating ways (Westinen & Lehtonen 2016, 17–18; Lehtonen 2015, 264–68; Juhila 2012, 175–225; Pälli 2003, 123–25; Hall 1997b, 257–58). Othering is based on demarcating ‘we’ and ‘other’ from each other. However, this demarcation creates homogenous assumptions of both ‘we’ and ‘other’ and hides the particularity of individuals and the heterogeneity of both categories (Lehtonen & Löytty 2003, 7–8).

The academic debate around othering has involved proponents from various disciplines (Hall 1997b, 234–38). One of the main driving forces behind the debates is Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), which addressed othering in the context of postcolonialism. *Orientalism* critically examined the notion of the non-European ‘other’ produced in the discourse of colonial Europeans and the image of ‘the other’ in relation to Europeans, whereby ‘the other’ was presented “in a reductionist, distancing, and pathologizing way” (Jensen 2011, 64; Said 1978). Indeed, ‘the other’ was simultaneously “exoticized,” “strange,” and an inferior or negative counter-image to that of ‘the European’ (Harris 2018, 117).

According to Jensen (2011, 64–67), Gayatri Spivak has been considered one of the first researchers to define othering as a concept systematically. In Spivak’s definition, othering is a multifaceted process, including interlocking systems of oppression. Othering may take the form of racism, sexism, or symbolic denigration based on social class and the formation of an identity connected to this denigration. In Spivak’s conception of ‘the other,’ the question is not one of its exoticism but, rather, one of solely viewing ‘the other’ as inferior. Othering has also been discussed in terms of intersectional othering enacted at the intersection of various factors, such as ‘race,’ ethnicity, and gender (Jensen 2011, 67; Hall 1997b, 225). In cultural studies, Stuart Hall (1997a) has been one of the central scholars to continue and deepen the theorization of ‘the other’ and the processes of othering.

We understand exclusion as a social phenomenon that arise from the interactions between several people. In this kind of interaction, someone is (intentionally) excluded from everyday activity. Therefore, for example, Abrams & Killen (2014, 2), Pikkumäki & Peltola (2017, 10), and Salmivalli (2010) understand exclusion as a phenomenon strongly connected to group identity. Exclusion also refers to an individual’s experience of isolation from others, both physically and emotionally (Sunwolf & Leets 2004, 206–210; Wesselmann et al. 2016, 5).

Furthermore, exclusion refers to individuals or specific groups being denied the

means of entry to the social spheres in which matters about themselves are managed: they are invisible and unheard. For example, exclusion can be understood as a consequence of othering of migrants (Löytty 2016, 161–62), who are excluded from the participatory social space in which people can become visible agents or negotiate their inclusion in this space (Zobl & Drüeke 2012, 1). Moreover, according to Grosz (2003), exclusion can emerge as a product of the discursive violence inherent to language, writing, and cultural practices that can other, humiliate, and invalidate. Discursive violence can not only take the form of aggressive hate speech, but it can also become manifest through refined, subtle, and hurtful language usage (Heywood 2021).

At one extreme, othering and exclusion may involve physical and verbal violence or the threat of violence. At the other extreme, everyday encounters constitute othering and exclusion through more subtle, refined, and hidden means, such as various forms of microaggression (microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations) (Sue et al. 2007). Sue et al. (2007, 273) note that the forms of microaggression toward ethnic minorities are everyday verbal, behavioral, or humiliating acts, which, intentionally or not, communicate hateful, demeaning, or otherwise harmful racial slurs. The perpetrators of microaggression, however, are sometimes unaware of their negative actions when they interact with racial or ethnic minorities.

While othering and exclusion are not automatically understood as bullying, they share some of the same qualities as bullying when experienced constantly and repeatedly. Bullying is also a matter of the systematic abuse of power (Monks & Coyle 2011, 2; Rainivaara & Karhunen 2006, 10; Salmivalli & Peets 2018, 303). Bullying is defined as a long-term process in which an individual is subjected to systematic and repeated offensive and/or aggressive behavior by another individual, group, or community, and the target finds it difficult to defend themselves or to escape the situation (e.g., Einarsen 1999, 16; Rainivaara & Karhunen 2006, 9).

In this article, insidious trauma refers to the cumulatively traumatizing experience of, for example, situations in which a person is repeatedly othered and excluded (Craps 2010, 54–55; Facemire 2018, 9–10; Nadal et al. 2015, 58). In contrast to trauma caused by sudden events, insidious trauma is not caused by isolated incidents of violence or forceful or threatening events; instead, it gradually accumulates over a long period, for example, in ‘everyday’ chronic conditions (Brown 1991; Oakley 1996). Insidious trauma may also be caused by difficult experiences that, as the subjects of discrimination, specific subordinated individuals or groups experience in their everyday lives as a result of social structures (Kaplan 2007, 144; Nadal et al. 2015). Insidious trauma may also be experienced by an individual from an oppressed or subordinated minority group that has been subjected to violence, the threat of violence, or discrimination, even though the individual has not directly experienced violence or discrimination in their own life (Kaplan 2007, 144; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Vesala 2002, 142–45; cf. *minority stress* Meyer 1995).

In insidious trauma, violence does not necessarily threaten a person’s physical wellbeing; instead, it is a question of violence against one’s soul and spirit (Brown 1991, 128). Accordingly, behind the trauma lies an attack (aggression) against the subject’s own identity, which fundamentally shatters the individual’s sense of self-worth

and acceptability (Kaplan 2007, 147). Insidious trauma may appear as depression, feelings of shame, withdrawal from social relationships, social anxiety, or the belief that one is not as good or capable as others (Kaplan 2007, 143).

Individual's experience is significantly affected by how their surrounding community relates to their group and experiences. Migrant people in new communities are often treated similarly to other targeted minorities. In Kaplan's view (2007, 144), for example, gendered minorities often experience that they are regarded as being "less than other citizens and inherently wrong." This article does not contend that every migrant would experience trauma due to othering and exclusion. According to Facemire (2018, 10), traumatization can be affected by, for example, an individual's susceptibility to stressors. A person in a fraught or vulnerable position may be traumatized by relatively mild stressors, whereas a less vulnerable person may only react to major or catastrophic stressors. Conversely, the cumulative effect of even the mildest of stressors, the simultaneous presence of several stressors, or prolonged exposure to these stressors can eventually result in trauma in Facemire's view (2018, 10).

Moreover, insidious trauma is not visible to everyone; for example, the dominant groups in society may not recognize it (Craps 2010, 54–55; Gibbs 2014, 15–17). The invisibility or visibility of insidious trauma may also be political. In this article, we reference Hannah Arendt's (1958) definition of the politics of visibility and invisibility. Arendt defines the political world as a space where "'I' become visible to others and others become visible to 'I'" (Borren 2008, 214). In this space, individuals act, become visible, express their opinions, and become heard; however, becoming visible requires a spectator, an audience (Borren 2010, 164). People who have experienced insidious trauma do not necessarily become visible and heard; for example, the majority may invalidate or suppress their experiences.

Later in this article, we consider the consequences of othering and exclusion through the concept of cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship refers to the opportunities an individual has to function as a member of a culture and society, participate in decision-making processes about themselves, and experience belonging and inclusion. Cultural citizenship holds that an individual's ethnic, linguistic, and cultural background is also recognized (Rosaldo 1994, 402; Huttunen 2004, 134–54). Therefore, cultural citizenship involves both "movements from below" (participation, feelings of belonging, identity, informal recognition) and "action from above" (governance, formal recognition) (Andrew & Gattinger 2005, 4; Beaman 2016). We understand the construction of cultural citizenship as a social process in which participation and agency are created in everyday encounters and interactions. Here, cultural citizenship is examined through narratives, especially from the perspectives of agency and participation and inclusion and exclusion.

