Spaces on the Stave: Documenting the Musical Lives of Transgender People in Ireland

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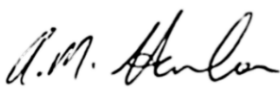
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Abstract

Spaces on the Stave: Documenting the Musical Lives of Transgender People in Ireland by Lee Harding

'Spaces on the Stave: Documenting the Musical Lives of Transgender People in Ireland' is a study situated in the domain of cultural musicology, establishing socio-historical context in alignment with a mapping of the musical lives of transgender people in Ireland. Identifying and interviewing transgender music-makers resulted in the collation of primary data for this research, combined with a nationwide survey that maps transgender music fandom. This data was analysed in order to develop a cultural historical perspective on the impact that gender identity has had on music-making and consumption for transgender people in Ireland. This research project engages with three research methods: archival research, online survey and the semi-structured interview. Archival research reveals traces of a history of transgender people in Ireland from the 1970s onwards with documentation of transgender experiences, community frameworks and music consumption. The survey investigates the role of music in participants' lives, transgender musical icons within Ireland and internationally and music venues, scenes and communities in Ireland. 230 transgender people from all over Ireland responded to the survey and shared their experiences as a means of supporting this research project centred on their lives and music. The series of interviews conducted with four transgender music-makers based in Ireland provide insight into career development, status in venues, spaces and scenes, and perspectives on a lineage of transgender music-makers. This thesis serves as a documented chronology of transgender musical experiences in Ireland dating from the 1970s to the present.

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

With the development of more liberal ideas within a changing society in Ireland, traditionally marginalised people have begun to gain more visibility in recent years. However, transgender people often remain absent from mainstream discourse. Society often views transgender people as part of comedy, shock factor, or with disgust.

> Putting characters in drag is treated as a gag. The very detailed and painful, expensive process of transition is simplified into one day in surgery. Pronouns used in reference to a transgender are inaccurate, as if to say, "Hey, this man thinks he's a woman. Isn't that funny?"
> (Jobe, 2013, p. 7)

In Irish cultural history, the transgender experience has yet to be adequately documented. Of particular relevance to this research is the fact that transgender lives have not been written into Irish popular music history. Despite the emergence of a number of prominent queer artists in Ireland, there are few Irish transgender music-makers. This thesis seeks to document a history of transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland, illustrating the role that music plays in transgender people's experiences. The leading research question influencing the direction of this thesis is 'what is the socio-historical context of transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland, and how has it shaped the experiences of transgender people?'. Through archival research in Chapter 2, the background documented context of transgender people, music-making and consumption is gathered which situates transgender people in the socio-cultural history of Ireland. Then, in Chapter 3, a national survey will be conducted to identify the key transgender music-makers in Ireland and to map the transgender music fandom in Ireland surrounding a soundtrack of a transgender person in Ireland, transgender music icons and the scenes and venues that transgender music consumers are a part of. Chapter 4 relates the findings of interviews conducted with four transgender music-makers in Ireland. These interviews address their beginnings and career in music, their experiences in their respective venues, spaces and scenes and explore the subject of a lineage of transgender music-makers. In conclusion, this thesis provides a cultural history of transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland.

1.2 Aims

The aims for this thesis are centred on four main objectives: to situate transgender people, music-making and consumption within the socio-cultural history of Ireland, map transgender music fandom in Ireland, gather the experiences of transgender music-makers in Ireland, and assess the role that music plays in transgender people's lives. Through archival research I have been able to gather sources from a range of physical and digital archives relating to queerness, transgender identity and Irish culture. *Gay Community News* (GCN) is a key resource, as the publication has been active since 1988 and provides a recent history of the Irish LGBTQ+ community and cultural practices. Using an online survey, I seek to define the soundtrack of a transgender person's life, establish potential icons that have resonated with transgender people, and to identify the genres, spaces and venues that transgender music consumers gravitate towards. This will aid in documenting scenes and in establishing a recent account of transgender social spaces in the last decade. Finally, I conducted interviews with transgender music-makers in Ireland. These participants were recruited through the survey and through direct contact with known music-makers who identify under the transgender umbrella.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is structured in seven chapters, each is sub-divided into relevant sub sections. The first chapter provides the overarching thesis design, aims and objectives, rationale, research design and a summary of terms and definitions used throughout. Chapters one to three address context, literature and methodology. Context includes cultural Irish history (in relation to rights and equality), popular music history and LGBTQ+ history in Ireland. The literature review appraises sources on Irish history, popular music and queer literature. The methodology discusses archival research, identity studies and community studies in order to establish the theoretical frameworks used in this research. Chapter 3 is centred on the documentation of transgender people and transgender music-makers in Ireland through the means of archival studies. This chapter highlights evidence of transgender people and music-making from the 1970s onwards. Chapter 4 focuses on a survey conducted on transgender music fandom in Ireland. This chapter explores a soundtrack to a transgender person's life, transgender icons and experiences of transgender people in music venues, spaces and scenes. Chapter 5 introduces four transgender music-makers in Ireland as they are interviewed on their career development, their experiences in spaces, venues and scenes and their sense of a lineage of transgender music-

makers in Ireland. The final chapter entails the conclusion of the thesis with a full timeline of Irish cultural history including the research collected from this project.

1.4 Rationale

Nagoshi and Brzuzy in *Transgender Theory: Embodying Research and Practice* (2010) discuss the development of transgender theory which emerged from post-structuralist theory, queer theory and feminist theory. The main point addressed by Nagoshi and Brzuzy are that each of these theories have failed to move past the gender binary. Roen (2001) provides one of the first examples of transgender theory as a critique of queer theory, acknowledging that queer theory recognises that gender is fluid but still situates the gender binary in terms of opposite sides of a spectrum. Delineations between male and female therefore remain the defining elements of queer theory (to some extent). Transgender theory in essence, attempts to remove the gender binary entirely. Nagoshi and Brzuzy (2010) state that:

> 'conceptualizing gender as being solely a social construct is also problematic in that it denies the sense of identity that comes from a body that continues to exist as a seeming self between the social performances of gendered behaviours'. (p. 435).

Critique of queer theory from a transgender theoretical perspective remains an active debate; Chaudhry (2019, p. 46) argues that 'trans and gender-nonconforming people have not unequivocally benefited from the convergence of "LGBTQ" and "trans" as institutionally legible categories'. By combining identities under one category, generalised study results in only some identities being researched while others are merely mentioned or dismissed. In particular, LGBTQ+ research tends to focus on lesbian, gay and bisexual identities. This is why research centred on transgender people is essential.

Personally, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community in an undergraduate music programme in the late 2010s – I was personally always inspired by musicians such as SOAK and Kitt Philippa but struggled to come up with an answer as to why there were not more transgender musicians on the island of Ireland that I listened to. This project, for me, is a beginning to change that narrative for myself and hopefully for many others by creating more visibility around transgender people in music in Ireland.

1.5 Methodology

The primary research question of this research project is: what is the role that music plays in transgender people's lives in Ireland? It is a mixed-methods study, which is a study that uses more than one method, in this case three different methods, in order to answer the research question. This involved collating data from archival research, an online survey using Microsoft Forms and four semi-structured interviews with transgender artists in Ireland. Three sets of primary data were created based on archival research, survey research and interviews. The reason that these data sets were chosen is due to the dearth of existing knowledge surrounding transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland. These data sets were used to learn from the subject about the music they play or listen to, and the role it plays in their lives. The music fandom survey and the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. This research has been approached with rigour through triangulation of the data.