Research Material and Method

Material

Finland has experienced a significant increase in immigration since the 1990s. More-

over, “a wide array of authors from every corner of the globe” have arrived in Finland during the 2000s (Nissilä 2016, 19). In her research, Hanna-Leena Nissilä has compiled a list of 90 so-called transnational authors or writers with a migrant background in Finland since the turn of the 21st century (Nissilä 2016, 19–20; problematizing the concept of migrant literature e.g., Löytty 2013, 261–79). Many authors address themes of migration and cultural and linguistic encounters based on their own experiences through biographical narratives, but these themes are also explored in fiction, through multiple voices, and through the utilization of different cultural and linguistic codes (Nissilä 2016; Sorvari 2018a; 2018b; 2016; Kurki 2018a; 2018b; Melkas 2018).

This article is based on the idea that authors, with various writing strategies, can make visible and audible the experiences shared by many people with a migrant background. Therefore, they can address questions relating to migration more broadly than merely at the individual level. Authors can also elucidate those hidden forms of othering and exclusion that remain invisible, for example, to members of the dominant cultures in everyday encounters.

The research material of this article includes the autobiographical works of immigrant authors in Finland who have lived in the country for approximately twenty years. In addition, the material includes some works of fiction where the authors with immigrant backgrounds address the themes of migration and cultural encounters from the perspective of an individual. The article treats the autobiographical accounts and the works of fiction with equal weight: the different writing strategies and literary genres function as instruments with which the authors address the multidimensional experiences of othering and exclusion. Literary fiction can apply different narrative strategies than narratives based on documentary or eye-witness accounts. Therefore, it may be easier to address complex or sensitive themes in fiction than in documentary or autobiographical writing.

According to James Anderson Winn (2008, 7), poetry constitutes a means of presenting the multilayeredness and complexity of traumatic experiences, which would not otherwise be possible if narrative attempts to adapt solely a documentary style or a style that rigidly follows eye-witness accounts. In Anne Whitehead’s view (2004, 83–84), instruments of fiction, such as estranged points of view and distancing, may, in some circumstances, be the only possible means by which difficult and traumatic experiences can be addressed. Consequently, there are justifiable grounds for employing autobiographical and fictional accounts to examine experiences of othering and exclusion.

Five works of literature published in Finnish from five different narrators have been selected as the research material in this article. Of these, three are autobiographies, and two are works of fiction: a collection of short stories and a novel. The authors emigrated to Finland toward the end of the 20th and at the turn of the 21st centuries and represent different narrative positions. The authors and narrators are Inna Latisheva, Abdirahim Hussein, Umayya Abu-Hanna, Zinaida Lindén, and Arvi Perttu. Latisheva, Hussein, and Abu-Hanna have published autobiographical works that describe their experiences of life in Finland and integrating into Finnish society. Lindén and Perttu use fiction to address the experiences of people struggling between

different countries and cultures.

Inna Latisheva (b. 1955) was born in Baku, Azerbaijan, formerly part of the USSR. She moved from the USSR to Finland at the end of the 1980s when she married a Finn and went to live in Finland for almost twenty years before she left Finland for Spain. During her time in Finland, she studied export marketing and worked in commerce as an export director and CEO of Finnish companies. In this article, we examine her autobiographical book, *Ryssänä Suomessa: Vieras väärästä maasta* [A 'Russki'⁴ in Finland: A Guest from the Wrong Country] (2010, 238 p.). The book describes Latisheva's experiences of life in Finland. She wrote the manuscript for the book in English, and it was published in Finnish in 2010. The book was adapted into a documentary film (*Ryssänä Suomessa*) [A 'Russki' in Finland] in the same year.

Abdirahim "Husu" Hussein (b. 1978) was born in Somalia and came to Finland as a 15-year-old asylum seeker in 1994. Hussein was educated in Finland and has produced many works, being especially well-known as the co-presenter of the 'Ali and Husu' radio show broadcast between 2013 and 2016. In Finland, Hussein has also been active in municipal politics. This article examines his autobiography, *Minä Husu, suomalaisalainen: Abdirahim Husseinin tarina* [I, Husu the SomaliFinn: The Story of Abdirahim Hussein] (2017; 251 p.). The book was written by Abdirahim Hussein in collaboration with author Markku Hattula and was based on Hussein's account of his life and interviews conducted with him.

Umayya Abu-Hanna (b. 1961) was born in Israel and moved to Finland in 1981 after marrying a Finnish spouse. Abu-Hanna lived in Finland for approximately thirty years before moving to the Netherlands. Having a varied career during her time in Finland, she worked as an author, a journalist, and a politician. Abu-Hanna has written several books about her experiences of life in Finland. This article examines her book, *Sinut* [You] (2007; 246 p.). The book consists of Abu-Hanna's journal entries, letters and correspondences, lectures, and press articles and, in her own words, tells the story of life in Finland from the early 1980s through the experiences of a migrant.

In addition to the aforementioned autobiographical works, the research material consists of two works of fiction: Zinaida Lindén's collection of short stories, *Nuorallatanssija* [The Tightrope Walker] (2009; 179 p.), and Arvi Perttu's novel, *Skumbria* [Skumbria] (2011; 366 p.). Zinaida Lindén (b. 1963) was born in Leningrad and moved to Finland in 1991. Lindén has worked as an author and translator in Finland. She writes in Swedish, the second official language in Finland, and has published numerous books. Lindén's collection of short stories, *Nuorallatanssija*, describes different people who "are not at home in Finland but are already alienated in their own country." In her short stories, Lindén paints a picture of people struggling to exist in the mobile world and trying to cope with the sense of in-betweenness and non-belonging. The original Swedish language version and its Finnish translation were both published in the same year, 2009.

Arvi Perttu (b. 1961) was born in the former USSR, studied, and worked in Petrozavodsk in Russian Karelia. He moved to Finland in 2001. His career as a writer began while in the Soviet Union, and he has continued his writing career in Finland. Al-

though he was educated in Russian, his mother tongue is Finnish, and he also writes in Finnish. In his novel, *Skumbria*, Perttu describes the relationship between a Russian man, Pauli, and a Finnish woman, Katri, and their life in Russia and Finland at the turn of the 21st century. The themes of otherness and being an outsider, living betwixt and between two countries and different cultures and languages, and the challenges of this existence are also present in the story of Pauli and Katri.

In bringing together the various narrative positions and narrative voices present in the previous works, it is possible to examine othering, exclusion, and other manifestations of so-called harmful interactions, as well as their mechanisms and consequences for the lives of individuals, from multiple perspectives and through multiple voices. By employing various narrative strategies, the authors make visible how othering and exclusion are enacted in everyday encounters; these methods may be explicit, invisible, or even unknown to members of the dominant culture.

The previous research shows that many factors that serve to other and threaten the individual's sense of belonging and social connections are subtle, ambiguous, and sometimes unintentional (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 3). Therefore, it is also essential to make visible the more hidden instruments of othering and exclusion. Making these instruments visible allows us to improve our understanding of experiences of being othered and excluded. The authors' accounts of othering, exclusion and the consequences of these experiences can, on a more general level, widen the perspectives on the development of structural, insidious trauma and the possible means of preventing insidious trauma.

Methodology

The material was analyzed through qualitative content analysis (e.g., Rapley 2016, 331–35; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2004, 93–95). During the analysis phase, the content of five literary works (a total of 1,280 pages) were explicated according to the themes of othering and exclusion. For this article, we have systematically collated the narrators' and protagonists' narratives on being othered and their accounts of being rejected by society or excluded from society's participatory space. The narrators and protagonists also describe such encounters where they are forced to conceal part of their identity not to be excluded. In addition, they describe how the experiences of othering and exclusion impact their sense of self and belonging. These interactions have been collated and analyzed in this article as well. The themes of othering and exclusion elicited from the research material are examined more closely in the following sections.

The Experiences of Othering and Exclusion

This article considers othering and exclusion (from the participatory space) as tightly interwoven phenomena. In their study on bullying in kindergarten, Pikkumäki and Peltola (2017, 15) note that such children who were slightly different from the group were often excluded. The research material also describes similar responses to difference and the consequent exclusionary practices. Consequently, the perceived differences become factors that demarcate 'us' from 'them' or 'the other.' Here, difference is

rendered as an instrument of exclusion and an uncrossable border. Moreover, othering and exclusion may intertwine into various cultural codes; for example, national anthems, national symbols, and linguistic conventions may delineate and exclude. On the other hand, repetitive exclusion also produces experiences of otherness.

According to Wesselmann et al. (2016, 4), rejection takes several forms, including, for example, the use of dehumanizing language, discrimination and stigmatization, and different forms of microaggression and ostracization, such as averted eye gaze, being forgotten, information exclusion, language exclusion, and uncomfortable silence. In the works analyzed in this article, exclusion appears as, among other things, various forms of direct and indirect (or hidden) rejection, isolation, exclusion, avoiding, and neglect.

These works of literature also describe the contempt, taunting, hate speech, and the direct violence and threat of violence that the narrators personally experience or witness in their daily living environment (e.g., *Minä Husu*, 55, 176–78; *Ryssänä Suomessa*, 96–97; *Sinut*, 23–24, 47; *Skumbria* 236–37). At worst, physical violence or its threat may be ever-present in the lives of people with a migrant background. People from the dominant cultural group do not necessarily always have a clear understanding of this violence (e.g., *Sinut*, 174–75), nor do they necessarily respond to it by, for example, intervening or defending the subject of such an attack, even when they happen to be present (e.g., *Minä Husu*, 100–01, 108–09). Nevertheless, this article focuses on examining the less obvious and more difficult forms of othering and exclusion to recognize. In the research material, these forms become visible when the narrators or protagonists describe harmful interactions or reflect on implicit cultural codes and various cultural categories they have observed but do not feel part of. These forms of othering and exclusion affect how the narrator experiences a sense of belonging and their ability to act as members of society. For example, Wesselmann et al. (2016, 4) suggest that negative experiences of rejection, ostracization, and dismissal, may make an individual think that other individuals, groups, or even society consider them inferior.

Living as ‘The Other’ in Finland

The material is replete with descriptions of the ‘us/them’ categorization that occurs in various everyday interactions: where ‘the other’ is classified as suspicious, dangerous, or inferior based on a perceived difference (e.g., a certain kind of name, nationality, ethnic group, outward appearance, style of clothing). Moreover, othering may be rendered visible via exoticization, the assumption of difference, emphasizing difference, or even by the authorities’ actions. The categorization of ‘the other’ is often made and reaffirmed during everyday encounters, either indirectly, implicitly, or even very explicitly. The media may also function as an enabler of unilateral categorizations.

The authors describe several instances in which they have encountered being othered by different authorities. In her book, Abu-Hanna writes about the time her mother visited her in Finland, with the police calling at Abu-Hanna’s door on the first day of her mother’s visit to ask whether her mother intended on moving to Finland, as she had brought such a large suitcase (*Sinut*, 18–19). On another occasion, the narrator’s

e-mails from her workplace, the Finnish National Gallery, do not reach her British colleague in the UK. Soon it is revealed that the messages never reached their intended destination because of Abu-Hanna's surname: the British server blocks any messages sent from e-mail addresses containing the "Abu" prefix. (*Sinut*, 220–21). She is categorized as suspicious or dangerous merely based on her name. Similar categorization as suspicious occurs when she orders a DNA test from the US. When the package arrives in Finland, the customs officials call her to ask about it:

My cell phone rings: "Hello. This is Finnish customs calling." They want to know why this Arab type has ordered a package stamped with "medical material" all the way from America. We live in a time when the words 'Arab', 'laboratory', and 'package' don't go well together. Even I feel confused. "Well, I'm looking for my roots", replies this Finn who often hears that she doesn't come from anywhere. (*Sinut*, 198)

In the story of *Ofelia* [Ophelia], included in her collection of short stories, *Nuorallatanssija*, Zinaida Lindén describes the Russian protagonist's life in Finland and her relationship with Paavo, a Finnish man. When the relationship hits a rocky patch, the couple decides to go to therapy in Finland:

Our therapist didn't necessarily require us to do any homework, but began, instead, with conversations. She was a tactful lady. She referred to sex as 'intimate socializing' or courting. She sympathetically asked me about the 'clash of cultures.' She appeared confused when I said that I enjoyed life in Finland and that I'd never been discriminated against here. (*Nuorallatanssija*, *Ofelia*, 169)

In this example, the therapist others her client with her automatic assumption that 'difference' and a different cultural background has caused her to experience difficulties. An assumed difference is typical of offensive and othering communication (Capodilupo et al. 2010, 202).

The research material includes numerous everyday encounters where Finns regard migrants with suspicion solely based on their different backgrounds or appearance. Inna Latisheva gives an example of a time when she was at a grocery store checkout with her son:

I was sad because Toni was embarrassed by his mother's Russianness, even though I could, of course, understand how he felt. There was this time when he was with me queuing to pay at the store checkout. The woman ahead of us began to shout that her purse had been stolen. She looked at us, as she heard me speaking to Toni in Russian, before announcing in a raised voice: "It's no wonder that it's been stolen. There are Russians here!" My son was so embarrassed that he left the line. I couldn't blame him. Soon after, the woman found her money. She didn't, of course, apologize to us. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 85–86)

Latisheva also describes discrimination in working life: the dentist and hairdresser who have Russian backgrounds go without customers, because their clients cancel

their appointments when they find out they would be served by a Russian (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 17–18). Even the smallest of everyday differences is enough to cause othering: in Lindén's short story, *Romeo ja Julia* [Romeo and Juliet], the protagonist is of Russian background and highlights the indignation she feels as a result of her distinctive clothing style:

I was hanging out at a wedding reception with a fellow countrywoman, who told me that she had unknowingly annoyed some Finnish mommies by appearing in the children's playground in her high-heeled leather boots. (*Nuorallatanssija, Romeo ja Julia*, 102)

Abu-Hanna continues this theme when she narrates about her neighbor getting annoyed by the smell of her cooking:

I was frying some vegetables when the doorbell rang. I opened the door only to be confronted by this old lady who, staring at my shoelaces, announced abruptly: "Do you know that decent people live in these parts?" I smiled, although somewhat startled. Did this woman want to put me in my place? I waited. A moment's silence passed before the woman continued, her lips askew: "If you make spicy food, the smell is going to come under the door, into the hallway, and all the way into the paintwork." [...] I remembered the good old days when they came to tell the Arabs that 'decent white people live here, so get lost!' I smiled and thought to myself, thank goodness that times have changed. (*Sinut*, 102–03)

The authors describe othering, forever being labeled as "the other," and their disbelief that, even after having lived in Finland for many years, they continue to be seen first and foremost as 'others,' as lesser citizens in Finnish society:

In Finland, the kind of person I was did not matter at all. I was Russian and, therefore, could never be one of them. [...] I had imagined that, if the President of Finland had granted me Finnish citizenship ten years earlier, I would have been considered to be of equal standing as any other Finn. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 223–24)

The second quote from Abu-Hanna's novel further reflects the binary opposition of "us" and "others":

With what goddamn right am I classed a foreigner? When I considered this, my officially sanctioned role, I ended up wondering why people characterize the world through a dichotomy. There are us and there are them. And it's obvious who we are and who they are. Even after eighteen years, I am still a foreigner. Why and how am I revealed to be an outsider, a stranger, 'other,' unseen? (*Sinut*, 54–55)

The media can participate in othering by creating and maintaining representations of otherness (Raittila 2002; Karvonen 2000). The research material also reveals a few examples of how an individual can experience being othered by the media. The media

can create and perpetuate prejudices by, for example, disseminating negative news stories about migrants (e.g., crimes committed by migrants) and forgetting to mention the positive stories (e.g., a successful collaboration between a migrant organization and a government agency) (*Minä Husu*, 217–18). Whereas crimes committed against migrants do not necessarily pass the threshold of newsworthiness, crimes perpetrated by migrants are quick to make the headlines (*Minä Husu*, 48–49). The media can also ascribe a biased and stigmatizing image to a specific group of people, leading to individuals viewing themselves as reduced to only being “part human” (*Sinut*, 136–37; 173–74).