All three methods were analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis' goal is defined by Maguire & Delahunt (2017, p. 3353) as a method 'to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research'. It is a qualitative method that I used to identify a set of themes within each chapter that aided in main findings through comparing and contrasting statements made by sources. These sources included different articles from periods of time discussing certain events or opinions, survey participants reflections on their own lives and relationships with music and interview participants on their opinions surrounding music scenes in Ireland.

Mapping Transgender Music Fandom in Ireland is a survey which investigates music fandom of individuals in Ireland who identify under the transgender umbrella. This survey follows the definition of transgender as advocated by Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI): "TENI advocates the use of "transgender" or "trans" as an umbrella term as it is currently the most inclusive and respectful term to describe diverse identities." (https://www.teni.ie/resources/trans-terms/). The survey was conducted through Microsoft Forms, containing a total of twenty-two questions divided into areas of participation in music making, personal relationship with music, transgender artists and fandoms, transgender icons and music venues, scenes and communities. The participants in the survey are primarily in the 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 age brackets. 49% of the participants identified as non-binary, with 32% identifying as transgender male and 10% identifying as transgender female. The remaining portion identified as either Other or Prefer not to say. Nine of the questions are quantitative and

twelve of the questions are qualitative. The first question acts as a consent question to taking part in the survey. (See Appendix 4 for survey questions)

Chapter 4 focuses on the lives of transgender music-makers in Ireland as revealed through a series of four interviews with professional transgender music-makers. The initial section of the interviews is based on the beginnings, career evolution and obstacles of the participants' musical lives. There are a total of sixteen questions in the interview, fifteen of these are asked while the questions are being recorded with the final question being a snowballing sample question, that is asked after the interview concludes: Is there any other transgender music artists you know that you think I should speak to for this research? The length of each interview varied: participants 1 and 3 lasted within the estimated time-frame of thirty to forty-five minutes; participant 2 completed all responses in approximately seventeen minutes; while participant 4 took approximately one hour, twenty seven minutes. These interviews provide four unique perspectives on what it is like to be a transgender person in the contemporary Irish music scene.

Positioning within the community

I am a member of the queer community but I am not transgender, so my position within this research is very much an outside perspective. Due to being an outsider, I have maintained a level of carefulness when approaching each method as I want to ensure that the impact of this thesis is not negative for transgender people. In particular, within each interview I briefed participants that I was cisgender and that I am not here to narrate their experience but instead give space for their own voice. Following the interviews being written, I sent a copy of the script for each participants interview and gave them an additional opportunity to omit any information that, on reflection, they no longer wished to share. I thoroughly examined each question in both interviews and survey in order to ensure that my questions were not directing participants to say particular things but instead to allow them to speak on what they resonated with in the questions.

Participants

The participants in the survey were recruited initially through Pink Training delegations. Pink Training is an annual event where third-level LGBTQ+ societies from across the island of Ireland gather for workshops and socialising. Following this, participants were also recruited through online social media LGBTQ+ groups and transgender groups after being granted permission to post within these groups. The most effective recruitment method was through

paid targeted advertisements on Instagram, which brought the total of participants in the survey from 17 to 230 within two weeks. In total, 230 participants took part in the survey with 228 responses being usable. Two were eliminated as they ignored the research questions and were transphobic in nature.

The participants from the interviews were recruited via the survey and its use of snowball sampling, whereby the participants are asked to assist the researcher in identifying other potential subjects (Human Research Protection Program, Oregon State University, 2010). Of the interview participants, two are from Northern Ireland and two are from the Republic of Ireland. Though unintentional, the sample of these participants led to a balance of participants from both north and south of the border. Participant 1 is a trans man, participants 2 and 3 are non-binary (assigned female at birth) and participant 4 is a trans woman. Participant 1 has worked in electropop music but also uses folk/acoustic approaches; participant 2 works in the genre of punk rock; participant 3 is an indie-pop music artist; participant 4 is an industrial musician with work in electronic and noise music.

Data collection methods

Archival research was undertaken to establish the current state of historical data available on transgender people in Ireland, both in general and musical terms. This archival data is subjected to thematic analysis. The theory that underpinned the collection of this data draws upon the works of Halberstam (2005), Rawson (2009) and Wasserbauer (2018) and their research on documenting queer history and conducting archival research. Rawson (2009, p. 126), in particular, discusses the issue of 'a significant amount of transgender history potentially being 'anti-history, which can be at odds with the archives' task of preserving transgender materials in contexts that uniformly uplift history.' Anti-history is defined as something that is not 'a rejection of history as accounts of the past, but rather a rejection of the idea of the past as knowable through history' (Durepos & Mills, 2018, p. 431). This concept infers that the collation of primary data (drawn from surveys and interviews in this case) may therefore offer more constructive insights than archival sources for the purposes of research on transgender identities.

Statistical and qualitative outputs are derived from the survey. Key themes were used to structure survey design, and these permit the comparison of participant responses. These themes were: 1. Identity 2. Participation in Music Making 3. Personal Relationship with Music 4. Transgender Artists & Fandoms 5. Transgender Icons 6. Music Venues, Scenes, Communities.

The questions were developed from these themes in order to centre the survey around specific needs that would aid in answering the research question. This also aided in mapping specific genres that were frequently mentioned by participants. The statistical outputs generated include the size of each gender identity, their age group, the popularity of certain music-makers, songs and genres and the number of memories associated with different artists. In this context, a survey is used 'generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context' (Isaac & Michael, 1997, p.136). The survey is aligned with the first recommendation by Mangaoang & O'Flynn in *Mapping Popular Music in Dublin* (2016, p.42) which is that future strategies in Irish popular music studies should focus on the 'domestic musician networks, emerging genres, and alternative scenes and subcultures as they do on the "canon" of internationally successful musicians in rock, folk and traditional genres.' The survey data was analysed to identify transgender music-makers in Ireland, document the genres and music that have influenced and resonated with transgender people in Ireland, to map the venues most associated with transgender music-making in Ireland over the last sixty years and to map the music scenes and events that have related to transgender music consumption in Ireland. The survey itself is not statistically meaningful as in certain cases, the data was too large and varied to gather great quantitative results. However, these can still be used in a qualitative sense as they were used to highlight certain genres of importance, artists that are transgender themselves or have showcased significant displays of allyship, or songs that had resonated strongly with participants.

The interview process in this project focused on semi-structured interviews with transgender music-makers which provided insight into careers, obstacles, scenes and a discussion of lineage regarding transgender music-makers in Ireland. In *Queer Voices: exploring the roles of music in LGBTQ lives* (2018), Wasserbauer's four oral histories serve to create a rich and diverse set of perspectives all on music. Whilst Wasserbauer's approach to the interview experience (asking participants to bring songs and physical artefacts) is not mirrored directly in this research, the idea of framing a life through musical experiences is certainly an important feature of the interviews conducted herein. Wasserbauer views herself as a co-archivist, documenting history in direct collaboration with the interviewee. Though this project is focused on semi-structured interviews as opposed to unstructured interviews, there is the same intention to allow the participant to guide the interview and to provide personal and unique insights into their life as a transgender music-maker in Ireland.

Data Analysis

The data collected is used to assess the role that music plays in the lives of transgender people in Ireland, triangulating archival research, survey and interviews to collectively address the research question.