How can you love a society in which you are a monster or a clown by mere virtue of your existence? How can you be trusting when the media turns you into a source of fear and then fosters the belief that Finns are the most honest and genuine people out there? (*Sinut*, 63)

Abu-Hanna writes about an example of how even the attempts to support minority groups may unintentionally turn into discrimination (*Sinut* 2007, 142–43). If people from minority groups are publicly viewed solely in three categories—as victims in need, as exotic, or as the source of fear—it can be hard for them to be treated equally as, for example, a colleague or advisor (Horsti 2009, 77–85; Aden 2009, 25–32). In addition, if a person is constantly categorized solely as ‘an immigrant’ and their particularity as an individual is ignored, they become excluded from many critical everyday social networks (Huttunen 2004, 140).

Exoticization may not only evoke surprise and admiration directed at “the other,” but often also invokes the notion that the ‘exotic other’ is somehow simultaneously inferior (Harris 2018, 117). Stereotypes associated with exoticization create reductionist notions that can emphasize juxtaposition or the differences between groups. According to Jensen (2011, 64), exoticization serves to address ‘the other’ through one-dimensional stereotypes.

Perttu’s novel *Skumbria* shows an example of exoticization that demarcates the protagonist as “the other.” In *Skumbria*, the character of Pauli is subject to a discourse that emphasizes his “Slavicly smoldering” masculinity while simultaneously reducing him to the same status as an “animal” or a “child” who, perhaps, does not understand everything around him.

I felt snared, like a woman’s prey on a mission of conquest, like an ape brought from afar as an exotic gift. I snatched an empty glass from the table and filled it with liquor. The women talked to me like they would a child or an imbecile, with raised voices and simplified language. Even Katri, who usually treated me equally at home. (*Skumbria*, 194)

Indeed, the category of “the exotic other” may include every one of “them,” who differs from “us.” Consequently, “the other” appears as if part of a homogenous whole, with relative individuality or distinctiveness unseen or ignored. For example, Abu-

Hanna describes how she—a Palestinian Arab who had moved to Finland from Israel—was shouted at in the street and believed to be a “Gypsy” (*Sinut*, 11–12). Abu-Hanna also recalls another incident at a public swimming pool in Finland, where she became subjected to the exoticizing gaze (*Sinut*, 185–88):

When in the locker room, she pulled down her underwear. The silence cut like a knife as the elasticated waistband dropped to her ankles. It was almost as if the falling elastic let out an ultrasonic sound that only the blondes could hear. The blondes stopped in their tracks and the room was not just quiet, it was silent. She marched, naked, towards the intelligence test that was the showers. The blondes stood up to get a better look [...] Their gazes scanning her entire body. They were fixed on her hair for a long time, confused. Their eyes panned down, along her back, towards her buttocks. Caressing the surface of her skin, their gaze tried to reach around to her front, where there was a small black curly mound. Afro pubic hair. Black. (*Sinut*, 185–88)

Ignoring and Rejecting ‘The Other’

The authors make visible the various means of exclusion enacted in everyday encounters—be they explicit or hidden, or even unknown to the majority members. Nevertheless, these subtle instruments of exclusion negatively affect well-being, self-confidence, and, for example, individual’s sense of belonging and agency. The explicit means of exclusion elicited in the research material can be seen, for example, in interactions in which a person is told, either directly or indirectly, that they are not welcome to participate in society. The direct means of exclusion presented in the material are 1) direct exclusionary speech and rejection, 2) silence, speechlessness, and being ignored, and 3) language exclusion.

In the works examined, these direct exclusionary instruments are present in different social situations, for example, in the workplace, where the other people are not willing to communicate or have anything to do with the author (*Minä Husu*, 112–13; *Ryssänä Suomessa*, 34–38). They also tell him that ‘he’ll never be Finnish no matter how hard he tries’ (*Minä Husu*, 241). In these situations, it also becomes apparent that there is an unwillingness to accept different kinds of people and that there is no room in Finland for these people or people of their kind (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 9–10; 226–27).

Direct exclusionary means are also described in the examples where the narrator is ignored or rejected because they do not fit the prescribed image of the ‘migrant’ while simultaneously they are not recognized as a member of the dominant culture. Not-fitting in any predetermined conceptions of immigrant becomes apparent when the expertise of the narrator is not acknowledged, ignored, not recognized, or identified; the narrator is merely seen as a ‘migrant’ and, therefore, a non-expert. In *Sinut*, the writer describes applying for a job as a journalist in a Finnish media company. On this occasion, she is seen primarily as an immigrant—not as a professional journalist—and is, therefore, not thought to be suitable for a mainstream media channel (*Sinut*, 132–33).

In *Minä Husu*, the narrator’s knowledge of refugee issues is not recognized despite him having fled to Finland from Somalia and having experienced what it was like to be a refugee in Finland in the 1990s (*Minä Husu*, 173). The author also feels that he

has not been able to progress in his political career at the same pace as other young politicians because of his Muslim background (*Minä Husu*, 169–70). In *Sinut*, we see how the media ignores the narrator when she stands in a parliamentary election and attempts to raise discussion about the life of migrants in Finland (*Sinut*, 178–79). In the examples above, the narrators' agency and ability to participate are disavowed; they are prevented from discussing and addressing this matter on equal footing with others. The negation of the narrators' knowledge, expertise, and voice shows how a person with a migrant background is only permitted to visibly participate in public debates when a member of the majority 'finds' or 'notices' them (*Minä Husu*, 187).

The writers also described being directly excluded when they attempt to participate in various social events only to feel they are in the wrong place or they look or act in the wrong way. Consequently, they are rejected or feel they have no agency. These situations highlight such differences between the narrator and the majority that the majority interprets negatively. For example, in *Sinut*, the writer describes receiving negative feedback from audiences when she worked in television. The feedback stemmed from her not being seen in the 'right arena,' referring to her migrant background (*Sinut*, 60–61). The audience did not see her as competent enough to comment on social affairs in Finland (*Ibid*). The fact that Abu-Hanna's journalistic expertise was ignored led her to the conclusion that "Finnishness is a one-dimensional concept" that had no room for her (*Sinut*, 60–61). Examples of similar transgressions of invisible boundaries can also be found in *Ryssänä Suomessa*, when the narrator receives complaints about using Russian, her native language, at her workplace, where the majority speaks Finnish.

[...] some of the people at the office complained about me talking to my Russian assistant in Russian. I explained that it was only natural, as Russian is our mother tongue and it is much easier for us to use it when there are no others involved [...] The reason behind the complaint was, perhaps, the fact that it was a Finnish company and, knowing what the general attitude of the Finns was regarding Russians, it was clear that they didn't like having a Russian woman at the top and having to listen to Russian in their workplace. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 184)

In *Minä Husu* (170–71), the narrator wishes to join the Centre Party of Finland. However, he is told by his acquaintances that he is in "the wrong party"; owing to his Islamic background, the belief is that "they [the members of the Centre Party] are hardly likely to ever accept you as one of their own." In addition, explicit exclusion may be implemented even by one's family members. In *Ryssänä Suomessa*, the writer describes how she realizes that her husband and son are ashamed of her ethnic and linguistic background (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 19, 83–84).

I didn't yet know at that time that he [the author's husband] was embarrassed to be seen with a Russian woman in public. He always spoke to me in English so that he could keep my 'Russianness' a closely guarded secret. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 52)

I would never have guessed, then, that years later he [the author's son] would be embarrassed to be seen with me or worry about someone hearing me speak to him in Russian. Nor could I have guessed that he would dismiss his Russian roots and tell everyone he was a full-blooded Finn. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 69–70)

These exclusionary experiences make the writer feel that she is 'the wrong sort,' not passing or otherwise inferior to those around her. Such experiences classify as negative social encounters and harmful interactions (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 4; Jerman 2009, 97–105).

The narrator may also experience the silence, speechlessness, or quietude of Finnish conversational culture as rude, inconsiderate, isolating, and dismissive (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 11; Carbaugh 2009, 43–61; Wilkins & Isotalus 2009, 13), even though the majority would regard the same situations as part of the culture of everyday conversation. For example, the strangeness and unfamiliarity of Finnish conversation culture was experienced negatively by the narrators. The moments of silence that punctuate conversation are perceived as distressing and oppressive (*Skumbria*, 202), problematic (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 224–25), and impolite (*Nuorallatanssija*, *Ofelía*, 167). In these examples, silence is interpreted as meaning that Finns are too bashful to join in the conversation (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 62) or that the narrator has been abandoned in this 'land in which nobody talks,' which feels to him like being in 'hell dressed up as utopia' (*Skumbria*, 346).

Silence and speechlessness are mainly interpreted as exclusionary measures when the narrator feels they do not have access to enough information about different cultural practices and the ways of doing things, nor are they directed to relevant sources of such information (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 9). This phenomenon is known as knowledge exclusion. For example, in *Minä Husu* (18–19), the author is not provided with information about being detained when trying to enter the country. In the novel, *Skumbria* (177), the narrator wonders about the various sanctions and rules he does not understand where he lives and about which he is not offered any explanation. In *Ryssänä Suomessa* (9–10, 17), the writer longs for someone to explain how the Finnish 'system' concerning things like ATMs, restrooms, washing machines, coffeemakers, and using the bus. In addition, the research material shows examples of other types of exclusionary silences. In these examples, the narrator may experience speechlessness as hurtful and exclusionary, especially when the silence becomes a signifier of difference. For example, the narrator may mispronounce or use a wrong word and may find the resulting, confused silence exclusionary (*Sinut* 13–14, 21–22).

The notion of silence can take on forms of exclusion such as being ignored and silenced, (Böckler, Hömke & Sebanz 2014, 142). In the analyzed works, the authors describe occasions on which, for example, their requests for help are ignored (*Sinut*, 12–13), they do not receive encouragement, are not praised for their success (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 42–43, 179–80), almost as if they had not been noticed by the other people at all. They are not greeted, their questions go unanswered, and their attempts to strike up a conversation go ignored (*Sinut*, 11; 182; *Ryssänä Suomessa*, 21–22, 36–40, 62–64; *Nuorallatanssija*, *Ofelía*, 76) or the narrator is left to fend for himself when he first ar-

rives in Finland (*Minä Husu*, 16–17).

The narrators describe conversations where the conversation partner does not look them in the eye, with the narrator left to feel as if they do not exist (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 60–61; *Skumbria*, 202). Sometimes it seems the neighbor does not want to interact with them (*Skumbria*, 201; *Ryssänä Suomessa*, 60–61) or, rather than engaging in conversation, the neighbor posts letters through the narrator's mailbox to complain about the overpowering smell of cooking (*Sinut*, 62–64). The narrator interprets Finnish politeness, for example, in the case of social greetings as 'nothing at all'. In this interpretation the greeting can be included in the same category as being ignored and overlooked (*Skumbria*, 269). This also extends to the floral tributes the narrator receives from her work colleagues while in hospital. The narrator finds the flowers meaningless and an empty gesture because her colleagues have never previously shown any interest in her.

I have lived in Finland for five years, but nobody has wanted to be friends with me. Did I really have to be hospitalized with peritonitis to discover I was liked and respected? I received a bouquet of lilies and a greetings card signed by all the staff. (*Nuorallatanssija, Juice ja muita huolia*, 75) [The Tightrope Walker: Juice and Other Concerns. Note: *Juice* is a man's name]

According to Wesselmann et al. (2016, 9–11), language exclusion refers to situations where a language is used in a way that others do not understand. It can also refer to other exclusionary utterances, such as those that employ sexist or racist language. In the research material, the narrators describe experiencing language exclusion in terms of their feeling unable to adequately express themselves in a language other than their mother tongue, which prevents them from participating in social interaction. In *Sinut*, the narrator attempts to join in by speaking Finnish, only to use the wrong words; she finds this experience troubling as if she has failed (*Sinut*, 13–14, 20–22, 176, 189).

She couldn't hear my outpouring. I made a note of it in my mind – in Russian. I am not able to express myself so boldly in this foreign language. (*Nuorallatanssija, Juice ja muita huolia*, 80–81)

People's faces contort as they tried to understand me; only understanding half of what I say. As for me, I only understand half of everything they say. I am exhausted every goddamn evening. (*Sinut*, 176–77)

Some exclusionary experiences in the research material result from the difficulties the narrators encounter while attempting to understand implicit cultural codes (*Nuorallatanssija, Ruusun suudelma* [The Tightrope Walker: A Kiss from a Rose], 46, 48; *Sinut*, 29–30) or through inadequate language skills and an inability to interpret the cultural codes embedded in the language (*Nuorallatanssija, Juice ja muita huolia*, 80–81; *Minä Husu*, 22; *Skumbria*, 249; *Sinut*, 32–33, 39, 189). In *Sinut*, for example, the narrator answers her door at Easter to be greeted by trick-or-treaters. She does not understand

what is happening. She thinks that it must be some interactive performance and starts acting like a chicken, at which point the whole situation becomes, in the narrator's eyes, "embarrassing," and she feels "sad" that "everything remains a complete mystery to her" (*Sinut*, 24–25).

Insufficient language competence or a level of fluency that is not quite up to the same standard as a native speaker can also be used as an instrument of exclusion in the context of, for example, seeking work or in everyday communication:

During a Labor shortage, I applied for a job packing cookies at the Fazer factory. How could I have been so stupid not to remember that Swedish⁵ is the A and B of boxing cookies! (*Sinut*, 179)

I answered a newspaper ad for a teaching position at a 'Russian-English school'. I was soundly rejected over the phone. They told me that my Finnish wasn't fluent enough. A month later, I happened to meet a fellow countrywoman of mine from the city of Irkutsk. She had got the job. The hag didn't even speak a word of Finnish. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 43–44)

Language exclusion can also manifest when Finnish is not used while talking to a certain person because they are not assumed to be fluent enough.

When I first came to Finland and didn't yet speak a word of the language, we used to speak English with each other. Later, when my Finnish was pretty good, I asked him to talk to me in Finnish because I needed practice. He told me that my Finnish wasn't good enough and then started speaking very quickly, using complicated words, the kind of which he wouldn't ordinarily use. Afterwards, he asked me if I'd understood. Naturally, I had not. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 160–61)

Once, I said to him that from now on I am only going to speak to everyone in Finnish. 'Fine', he replied, in English, and never said another word to me in Finnish again. After this, I couldn't even be bothered trying. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 160–61)

Lack of language skills alienates the narrator from the people around her. In some examples, native speakers think her incompetence in Finnish reflects on her intelligence. On other occasions, native speakers consider the lack of language competence amusing, even though the narrator herself does not necessarily see the humor in the situation.