Ethics

This research was conducted in accordance with the DkIT Ethics Policy and was granted ethical approval by the DkIT Ethics Committee on 16 February 2021. Both surveys and interviews were anonymised, and participants were able to opt out of the study if they so wished. Table 1.1 details the ethical issues and strategies used to address them.

Table 1.1. Ethical issues and Strategies to address them

Ethical Issue	Strategy to Address Issue
Informed Consent	Participant information sheets provided outlining the following information: • Description of the research project, its aims and objectives • Description of the commitments that participants consent to, such as partaking in an interview or in a survey and duration of the survey • Description of how participant data will be managed and used • Details on how to withdraw participation • My contact details and that of my supervisors at DkIT Participants will be given sufficient time to read and consider the information in this leaflet and to contact me with any questions concerning the research. As survey information is anonymised, participants will not be able to withdraw participation from this element. Participants have the right to withdraw participation prior to the submission of this project for examination.

GDPR Compliance	
Right to privacy	No personal data of participants will be revealed in the thesis or other research outputs that arise from this research. Participation in surveys is anonymous. Participants in interviews will remain anonymous. If participants feel uncomfortable answering questions, then they are free to opt out of questions before or during their participation. For interview participants, their transcripts will be sent to them for review, and they can choose to delete answers they have decided, in retrospect, not to answer. Transcripts of interviews do not reveal names or personal data of participants.
Storage of data	All data will be stored in DkIT's OneDrive system Audio recordings of the four interviews will be deleted following transcription. All other data will be destroyed after submission, correction and approval of research project and the publication of its related outputs.
Research Integrity	
Data Analysis & Verification	Triangulation of data sets in analytical method. Focus on emic perspectives in analysis
Feedback to participants in the research	Participants to be emailed a copy of the findings upon request

In addition to ethical considerations potential issues were identified that may arise in conducting this research. The following table outlines the remedies suggested to address these potential obstacles to completing the research.

Table 1.2. Potential issues and Remedies

Potential issue	Remedy
COVID-19 related issues with meeting for an interview	Zoom is a resource where interviews could be conducted. Its support in providing internet stability while in a call aid in optimising the best quality for audio recordings. Zoom also offers a recording feature free of charge and unlimited minutes in a meeting where there are only two people in a call. This makes the process of recording interviews in order to transcribe them a much simpler process.
Potentially triggering moments for participants which may cause distress	Ensure to not pursue potentially triggering areas with participants with follow up questions. Talk to the participant before the interview by telling them about myself in order to offer that I am not judging or interrogating them. Offer a debriefing after the interview with a copy of contact details of support organisations that can offer assistance if they are in need of help.
Gatekeeping, some transgender people may not want to participate or provide assistance	Do not pursue any further, this research is based on consent.
Mistakes made in relation to understanding of gender identity	Keep referring back to official terminology and keep informed of new information, as what is correct and incorrect can change quite quickly.

1.6 Theory

Queer Theory

The term 'Queer theory' is defined by Spargo (1999) in *Foucault and Queer Theory* as 'not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire.' (p. 9). The roots of queer theory is based in post-structuralist theory, which is described by Darkins (2017) as a theory where one engages 'in a kind of critical thinking that problematises and destabilises a framework that would otherwise be taken for granted, thereby making room for the possibility of a new reality' (p. 1). One theorist who is 'generally categorised as poststructuralist' (Spargo, p. 7) is Michel Foucault, whose theories behind sexuality in *History of Sexuality* (1984) acted, in some ways, as 'a catalyst for the development of queer theory' (p. 7). Foucault's theories behind sexuality and the concept of modern homosexuality, gave rise to an emergence of queer theory in the 1990s – which has continued to evolve today. Though in the earlier years this research did not focus on transgender identities, these theories surrounding homosexuality can similarly be re-examined for transgender people. Discussions behind queer theory in this research will analyse, summarise and compare research in a genealogical process from the 1990s to contemporary research. Theorists mentioned will include Adrienne Rich, Judith Butler, Diana Fuss, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lauren Berlant, Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman and Jack Halberstam.

Though Foucault's model of discourse was influential, Spargo also links the theories of a 'decentred, unstable identity' (p. 40) by Jacques Lacan and 'Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of binary conceptual and linguistic structures' (p. 41) as influences of poststructuralist theory employed in queer theory. Central queer theories in the 1990s included discussion on binary structures, such as heterosexual and homosexual, natural and unnatural, and how to break out of this thinking. Diana Fuss in *Inside/Out* (1991) links this binary of inside and outside, and how those on the inside are the heterosexuals and those on the outside are the homosexuals, and for one to 'come out' is a process of them moving from the inside to the outside. Fuss's call to study is for further research surrounding 'a theory of sexual borders' in order to organise 'the new cultural and sexual arrangements occasioned by the movements and transmutations of pleasure in the social field' (p.5). Her call for this research stems from the theoretical idea that homosexuality is not necessarily inside or outside, but like an in-between 'which continually rubs up against the hetero' in a way that threatens a collapse of boundaries and 'a radical confusion of identities' (p. 6). In continuing on the discourse of boundaries and binaries, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) discusses the boundaries of gender and the limitations of conditioned experiences of gender. Butler's discussion of 'inner' and 'outer' refers to its reliance on 'a mediating boundary that strives for stability', and that without the structure of a binary, this theoretical idea of an inner and outer world begins to destabilise. Butler's idea of gender is that it is performative. 'In other words, acts

and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organising gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.' (p. 173). In this sense, a person is referred to as an actor who engages in three forms – sex, gender identity and gender performance. In a way, gender performance can be considered an act of survival which 'humanises individuals within contemporary culture' and those who do not act in a way deemed humanising are outside. Butler's central theoretical claim is that gender, in itself, is a construction stemming from histories of repeated gender acts in societies amalgamating in a set of rules and structures of what is normal – the gender norm. Leo Bersani is another queer theorist of the 1990s who discusses this idea of binary structures. Bersani's *Homos* (1995) discusses the claim that 'just about everything we take for granted about sexuality and sex, even the very differences between the sexes, may be to a significant degree learned, and that to unlearn it all may be our greatest political challenge.' Bersani's opinion on binary divisions is that the couple itself transcends sexual difference through the idea of 'sameness'. A same-sex couple is not a man-woman binary but breaks outside of that – one that destabilises the binary pairings in a way that counters and breaks a heteronormative and structuralist understanding. The weaknesses of research in the 1990s is in its lack of thought towards identities outside of the binary. Though this research lacked a focus outside of gay and lesbian studies, there is a clear introduction from Judith Butler on the idea that gender is socially constructed – which makes way for nonbinary and transgender identities to become more visible and understood in academia.