'Stupid Israeli bitch' was one of the first sentences I learned to say [in Finnish]. [...] The cause of my stupidity soon became clear [in kindergarten where the writer was working]: "An adult that can't even SPEAK!" 'Can't even speak' meant that this adult 'can't speak Finnish'. Intelligence is demonstrated in speech and all I could do was slur, unable to speak Finnish. (*Sinut*, 20)

I don't understand why they laugh at me when I join in with the small talk: 'Ilima on

helevetin huono tänään' [The we-e-ather is hellishly bad today]. I'm from Naantali and I'm an Arab who has learned how to say a few sentences in a Savo dialect.⁶ Why are they laughing? (*Sinut*, 176)

In the latter example, the dialectical qualities of the migrant's speech amuse her conversation partners. The narrator is confused because she is unaware of the associations people have with the various regional Finnish dialects (cf. Mielikäinen & Palander 2014; Nupponen 2011). Using the Savo dialect rather than standard Finnish during a conversation where it is not expected creates a strong contrast and surprise in the party.

Invisible Exclusion

The indirect forms of exclusion in the research material are 1) different forms of microaggression and 2) institutionalized exclusionary discourses (e.g., demarcatory discourses embedded in the national narratives). According to Capodilupo (et al. 2010, 202), microaggression refers to forms of communication, such as sexist language and gestures, that categorize someone as a second-class citizen or inferior, ascribing traditional gender roles, or making assumptions based on a person's ethnicity. The various forms of microaggression, such as microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidations, are hidden and, sometimes, even unknown to the perpetrator (Sue et al. 2007).

A microassault is closely related to racism but functions at the individual level or in "microsituations" (Sue et al. 2007, 274). It can be a spoken or unspoken attack intended to hurt someone by, for example, insulting them, behaving evasively, or in discriminatory ways. In *Minä Husu* (87), the author describes how his boss, a funniman, "sometimes tells 'negro jokes'" but "is otherwise a good guy." Similarly, the writer in *Sinut* wonders about the racist nature of the term "negro" when she hears it used in Finland: "I often hear that the word 'negro' [in Finnish, *neekeri*] is neutral in Finnish and that it's been a part of Finnish culture since the 1950s. Here, neutral means that Finland did not take part in the slave trade. But neutral in whose ears?" (*Sinut*, 134–35). In *Ryssänä Suomessa*, the writer explains how one of her acquaintances says how "abhorrent everything to do with the Soviet Union is" for her and that "she never would have imagined that she'd have a Russian friend and even go to a Russian music concert" (94–95). The writer is also told that there are "lots of Russians" living in her apartment building, even though the only Russians are, in fact, herself and another girl. The meaning of this insinuation is that "the building's reputation has been ruined" implying there are too many Russian residents (95).

According to Sue et al., a microinsult is an utterance that rudely or insensitively refers to a person's heritage or identity (2007, 274). Microinsults may also be ambiguous and hard to identify. In *Sinut*, the writer describes how she was called a 'Christmas tree' because of the colorful way she dresses (29). She does not interpret this as an insult, considering it instead as a compliment. The offensive nature of the moniker only becomes apparent to her later on.

Microinvalidation is another form of hidden exclusion enacted in everyday com-

munications. Sue et al. observe that microinvalidation is a form of exclusionary communication, typically involving invalidating an individual's thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences (2007, 274). The authors in both *Sinut* and *Minä Husu* describe situations where their experiences of racist attacks or bullying have been invalidated and not taken seriously (*Sinut*, 162–165; *Minä Husu*, 108–09). For example, in *Sinut* (150–52), the writer is confused and criticizes the racist use of the word 'negro' in Finland, only for her experiences of racism to be invalidated and not considered important.

In the research material, examples of microinvalidation are present in situations where persons with a migrant background are repeatedly told that their Finnish is very good even though their primary language is Finnish or when they are repeatedly asked when they are going home (*Sinut*, 19). As a result, people with migrant backgrounds feel that they are defined as "forever foreigners" and are not accepted as members in Finnish society and culture (Sue et al. 2007, 274). A person living in Finland may be called a "foreigner," even after receiving Finnish citizenship, and the fact that someone speaks Finnish fluently does not make themself a Finn (Lepola 2000, 367). Citizenship and fluent Finnish are not necessarily enough to make them part of the community.

"What is this? A Russian passport! Why do you speak Finnish so well?" (*Skumbria*, 181)

But every time I went to renew my residence permit, I had to fill out a form that asked: "When are you returning to your home country?" (*Sinut*, 19)

Parallels can be drawn between the examples above and a study about the experiences of second-generation Asian Americans (Sue et al. 2007, 274). They, too, are repeatedly praised for their excellent English, or they are constantly asked where they were born. According to Sue et al. (*ibid.*), this kind of treatment denies their identity as Americans and signifies them as 'forever foreigners.'

In addition, various kinds of national narratives, which can be read from, for example, national cultural institutes and national symbols, such as national anthems, may also be exclusionary. For example, a museum exhibition can tell the story of a single, homogenous people, whereas the true diversity of these people is excluded from this story (*Sinut*, 173–74; Davydova-Minguet 2018). Indirect and everyday forms of exclusion can be seen on festive occasions colorfully emblazoned with national symbols, in which, with the aid of cultural categories, symbols, and language, certain groups are excluded from the "us" of the occasion. In *Sinut*, the author goes, as an invited speaker, to a high school prom, during which the Finnish flag is raised, and the Finnish national anthem is sung (89–91). She does not feel she belongs to the people about whom the song's lyrics tell, to "the land of the forefathers," and consequently sees herself as an outsider (*Sinut*, 89–91):

It was the fall, a time to celebrate Finnish Independence Day and graduation from high school, and we had reached that time of the prom when the national anthem was to be sung. And I sang "Oh Our Land Finland Fatherland." [...] I was born to a Palestinian

woman in a Jewish hospital in Mount Karmel and, yet, Finland is still the country I call home. At this point of the song, a little adjustment is required. (*Sinut*, 89–91)

We were coming to the end of the “This Precious Land of Our Fathers” section. [...] Finland is indisputably my land, too, even though it is not of any “fathers”. It’s soon my turn to speak. I have to change my speech because I don’t quite feel at home here. (*Sinut*, 91–93)

In addition to these national narratives, exclusionary discourse may be embedded in everyday encounters with advertising or the media. An example of this is the Elovena brand of traditional Finnish oat flakes, which for years has used the image of a blonde-haired female dressed in the Finnish national costume on its packaging. This female character has become a logo that represents everyday Finnishness. In *Sinut* (203), the narrator recalls when the ‘Elovena woman’ was replaced in a newspaper ad by a dark-skinned version and the uproar it created. The inflexibility, or the selected flexibility, of the national discourse associated with this brand, was demonstrated at a later date when the flaxen-haired Elovena character was pictured wearing sneakers emblazoned with the Chanel logo—without any uproar. At the everyday level the national discourses play a part in deciding who is included in and excluded from national narratives.

The Consequences of Othering and Exclusion

The authors described several consequences of othering and exclusion, affecting their sense of well-being and their ability to participate and have agency in society. Some of the more prominent consequences of othering and exclusion included, for example, loneliness, feelings of inferiority, depression, isolation, non-belonging, and a loss of hope about the future. For example, the narrators describe being “constantly” or repeatedly “alone” (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 41–42; *Skumbria*, 246, 346; *Nuorallatanssija, Juice ja muita huolia*, 75), feeling “lonely” and “helpless” (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 75, 156–57), and being at a point in their life when they had “no Finnish friends at all” (*Ryssänä Suomessa*; 22, 82–83; 162, 220, 221), nor a friend with whom to converse, “laugh,” “gossip or cry” (*Skumbria*, 276, 311). The authors also described either their own or the protagonist’s experiences of isolation. We can see this when the narrator feels that they are “isolated” from the rest of the world (*Sinut*, 17), or that their world has shrunk to the walls of their apartment (*Skumbria*, 248), “my world centered on Katri and the occasional messages from the world outside were distant and insignificant” (*Skumbria*, 183). The writers describe experiencing exclusion through the metaphor of being lost (*Skumbria*, 253–54), being a prisoner in a strange land, or becoming dependent on their spouse as a consequence of being excluded (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 156–57, 246), and being set adrift from society “like a cow shit in space” that “cannot find its place” (*Skumbria*, 250).

When the effects of exclusion and othering are continuously present and repeated over a long period, the person can experience alienation, depression, helplessness, and insignificance (Wesselmann et al., 2016, 4) and feel like they cannot be seen or

are repeatedly misunderstood (Søndergaard 2012, 360). Similar social and psychological symptoms and traumatization may also occur when a person is bullied (Einarsen 1999, 17). The narrators in the material describe life feeling empty and sad, they experience a fear of violence and shame, and they think of themselves as second-class or 'B' grade citizens (*Minä Husu*, 179; *Ryssänä Suomessa*, 88–89, 234–35).

Yes, racist hate speech hurts, and hurts deep. It breeds a fear that can sometime paralyze and render you helpless. It consumes your dreams and all the joy in your life. (*Minä Husu*, 179)

If only he would have known just how much worse my life had become since coming to live in his country. For most of the time, my life in Finland was — almost without exception — so empty and sad that I could hardly remember a time when I had been happy. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 88–89)

Another effect of exclusion and othering is forgetting oneself or making oneself invisible. In *Sinut*, *Skumbria*, and *Ryssänä Suomessa*, the writers describe how they or their protagonists deny or hide part of their identity to participate and blend in with the majority. The narrator might, for example, play down their ethnic background, stop using their mother tongue, or change their name to make it easier to pass as belonging to the majority. There are situations in which the narrator feels that their own culture and language will prevent them from becoming equal citizens or one with the (nationally determined) majority: “it is difficult to participate as myself” (*Sinut*, 58–59).

Moreover, in *Sinut*, the narrator makes herself invisible by anonymizing her e-mail address so that her ethnic background or culture of origin cannot be discerned based on her name and she could not be defined by stereotypes: “When I want to get my point across, I prefer to present myself as anonymously as possible. The reason for this is that any identity I offer can delimit the receipt of my message” (*Sinut*, 88). In the novel *Skumbria*, Pauli considers becoming a naturalized Finn to feel belonging. He thinks about changing his surname to make it Finnish before concluding that “it would never help anyway—I’m going to be a Russki for the rest of my life” (*Skumbria*, 236). He has a mortgage, a job, and can speak Finnish, but he no longer dares to use Russian in public, because it makes him stand out too much (*Skumbria*, 361).

When we moved to our new home, I stopped talking on the phone in Russian when I was in the back-yard smoking. And if Russians came to visit, we stayed indoors. I didn’t want the neighbors to know anything about my background. I had to bury my Russian identity deep down and for good. (*Skumbria*, 361)

In *Ryssänä Suomessa* (160–61, 226, 234–35), the writer avoids using Russian and hides any signifiers that she is a Russian speaker. She sees the way ‘Russianness’ is denigrated in her surroundings and fears that people will judge her based on her background.

I was standing among a crowd of people at the bus-stop when I noticed the Russian

newspaper in my bag was there in plain view of everyone. My first reaction was to hide it so that nobody could work out I was Russian. It was still top secret. It was clear to me that the feeling I had, that I felt like a 'Russki', was so deeply entrenched that it would probably take the rest of my life to shed. I was always going to be an outsider in this country. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 226)

In *Fauni* [The Fawn], one of the short stories in the *Nuorallatanssija* collection, the narrator alters her typically self-expressive style of dress so that she does not stand out from the crowd at work from the Finns: "When the ice had only melted a little, I realized I was getting some strange looks as I turned up to a party wearing fancy clothes. I started to dress in a drab way in honor of the local customs and to avoid being picked on" (*Nuorallatanssija*, *Fauni*, 117). The writers also describe changing their everyday habits (e.g., preparing food) to not stand out from their neighbors (*Minä Husu*, 31–32; 33–34). The loss of elements of one's identity or background can also lead to the individual being harmfully rendered invisible (Borren 2008; Borren 2010) and unable to enter the participatory space as a whole person.

Agency, participation, and cultural citizenship are constructed in everyday interactions. In describing their experience of being excluded, the authors remark that they "have no space" in Finnish society (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 9–10) or that the "environment pushes them away" despite their desire to belong and to participate (*Sinut*, 62–64). The authors describe how their communities do not seem to want them to ever become Finnish (*Minä Husu*, 241–42). They express how they are always being viewed as different, a foreigner, and an outsider, regardless of how long they have lived in Finland or even when the person in question was born and raised in Finland (*Sinut*, 54–55, 140–41). The result is tragic as the protagonist in *Skumbria* states: "The chasm between themselves and the average working Finn was impassable" (*Skumbria*, 257–58). Experiencing exclusion and othering can also lead to a situation where the migrant does not want to be part of society or share the same cultural conventions, values, and ideals (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 63–64, 226–27). Moreover, non-belonging can also result in a situation in which the narrator cannot participate or have agency in their new country at the same time as their connection to their ethnic homeland is broken: "I simply no longer have any ties there. As if the umbilical cord has been cut" (*Skumbria*, 311).

Experiencing exclusion and othering can give rise to insidious trauma. Here, the trauma is not necessarily triggered by an isolated event but by the person's attempts to fit in and conform to the dominant norms. In Kaplan's view (2007, 143–44), members of minority groups repeatedly experience traumatizing stress in their attempts to conduct their everyday affairs. Their attempts to adapt to their new living conditions and the processes of othering and exclusion cause them to experience depression, hopelessness, a lack of ambition or hope about the future and believe that they are not as good as others, and feel self-hate. The research material is replete with descriptions of these kinds of experiences. At worst, the experiences of exclusion and othering lead to self-denial, shame, and even self-directed hatred and aggression.

Furthermore, it has been noted that different types of perceived discrimination have a long-term negative impact on an individual's mental and physical health and

social wellbeing (Rask et al. 2018; Castaneda et al. 2015). In *Ryssänä Suomessa*, the narrator compares her life in Finland to the feeling of having lost a leg in an accident, and how all the enjoyment in her life have disappeared:

I compared myself to a person who had lost their leg in an accident and constantly thought about how wonderful my life would have been if only I was still able to walk, to dance, and to travel. I now had to forget all those pleasures and learn to live in a wheelchair. [...] I started to learn what life as a Russian in Finland was like. (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 82)

The narrator goes on to describe the subconscious burden imposed by the acts of aggression she encounters towards Russians (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 237) and the way they have destroyed her self-esteem and her happiness (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 196–97). Her eyes are filled with tears of pain when she hears Finnish being spoken at an international airport and understands at that moment that she no longer wants to return to Finland (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 87–88).

In *Sinut*, the author explains how her negative experiences cause her to feel self-loathing and contempt:

It is more often the case that true hatred and contempt is directed at oneself. And with the constant inability to access an arena in which one can be oneself, the sense of anxiety grows. I do not recognize myself in the person who speaks and presents herself under my own name. (*Sinut*, 58–59)

When a person becomes the subject of exclusion, they may also experience aggression, which serves as one of their coping strategies. This aggression is directed at the person enacting the exclusion (the custodian), other people with whom the subject is interacting, and even at ‘innocent’ bystanders (Dongning, Wesselmann & Kipling 2017, 34). In the extreme, rejection and exclusion can even lead to acts of violence (Dongning, Wesselmann & Kipling 2017, 34; Leary et al. 2003).

The situations above and the emotional experiences shape the narrators’ conception of their opportunities to participate and function as members of society. In some cases, the person may exist in a liminal state, in which they do not experience attachment to anywhere (*Ryssänä Suomessa*, 147; *Skumbria*, 173). As such, the person is also unable to access the participatory space. According to Jensen, othering can lead to a particular form of agency (2011, 73). In this case, an individual may construct their agency by emphasizing the otherness, especially when ‘the other’ is exoticized and fascinated.