The 2000s showed a desire to move queer theory in a new direction. Halperin (2003) in *The Normalisation of Queer Theory* discusses how 'If queer theory is going to have the sort of future worth cherishing, we will have to find ways of renewing its radical potential' (p. 343). Halperin's main argument is that queer theory needs to start 'reinventing its capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not yet been thought' (p. 343). This idea of disrupting or destabilising a framework that is otherwise taken for granted is where gender takes on more of a forefront. Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) is a work not just on queer theory but also on transgender people, which was an area mostly untouched at the time. Influenced by Foucault's statement in *Friendship as a Way of Life* from *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984* that 'homosexuality threatens people as a 'way of life' rather than as a way of having sex', Halberstam moves towards the queer way of live through 'subcultural practices, alternative methods of alliance, forms of transgender embodiment, and those forms of representation dedicated to capturing these wilfully eccentric modes of being.' Halberstam, through this book, discusses Billy Tipton and how his death in 1992 led to a discovery that he was AFAB (assigned female at birth). 'In such moments, the supposedly objective and scholarly biographer

turns abruptly into judge and juror, and the life hanging in the balance is measured by impossibly high standards.' (p. 57). Jurich (2004) in The Female Trickster-Known as Trickstar discusses Tipton as a 'trickstar': 'for in their resistance to social conditions and in their abilities to manipulate conventions and power structures, they achieve a personal expression, advance their own agendas and, in very different ways, transform the way we think and relate to others.' (p. 69). Jurich (2004) refers to Tipton as someone who assumed a male disguise in order to advance a musical career, which is also highly subjective. Jurich praises Tipton for defying gender roles and rebelling against establishment ideas. Jurich also refers to Tipton as a 'woman' and reduces the five women he was in a relationship with to either being deceived or being part of the secret. Halberstam challenges the narrative of transgender people, and how they have been portrayed as only 'cad, deceiver, seducer of young women, or simply the delusional charmer.' (p. 56) by creating an archive surrounding transgender people in music, art, film, etc. in a light that is not judge or juror and not as someone who analyses and tries to make sense of the subject; but as someone who understands cases of gender ambiguity before the rise of a category as complex personhood. It is not clear whether Tipton was transgender, and 'complex and contradictory as they may seem, it is necessary to read for the life and not for the lie. Dishonesty, after all, is just another word for narrative.' (p. 74). Another theorist of this time was Lee Edelman, whose writing on *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) was remarked by Fisher (2007) as 'one of the most challenging and shocking works of theory to have emerged in recent year'. Edelman's main theoretical idea is in reproductive futurism, the idea that as a society 'we're fighting for the children.' (p. 2). The future is with the children, and if you are not working towards that future then you have no place in society. Edelman places queerness as the opposite of fighting for the children, a term he refers to as the death drive. The death drive is from Sigmund Freud's theory of drives from Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920). The death drive is a move towards self-destruction, an idea that the future is death. Edelman's conclusion for queer people is 'to consider accepting or even embracing it' (p.4) as a way of turning its intelligibility against itself, and 'to cast our vote for "none of the above"' (p. 5) to a scheme of reproductive futurism that is completely stacked against them. Edelman's theories have changed a lot of viewpoints on theory, Fisher (2007) in Reproductive Futurism and the Politics of the Death Drive states that 'Edelman's book poses an urgent question: what would a theory look like which is not oriented toward a 'better future'? Could there be a politics of the death drive?'.

Queer theory now is a direction that seems to be reinventing itself again. The idea of utopias has been a concept of theory long before queer theory came into existence, and in recent years this has brought attention to the idea of a 'trans utopia'. Copson and Boukli (2020) in *Queer utopias and queer criminology* states that 'The relatively recent emergence of trans utopias, however, offers a view of living beyond current gender binaries, which transcends current understandings of

embodiment and opens up new horizons for imagining the social world.' (p. 517). Copson and Boukli's claim is that this idea of utopia is abstract in that it is a state of thought. Bloch (1959) in *The Principle of Hope* refers to abstract utopias as 'expressions of desire ungrounded in a meaningful practical relationship to what is really possible' (p. 145). In contrast, concrete utopias refer to a real future, something that is possible. This research provides theories behind trans utopia in the criminal justice system, but it is interesting to consider a trans utopia in other forms, which is a possible area of progression in queer theory. Ryan (2020) links that the current state of queer theory may move into three distinct perspectives:

> (i) those who continue to view it as a largely philosophical issue tied primarily to discourse and still rooted largely in issues of sexuality; (ii) those who remain largely true to the philosophical underpinnings of queer theory yet, in response to its multiple criticisms for failing to do so, wish to more firmly root it in the material world and (iii) those who seek to employ the principles of queer theory largely as a methodological approach and to move it beyond the realm of sexuality.

(Ryan, *Queer Theory*, 2020, p. 88)

It is with the third perspective that this project unfolds, employing the principles of queer theory largely as a methodological approach and moving it beyond the realm of sexuality. This project will directly destabilise the framework of Irish history – which has until now, commonly left trans musicians out. This project will do this through one medium – music, as a way to gather sources and document histories surrounding the musical lives of transgender people in Ireland.

Scene Studies

Peterson and Bennett (2004, p.3) discuss scenes as 'situations where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment.' New music scenes often influence larger industry shifts in terms of commercial and stylistic trends. In other cases, music scenes offer a space for musicians who exist outside mainstream music to collaborate and create, with the objective less focused on professional development. The reason that scenes are featured in this study as more prominent than the concept of subcultures is directed by the arguments initially made by Peterson and Bennett, and later addressed in a queer context by Jodie Taylor. Taylor (2012, p. 167) explains that subculture 'generally presumes that its participants mark a cohesive deviation from a shared dominant culture and are governed by unified subcultural standards'. Furthermore Taylor (2012, p. 167) asserts: 'in theory at least, queer is resistant to unified standards.' Consequently, the term 'scene' in this context is arguably freed from assumptions or standards which may serve to limit the transgender experience of music-making and consumption. Bennett & Peterson consider scenes within the categories of local, trans local and virtual; all three of which have relevance

to this research. Local scenes refer to a scene 'as clustered around a specific geographic focus' (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, p. 6). Local scenes tend to impact and influence early musical development and socialisation. Given that Ireland's popular music consumption draws on multiple external sources, international music remains an important consideration. Trans local scenes refer to 'widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle.' (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, p. 6) Virtual scenes refer to 'people scattered across great physical spaces' but 'create the sense of scene via fanzines, and, increasingly, through the Internet' (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, p. 7). Virtual scenes are an increasingly resonant mode of connection in the contemporary age. This study examines the extent to which local, trans local and virtual scenes are important or evident. Additionally, DIY culture must be explored in relation to scenes. DIY, otherwise known as do-it-yourself-, is 'a mode of musical production that is symbolically and ideologically distinct from the commercial circuits of the popular music industry' (Guerra, 2020, p 58). In ways, a form of self-making (Wierenga, 2009), DIY music-makers are entrepreneurs, actively supporting those in the scene, and often achieving success beyond traditional constructs of the music industry. Scenes are addressed further in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 relating to transgender music-makers and music consumption.

Identity Studies

Fearon (1999, p. 2) argues that 'identity in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity.' This twofold confluence of the social and personal resonates other identity studies, where it denotes a complex series of both personal and cultural factors. Turner, Oakes, Haslam and McGarty (1992, p.3) distinguish that 'personal identity refers to self-categories which define the individual as a unique person in terms of their individual differences from other (ingroup) persons,' whereas 'social identity refers to social categorizations of self and others, self-categories which define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories.' Some aspects of personal identity can overlap with social identity, such as scenes where its members collectively dress in a certain way and have traits and ideals which are specifically affiliated with that scene. Scenes are often a space for the expression of collective identity in this way.