In Jensen’s view (*ibid.*), another strategy for coping with othering is through denial: a person or group does not want to accept the position of ‘the other.’ Jensen goes on to describe attempts to define a so-called third space, in which there is no “firstness” or “otherness,” no particular nationality or ‘other’ defined in opposition to this, and no majority or minority; instead, attempts are made for these definitions to transcend the various oppositional dichotomies (2011, 74). Nevertheless, in their

accounts of their relationship to the majority, the narrators in the works examined do not experience being able to access this kind of third space. They continue their stories as ‘the other,’ liminal, as outsiders.

As the analysis in the previous sections reveals, the negative psychological and physical consequences of exclusion and othering may have both short-term and long-term consequences (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 3, 6; Rastas 2004, 156 n7; Jasinskaja-Lahhti, Liebkind & Vesala 2002, 41–50, 110–114; Garoff, Kangaslampi & Peltonen 2019). Among the consequences of prolonged and continuous exposure to exclusion and othering are, for example, antisocial behavior, a diminished sense of belonging and alienation, poor self-image, stronger negative emotions, feeling pain, feeling increasingly helpless and rejected, experiencing insignificance, and depression (Wesselmann et al. 2016, 6; Dongning, Wesselmann & Kipling 2017, 34; Paradies et al. 2015). Socially exclusionary practices and processes can affect a person’s ability to form interpersonal relationships, limit their ability to get information and use assets, and, in extreme cases, lead to depression, the development of insidious trauma, and even lead to acts of violence (Kaplan 2007; Böckler, Hömke & Sebanz 2014, 140; Facemire 2018). Being excluded can have a significant impact both on the individual being excluded and on society more broadly.

Conclusion

When there are so few outsiders and the dominant culture exerts a powerful pressure to conform, no degree of originality, creativity, or conviction is enough to perpetually foster life in a society that one is rejected by. (*Sinut*, 58–59)

This article examined phenomena associated with othering and exclusion, which together constitute one means of approaching and addressing insidious trauma in the context of migration. The following forms of othering were found in the research material: exoticization, categorizing the ‘other’ as suspicious, dangerous, or inferior, emphasizing the differences, and signifying the perceived differences as negative and inferior. Furthermore, exclusion appears in various direct and hidden forms. The forms of direct exclusion were direct exclusionary speech and rejection, silence, speechlessness and being ignored, and language exclusion. The hidden or indirect forms of exclusion included the forms of microaggression (microassault, microinsult, microinvalidation) and institutionalized exclusionary discourses (for example, demarcatory discourses embedded in the national narratives).

The analysis of the research material demonstrated that othering and exclusion have a significant impact on an individual’s sense of self and their ability to function as an active member of society. For example, othering and exclusion may cause loneliness, inferiority, depression, hopelessness, lack of ambition, self-loathing and contempt, self-denial, shame, and even self-directed hatred and aggression. Overall, these experiences resulted in the feelings of being a second-class citizen. Similar to previous research (Brunnet et al. 2020; Castañeda et al. 2015; Paradies et al. 2015; Rask et

al. 2018), this article highlights the association between perceived discrimination and health problems among migrants. Therefore, in Finnish health care and more broadly in Finnish society, it is crucial to recognize the possibility of insidious trauma and address and act against the causes of insidious trauma (see also Castañeda et al. 2015; Rask et al. 2018).

The article approached the research questions by referencing factual autobiographies and works of fiction. In their works, the authors discuss the subtle mechanisms of othering and exclusion whereby participation is delimited, and the construction of agency is prevented. Moreover, by employing autobiographical and fictive tropes, the authors also make visible how people experience harmful interaction in their lives and how this negatively impacts their sense of agency and their ability to participate. According to previous research (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind & Vesala 2002, 34–36, 134–37), a migrant's background (e.g., age, gender, language, religion, ethnic background) affects the extent and type of discrimination the migrant possibly faces in Finland.

Instead of focusing on these kinds of factors, our emphasis has been on the insidious trauma and its causes, such as the experience of othering and exclusion. The analysis of selected works shows that participation and agency, and the cultural citizenship constructed through these phenomena, must be considered when addressing questions of belonging and attachment after having emigrated to a new home country. Citizenship or permanent residency consolidates a person's sense of belonging in the country of living (EU-MIDIS-II 2017, 19). However, individuals also need the kind of cultural citizenship that is fundamentally connected to their ability to experience agency and participation without constraining or losing a part of their identity. This approach to citizenship could mean that people with immigrant backgrounds are recognized as a part of society and, at the same time, they can retain their own linguistic and cultural background. DeVeraux & Griffin (2013, 140) and Lehtonen (2015, 268–71) also argue that when discussing (cultural) citizenship, it is necessary to examine how borders of inclusion and exclusion are defined. The cultural point of view allows a better understanding of the multilayeredness of these demarcations. However, in addition to (nation)states, globalization, transnationalism, and the new neighbor relations realized as a result of mobilities also form essential contexts for constructing cultural citizenship (cf. Clarke 2013, 464–65; Castañeda et al. 2018, 13). Othering and exclusion are present in their various forms precisely in people's everyday interactions in these new neighbor relations.

This research has shown that examining themes of othering, exclusion, and insidious trauma through the utilization of literature is meaningful. By employing documentary and fictive instruments, authors can illuminate the more hidden forms of othering and exclusion for discussion in the public realm that could otherwise remain unseen by the mainstream. In addition, these subtle forms of othering and exclusion could be difficult to reveal in, for example, interviews (cf. Rastas 2004, 33–55). The authors also elicit the potential consequences of othering and exclusion through the experiences and accounts of individuals. In the examined works, the authors describe the negative consequences of harmful interaction on the narrators' sense of self, their

status in their new country, and their ability to function as part of society. According to Sue et al. (2007, 272), modern-day racism in the US is, for example, more hidden, ambiguous, and is, consequently, more difficult to identify and name. Therefore, it is essential to utilize literature and other forms of artistic expression to bring to the fore harmful forms of interaction and the consequences of these interactions on the lives of individuals.

In the context of multidisciplinary research on trauma, this article has attempted to render visible how examinations of othering and exclusion can elicit the processes that potentially lead to the triggering of and fostering insidious trauma. This article emphasizes how everyday interactions form a significant arena where the bordering processes of inclusion and exclusion occur and may cause insidious trauma. In addition to the context of migration, other stressful circumstances can cause insidious trauma as well (e.g., bullying, hidden domestic violence, the experience of marginality). This article also contributes to examining those invisible borders in culture and society that the migrants encounter when settling in Finland and which often cause insidious trauma. Consequently, this article focuses on insidious trauma and encourages discussion of how it can be prevented from occurring in migrant experience.

Notes

- 1 Translations of the citations are by the authors of this article and Semantix Finland Oy.
- 2 This article was published as part of the research project *Traumatized Borders: Reviving Subversive Narratives of B/Order, and Other*, Academy of Finland, SA 297533.
- 3 CPTSD is a complex post-traumatic stress disorder that refers to chronic and prolonged traumatizing experiences that take place repetitively for months and even years (PTSD: National Center for PTSD).
- 4 The term 'Russki' [in Finnish 'ryssä'] is a pejorative and insulting term in Finnish language that refers to a Russian person. The term is used by Inna Latisheva in the title of her novel to illustrate discrimination and aggression that she has experienced in Finland.
- 5 Swedish is the second official language of Finland, spoken by a minority mainly in the West and South coast of Finland, and in Åland Islands.
- 6 Naantali is a town in southwestern Finland, whereas Savo is a region in the east of the country, and the dialects spoken in these areas differ greatly from each other.

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