Gender identity is a form of social identity, in that it links one with others in a social group. However, as discussed previously, social identity and personal identity can overlap and change over time. Fearon (1999, p.15) explains that 'I might say that a crucial part of my

identity is that I like to listen to punk rock, but if I stopped liking this music, I would not think that I was literally a different person'. Though it would be accepted that punk rock music would not change who that person is, sexual orientation or gender identity is very much a part of who queer people are and how they see the world and taking away their sexual orientation or gender identity would change them. It cannot be compared to liking a certain type of music or being a certain age. With this understanding, personal identity includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Drummond (2020, p.9) discusses the potential imbalance between social and personal identity: 'what "one" thinks or should think, what "one" does or should do, and what "one" is or should be.' Social and personal constructions of identity are potentially further complicated for transgender people, given the societal and cultural stereotypes associated with the gender binary. Wood and Eagly (2015) continue to divide the study of gender identity into men and women but do acknowledge further scope for research which recognises other gender identities.

Community Studies

The term 'community' is a broad inter-disciplinary term with various definitions. Konig (1968, p.195) describes it as 'the framework within which the human being is first introduced to social relations beyond the confines of the family'. Stein denotes it as 'an organized system standing in a determinate relation to its environment which has a local basis but not necessarily a rigid boundary' (Stein, 1960, pp.100& 101). Theorists in the 1960s and 1970s, (for example Clark (1973) and Stacey (1969)), hypothesized that the term community 'engaged in discourse surrounding the myth of community studies, and in how community was a word that did not really exist. 'Those adopting the structural approach have been most prominent in suggesting that the word 'community' be dropped altogether and replaced with such a phrase as 'the local social system' (Clark, 1973, p. 401). Community, in this context, would not necessarily take into account that there are communities outside of the singular local system, as these are theories founded thirty to forty years before widespread internet culture emerged. 'Music-making has been used frequently to engage marginalised groups to various ends; creating community, challenging injustice, and developing confidence' (Higgins and Willingham, cited by Sutherland, Calo Steiner & Vanderhoven, 2022, p.4).

Transgender people are an identity represented within the larger LGBTQ+ community. 'For members of minority and marginalized groups, a sense of belonging may only be accessible within identity-specific communities' (Barr, Budge and Adelson, 2016, p. 87). Whilst the LGBTQ+ community offers a sense of place for many; it is also useful to consider the transgender community as a specific entity. On a fundamental level, communities are

constructed around some sense of shared identity or commonalities. At times, this community identity is an important mode of self-actualisation, as with the movement from 'sodomite' to 'homosexual', discussed in Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976, p.101): 'It also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.' One could postulate that the claiming of a transgender community identity is conceived with similar intentions.

In discussions of community for transgender people, there are potential restrictions to assuming this sense of belonging. Some of these factors pertain to the queer community in general. Though LGBTQ+ is often defined as a community, there are differences between the identities represented therein. Huezo and Collins (2019) discuss the inclusion of trans people in queer communities and argue that in gay culture there exist examples of toxic attitudes towards transgender people, people of colour and those who do not fit the desired requirements of beauty. 'No fats, no femmes, no Asians, no blacks, no ballroom kids' is a recurring statement on profiles in queer social networks and dating sites. This is reflected in *No Fats, No Femmes*, a documentary by Jamal Lewis (2016). 'They think that because they reflect more masculine qualities than others, that they're sort of superior to the feminine young men of our community.' (XemVanAdams, No Fats, No Fems Compilation, 2016). The 'femme' in this statement includes people assigned male at birth who identify under the transgender umbrella. This sense of rejection from other members of the LGBTQ+ community makes it difficult to group identities together as one community. This is not applied to the same extent when considering communities of race or religion. Academic discourse is moving towards the concept of distinguishing specific communities associated with gender. Huezo and Collins (2019, p.159) note that in the transgender community in Canada 'there are trans-specific communication tools: Etiquette, language, concepts, and humour', in addition to 'dominant narratives, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and ideologies guiding or impacting trans people.' They also note that 'specific trans cultures differ across groups and mediums of communication' and 'interactional styles in the community often take the shape of mentorship, with mentors and mentees inhabiting different roles' (Ibid, p.159). Notably also, 'trans-centred events have an importance, impact, and function for the community' (Ibid, p. 159). These factors are important considerations in identifying transgender community structures in other countries, such as Ireland.

An Foclóir Aiteach (The Queer Dictionary) was authored by Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha in collaboration with TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) and BelongTo. This dictionary was publicly supported by the then minister for Gaeilge, Joe McHugh in 2018 (Berry, 2018). The dictionary includes terminology such as trasinscneach (transgender), inscne-sholúbtha (genderfluid) and neamh-dhénártha (non-binary). In this way, 'There are trans-specific communication tools: Etiquette, language, concepts, and humour' (Huezo and Collins, p. 159) being applied to Irish culture. The fact that there are Irish words for trans people suggests that Irish culture is adapting to the transgender community, and helping the Irish language become more accessible to the LGBTQ+ community.

The community has also become visible through rights advocacy for transgender people. For example, the #TransHealthcareNow movement in Ireland is an active and prominent community who are fighting for their rights. *Support the Transgender* Healthcare Protest Dublin* (SpunOut, 2018) is an indicative protest organised by Noah Halpin and Luke Daly, both of whom are part of a younger generation of queer people who are actively trying to create change for transgender people in Ireland. 'This protest is aiming to improve the woefully unacceptable level of transgender healthcare being provided in Ireland' (Halpin, 2018). #TransHealthcareNow alongside Gender Recognition are dominant narratives which are guiding trans people in Ireland.

TENI has become an organisation which has helped create pathways, mentorship, advice and support for trans people in Ireland through many different platforms. For example, *The Super Women – Empowering Trans Women into the Workplace* is a recent project to help trans women and trans feminine people 'to overcome barriers that prevent them from accessing work or reaching their full potential in employment' (TENI, Super Women Project, 2020). There are also a number of events in Ireland which aim to consider the transgender community as a particular identity. For example, *Purple Training* is hosted by both Trinity College and Maynooth University since 2016. 'Purple Training, a two-day conference on gender identity … was organised by the Maynooth Pride Society, offered workshops on topics ranging from Trans 101 to make-up tutorials' (Schardt, 2016). Events like Purple Training have been largely responsible for creating more opportunities for highlighting trans voices and providing a space to learn, connect and grow. This reflects Huezo and Collin's (2019, p.159) assertion that 'trans-centred events have an importance, impact, and function for the community'.

There are obvious similarities in transgender communities that transcend nationality, but there are also likely to be unique traits associated with particular cultural practices and

traditions. The role of music in transgender community can be supportive, liberating and a means of deconstructing societal or community ideologies. In terms of the supportive role music can play in community building, there are international examples of positive initiatives that utilise music. In *The Queer of Color Sound Economy in Electronic Dance Music* Black (2020, p.17) discusses The Gworls, who host 'a monthly party that fundraises for housing, gender-affirming surgeries, and general medical expenses for the Black transgender community.' Another example of this is DisCakes, a DIY rave in New York City that raises money 'for queer, trans, and nonbinary undocumented immigrants' (Ibid, p.17). The concept of raising money from music-making environments in order to improve the lives of transgender people is one of the ways in which music can provide support. Music as liberation refers to the capacity of creativity as a form of self-expression. *Flutua*, a song performed by Johnny Hooker and Liniker, a transgender black singer, features expressions of freedom from the perspectives of different members of the wider queer community. In particular, the lyrics 'No one can or will tell us how to love' are described by Villela and Iturregui-Gallardo (2020, p.4) as 'a motto of liberation and gender identity affirmation'. Liberation is important for transgender people, highlighted most powerfully in countries where gender identity is defined in narrow terms. Brazil has the world's highest LGBTQ+ murder rate, especially for transgender people – '868 trans and gender-diverse people were murdered between January 2008 and June 2016 in Brazil' (TGEU, p. 6). This far exceeds the sixty-four other countries included in a 2016 report titled *Transgender Europe's Trans Murder Monitoring*. Ireland is not mentioned in this study, but a total of 8 murders of gender-diverse people is reported in the UK.

Music as a means of deconstructing conventions and norms is an interesting aspect of trans community, as it is a movement which works to move away from gender and genre fixities within other music scenes. DIY (Do it yourself) culture is a large factor in this respect. Robin describes themselves as 'an effeminate queer man, a butch woman, a totally genderless thing, a person with an excess of masculine AND feminine traits' (Robin cited in Pearce and Lohman, 2019, p. 104). Trans music scenes also welcome cisgender artists, wilfully destabilising gender identity in a creative space which prioritizes interaction, performance and connection. Genre evasion is also a means of forging determinedly open creative paths, with performers such as punk bands, opera singers, acoustic rock artists, hip hop artists, burlesque performers and combinations of comedy, poetry and spoken word sharing the stage (Ibid, p. 108). This means that music can deconstruct gender exclusivity and genre exclusivity within the trans community, working more towards unity through diversity.

Chapter 2: Context

As I seek to investigate the role that music plays in the lives of transgender people in Ireland through the documentation of transgender music-making and consumption, it is important to appraise the social and historical factors which have impacted the transgender community. This section discusses Dr Lydia Foy, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), the Gender Recognition Act, a movement towards trans visibility in the 2010s with engagement from Hozier, and the more recent emergence of transgender artists such as SOAK and Kitt Philippa. Finally, it is relevant to consider specific genres which feature prominently in survey feedback (punk, hyperpop and industrial/noise music).

Irish Historical Context

Ireland is a considerably different country to what it was 100 years ago. Considering the influence England and Christianity had over Ireland, rising changes and influences from the outside world began to shift Irish people's perspectives. 1974 was the year that the first fully-fledged gay liberation group in Ireland was founded, The Irish Gay Rights Movement (Norris, 1981). David Norris first took the case of reforming homosexual law to court in 1977 but it was defeated in 1980 in the High Court. O'Toole in *The church brutalised Ireland. People have a right to protest against the pope's visit* (2018) highlights Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland in 1979, in which 79% of the population 'came out to honour him'. What is interesting about this is that in the same year in Chicago, Norris reported that the Pope made a speech which included stating 'i.e., that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered because they do not carry the necessary implication of conception.' (p. 36). In 1982, Declan Flynn was attacked in Fairview Park by five men. Even though Declan Flynn died later from the injuries, the five men were only given suspended sentences for manslaughter. Halpin in *Here's a short history of the battle for LGBT rights in Ireland* (2018) states that 'Following his death, Ireland's first Pride parade took place in March 1983. The first event was a one-day affair and aimed at highlighting the levels of violence against LGBT men and women.' In 1988, David Norris, who had progressed to the position of Senator, brought the case of buggery laws to the European Court of Human Rights. The case was won, resulting in the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. Norris wrote in the *Irish Times* (1993) 'when, next week, this Bill is passed by Seanad Éireann and sent to the President for signature I will, for the first time in my life, feel that I am at last a full and equal citizen in my own country.'

The Ireland that held such strong beliefs in the Catholic Church began to disappear in light of

Fr Brendan Smyth's arrest in 1994. Smyth's uncovering as a child abuser was the opening of a door that the Catholic Church had long attempted to keep shut. Kenny (2009) in *Significant Television: Journalism, Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church in Ireland* reflected that 'Smyth himself came to be regarded by many Irish people as the personification of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church'. (p. 65) Smyth pleaded guilty to 74 charges of sexual assault over the course of 35 years. The level of concern from the Irish public slowly began to rise over the years, with more members of the Catholic Church being exposed as child abusers. 'Gradually, it emerged through media reports that the problem of abusive priests had been known to the bishops for decades and that they had responded to it by either moving priests to other locations or sending them for various kinds of 'treatment', or both.' (p. 66). The cases and charges continued to emerge, which was a widely impactful social turning point in Irish society. The growing distaste for the Catholic Church in Ireland resulted in priests 'being sworn at or even spat upon' (p. 66) which was something that no one would even dare to do before this. Dr Louise Fuller reported to the Irish Times that 'While the sex scandals of the 1990s were "enormously damaging", the Church's loss of authority can be traced to the 1950s, when its influence was greatest. This was the beginning of the end for "a particular kind of Catholicism, which contained the seeds of its own demise"'. (*Church's loss of authority started in 1950s,* says academic, 2004). Fuller in *Irish Catholicism Since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (2002) relates the fall of Catholicism to several factors, some of which were the impact of movies and television, especially the free-flowing discussions on RTÉ's "Late Show", tourism and returned emigrants, Ireland's involvement in the United Nations and European Union, industrial and technological changes in the economy, leading to increasing urbanization and a better educated and more prosperous laity and the clerical sexual abuse scandals of the 1990s. Overall, it can be taken from Fuller's points that Ireland's development as a more educated, economically developed country with tourism attraction elements led to a space open to questioning the authority figures that had long since held abusive control over the country.

Following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland in 1993, Dr Lydia Foy applied for a new birth certificate to reflect her identity. Foy had lived as a woman since 1991, and subsequently worked towards establishing legal recognition for transgender people in Ireland. After years of rejection, the case was brought to the High Court in 2000 but was rejected in 2002 by Mr Justice Liam McKechnie on the basis that there was 'a lack of Irish or UK legislation that would facilitate the overturning of the existing jurisprudence' (TENI, *Dr Lydia Foy*, 2021). Foy appealed this to the Supreme Court in 2003 and later made a new application in 2005; she was refused both times. In 2007, Foy finally won the right to change her birth

certificate to reflect her gender identity, suggesting that Ireland was continuing to adopt dated policies, and 'not recognising the rights of [transgender] people five years ago when most other EU countries were doing so' (Bray, 2007). In 2010, the Gender Recognition Advisory Group was established 'to advise the Minister for Social Protection on the legislation required to provide for legal recognition by the State of the acquired gender of [transgender people]' (TENI, *Dr Lydia* Foy, 2022).

In 2006, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) was founded, with the mission 'to improve conditions and advance the rights and equality of trans people and their families'. It is an Irish non-profit organisation which provides advocacy 'across legal, medical, societal and political structures that ensure that policy development and legislative reform reflects the positive recognition of trans inclusion, rights and equality.' (TENI, 2021). It also seeks to educate through providing workshops and trainings that increase awareness, understanding and inclusion. Finally, it seeks to support the 'well-being of trans people and their families by providing support that mitigates common experiences of isolation, misunderstanding and exclusion.' Over the sixteen years that TENI has operated, they have published various reports such as the *STAD (Stop Transphobia and Discrimination)* report which raises awareness of transphobic hate crimes, and *Speaking from the Margins*, which reported on trans mental health and wellbeing in Ireland. The latter report notes that almost 80% of participants in the survey had considered suicide, with half of those responders having attempted suicide. TENI's most recent report, *The post-primary school experiences of transgender and gender diverse youth in Ireland* (2020) articulates post-primary school experiences of transgender and gender diverse youth in Ireland. Topics include uniforms, bathrooms, physical education and educational barriers.

In 2015, 62% of Irish citizens passed a referendum on same-sex marriage. Following this, the Gender Recognition Act was passed in 2015 and Dr Lydia Foy was the first person to be legally recognised by this Act. This law states that one can make an application for a gender recognition certificate if they are over the age of eighteen and are not married or a civil partner. There is a limitation in that non-binary and intersex people are not eligible to apply for a gender recognition certificate as the law only allows a person to be recognised with regard to the gender binary. Since 2015, there have been attempts to review the Gender Recognition Act to include non-binary and intersex people, and to reduce the age specification to include older teenagers who wish for their gender to be recognised:

'Today, we call on the Government to listen to and act on the lived experiences of the trans community and the

expertise of this robust consultation process. We urge them to take action to address these serious shortcomings that impact the everyday lives of the trans community.' (Philips & Griffith, TENI, *Gender Recognition Review Report*, 2019).

Irish Popular Music Context

The timeline of popular music in Ireland from the 1970s to the present is an important precursor to the survey and interview analysis. This provides a background to the topic of transgender people in music and in history. There is a level of mainstream canonicity used to identify the central performers important to the context surrounding how Ireland appreciates music. Desler (2013, 388) defines mainstream canonicity as artist's whose:

> popularity lasts long periods of time, their popularity extends beyond the end of their active careers, they have continuous commercial success, continuous visibility, a consistently high level of fan activities and their music stays in the collective memory.

It is this definition that will be used in order to provide context surrounding a mainstream popular music history in Ireland.

The 1970s are regarded as a continuation of the first wave of Irish rock music which Cullen (2012, p.5) states began in 1968 and ended in 1978: 'By the end of the 1960s, rock was well established as the dominant expression of youth oriented popular music production and consumption across the island of Ireland'. This ten-year period was exemplified by the success of Van Morrison, (following the release of his first solo album *Astral Weeks* in 1968), Rory Gallagher and *Thin Lizzy's* Phil Lynott. *Thin Lizzy* was formed in 1969, and their music generated international recognition with songs such as 'The Boys are Back in Town' in 1976. *Thin Lizzy* is regarded as 'the first internationally successful Irish rock band' that 'helped to pave the way for artists like Bob Geldof and U2' (Horan, 2006). Bob Geldof was a member of the *Boomtown Rats*, which started in the mid-1970s following a decline in the popularity of rock music. Geldof was intent on changing the popular music scene in Ireland, in response to a lack of studios, popular music magazines or gig opportunities. 'He had organised the so-called 'Falling Asunder' tour … in an attempt to open up an alternative gig circuit outside Dublin that was different to the ballrooms of the showbands' (McLaughlin & McLoone, 2012, p. 122). The *Boomtown Rats* returned to the origins of rock music in an R&B style in their performance, going against 'a place where ambition and talent were denigrated' (Ibid., p. 119). At the same time, the late 1970s marked the emergence of punk rock. The *Boomtown Rats* have mostly been regarded as an 'unfashionable catch-up punk band' (Ibid., p. 119). The perceived anarchy and

anger of the punk movement was particularly resonant in Northern Ireland, offering a 'temporary interruption to the ubiquity of Troubles-based narratives in young people's lives' (Mangaoang, O'Flynn, Ó Briain, 2021, p. 5). *The Undertones*, for example, formed in 1975 in Derry and one of their most well-known songs, 'Teenage Kicks', charted in 1978. Despite their apolitical songs, their music offered a means of uniting Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Alongside this, popular music culture in Ireland, was emerging RTÉ 2FM, the first Irish station to feature popular music, was created in 1979 alongside *Hot Press*, a popular music magazine, founded in 1977 (Mangaong, O'Flynn, Ó Briain, 2021).

The 1980s represents greater genre diversification, with artists such as U2, Aslan, Johnny Logan and Enya prominent in the cultural zeitgeist. 'U2 became the first Irish group to go global' (Watson, 2021, p. 42) emerging 'from the aftermath of punk, especially the movement's "back-to-basics", "do-it-yourself" ethos' (Hebdige, 1979, p. 112). U2's career was supported by the fact that *Hot Press* magazine narrated their musical emergence. For the first time, an Irish fan was able to engage with personal accounts of a home-grown band that was clearly on their way to success (McLaughlin & McLoone, 2012). Enya exemplified a hybrid sound conflating traditional Irish and popular influences. Enya's solo career (initiated in 1982) marked 'the emergence of the first female popular musicians to receive international prominence' (Mangaoang, O'Flynn, Ó Briain, 2021, p. 7). Enya's chart successes such as 'Orinoco Flow' (1998) was sampled by various successful artists in later decades such as The Fugees and Rihanna. McLaughlin & McLoone in *Folk-Rock-Trad Hybrids* (2012, p. 61) suggest that Enya was one of the artists responsible for developing the Celtic sound 'into "new age" ambience, resulting in atmospheric "chill out" music or somnambulant "musak"/elevator music'.

> Formed in 1982, Aslan are a five-piece band who espouse guitar-driven, plain-talking, no-frills rock sensibilities. Fronted by singer and lyricist Christy Dignam (b. 1960), they teetered on the brink of international stardom before setbacks such as Dignam's descent into heroin addiction prompted their dissolution in 1988.
> (Watson, 2021, p. 50)

During the 1980s, there was a manufactured rivalry between U2 and Aslan, with Aslan positioned as appealing to the working class, reflected in the lyrics and origins in the socially deprived communities of Finglas and Ballymun (Dignam, 2004).

The 1990s continued to produce Irish artists capable of achieving international success in various genres. The Cranberries, Sinéad O'Connor and Boyzone are associated with this decade, as are lesser-known artists such as Gregory Gray/Mary Cigarettes and Zrazy emerging

as some of the first representations of LGBTQ+ Irish popular artists. In 1992 Sinéad O'Connor's notorious appearance on Saturday Night Live, where she ripped up a picture of Pope John Paul II, denotes the power of the artist to make statements extending beyond those expressed through music.[1] In an entirely different respect, the emergence of boybands in Irish popular culture offered other perspectives on identity. Boyzone (formed in 1993) were 'heavily marketed on their youthful appearances and heteronormative masculinity (Mangaoang, O'Flynn, Ó Briain, 2021, p. 7) with many chart successes, including six UK Chart No. 1 singles and five UK Chart No. 1 albums. Stephen Gately, a member of the group, was forced to publicly come out after pressure from the press. Shane Lynch, while appearing in Celebrity Big Brother (2018), explained 'They said to him, "Look, you can tell your story, or we are going to print your story". It nearly destroyed him; it really nearly destroyed him. And then he did it, he came out.' (Shane Lynch, Celebrity Big Brother, 2018). Zrazy was influential for women and LGBTQ+ rights in Ireland, as was Gregory Gray.[2] Gray is referred to by McLaughlin and McLoone (2012, p.254) as 'Ireland's first pop/rock star to acknowledge publicly his homosexual identity.' His reinvention under the persona 'Mary Cigarettes' was an interesting statement on both musical and personal terms, presenting an artist who 'does not easily fit into domination conceptions of Irish rock, aesthetically, generically or indeed representationally' (Ibid., p. 263).

The 2000s are defined by a shift 'to a second wave of Irish folk-inspired, rock-infused balladeers. A succession of street musicians made the transition from busking on Dublin's Grafton Street to signing lucrative record deals' (Mangaoang, O'Flynn, Ó Briain, 2021, p. 8). This included artists and bands such as Paddy Casey, The Script and The Coronas. Lea's (2000) review of Paddy Casey in The Irish Times states that:

> 'In the general scheme of things, Casey might not seem a suitable candidate for mainstream success, but the sheer quality of his songs and his hard-as-nails approach counter such a notion. Undoubtedly, the only way is up.'

It wasn't until his second album, '*Living* which featured the hit 'Saints and Sinners', where Casey 'became the biggest seller in Ireland out-selling U2' (Whelanslive.com, 2021). The Script debuted in 2008 with their first album, which topped the charts and sold over 600,000

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[1] See Aileen Dillane (2021) for an exploration of Sinéad O'Connor's public challenge to prevailing Catholic discourses in Ireland during her career.

[2] See Hanlon (2021) for a discussion of Zrazy and their contribution through music to discourses of social change surrounding women's rights and LGBT+ rights in Ireland.

copies (OhAliceMonster, 2010). Songs such as 'The Man Who Can't Be Moved', peaked at number 2 in the UK singles charts. In an interview with Smooth Radio, O'Connor (2019) is informed by Danny O'Donoghue, lead singer of the Script, that:

> 'The song was about true emotion and true love and not having, in a day where a lot of people would be able to buy somebody back or give them enough flowers to win them back. What happens to the people who don't have money? What do they do?'.

The 2010s has continued to demonstrate increasing diversity in Irish popular music with acts such as Hozier and SOAK.

> 'As of 2019, the Irish Recorded Music Association charts remain dominated by international recording acts … These circumstances suggest the gap is widening between local scenes, music industries, and international media oligopolies.' (Mangaoang, O'Flynn, Ó Briain, 2021, p. 8).

Echoing O'Connor's earlier public condemnation of the Catholic Church, Hozier's 'Take Me To Church' in 2014 is a critique 'of the Catholic Church's influence on Irish culture up to that point, interweaving liturgical language with references to a lover pitched against a violent video highlighting attacks against the gay community' (Ibid.., p. 8). The single reached number 1 in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Columbia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the US. Hozier's first album provided plenty of social commentary such as 'Cherry Wine' discussing domestic abuse and 'In a Week' about a couple found dead in The Wicklow Mountains.

There have been initiatives moving to reward and encourage bands and artists residing on the island of Ireland, such as the Choice Music Prize. In 2015, the recipient was SOAK, a rising musician included in Mangaoang, O'Flynn and Ó Briain's (2021, pp. 1-12) history of Irish popular music. SOAK's career is in its early stages, with two albums released at the time of writing: 'Before We Forgot How to Dream' (2015) and 'Grim Town' (2019). What makes them very relevant to the context of this thesis is an announcement they made on social media on the 28 June 2020: 'now seems as good a time as any to say my preference is they/them please and thank you' (soaksoaksoak, Instagram, 2020). SOAK's recognition in the Choice Music Prize, and in an academic history of popular music in Ireland, suggests a cultural shift in acknowledgement of and appreciation for trans artists. Kitt Philippa, a prominent northern Irish non-binary artist, has had three of their first singles nominated for Best Song by the Northern Irish Music Prize and their release of *Human* in 2019 was later the winner of Best Album in the Northern Ireland Music Prize 2020. Both SOAK and Kitt Philippa are prominent examples of trans visibility on the island of Ireland.

Popular Music Genres that were frequently mentioned in Chapter 5

It is of importance to define some of the key genres central to the lives of the participants surveyed and interviewed in this research. These genres are punk, hyperpop, and industrial music. In particular, the three genres focused on came up most prominently in the later chapters of this thesis. Genre, as defined by Tagg (2012, p.266), consists of particular types of language (lyrics, paralinguistics, meta discourse, etc.), gesture, location, clothing, personal appearance, social attitudes and values, as well as modes of congregation, interaction, presentation and distribution.

One primary aspect of punk music is the ethics of DIY or do-it-yourself, manifesting intent to function as an alternative to mainstream music and societal convention. Moran (2021, p.58) discusses how:

> The punk movement is often viewed as a youth culture based on teen adolescence angst. However, punk as a subculture goes much further than rebellion and fashion as punks generally seek an alternative lifestyle divergent from the norms of society.

Punk has a devoted fanbase in Ireland and has served as a template for other genres, such as hyperpop which also has a DIY aspect.

There are examples of transgender musicians in punk's music history, but trans erasure is a common feature in punk's history. There is a queer oriented punk scene known as Queercore, which 'emerged a few years earlier [than riot grrl] and in fact inspired the zines and music of Riot Grrrl groups' (Nault, 2018, p. 214). Nault reports that scholarship on queercore has been spotty to date and that there is yet to be a 'comprehensive scholarly account of queercore itself'. (Nault, 2018, p. 214). Jayne County is a prominent example of a transgender person in punk mentioned by Szpilka (2021). County is a trans punk musician who was arrested after assaulting Handsome Dick Manitoba with a microphone stand after he called her 'queer'. Bands such as Blondie and The Ramones played at a fundraiser for her bail and there was a 'remarkable display of solidarity' (Szpilka, 2021, p. 122) from the punk community, but this still 'failed to enter the punk legendarium, contributing to the tendency to cast punk as having always been masculinist'. Alekszandra Rokvity (2020, p. 80) discusses how 'The punk and post-punk movements have challenged gender norms and aimed to reveal the constructedness of gender through gender-bending fashion statements and cross-dressing.' In particular, how 'it is still considered subversive if men appropriate female clothing and products to challenge hegemonic conceptions of gender' (p. 15). Themes of cross-dressing in music will be explored again in the archives chapter.

Hyperpop is a broad term which includes various subgenres and artists. Battan (2021)) highlights PC Music, a collective of artists who began releasing tracks online in 2014, as one origin point of the hyperpop movement. Battan describes hyperpop music as 'unified by a bludgeoning irreverence, beats with breakneck tempos, and a maximalist electronic production style that sounds like it was designed to blow out speakers, or to be played on ones that are already damaged'. Hyperpop is associated with DIY approaches with websites such as SoundCloud acting as outlets for early hyperpop artists to share their music. The word 'absurd' is a prominently featured in discussions of the genre. Madden (2021) argues that Hyperpop is exaggerated and accelerated pop music; it takes the more traditional ideas of pop music and deconstructs or intensifies its more identifiable elements, it mocks the structures and boxes of pre-existing genres and in itself, refuses to be defined. It is genre-less music.

Industrial music is a rather ambiguous term, with very little academic research to draw upon. One of the only definitions to date is offered by Woods (2007) who describes industrial as 'the most abrasive and aggressive fusion of rock and electronic music' featuring experiments using 'tape music, musique concrete, white noise, synthesizers, sequencers, etc.' It is regarded by Klett and Gerber (2014) to be characterised by abrasive frequencies and profuse volume. Woods explains that 'as industrial evolved, its Avant Garde influences became far less important than its pounding, relentless, jackhammer beats, which helped transform it into a darker alternative to the hedonism of mainstream dance music.' Its beats are the most pertinent musical characteristic for establishing a working model definition of the genre itself. One of the participants in the interviews is an industrial musician involved in noise music and in the industrial goth scene. Noise music, referred to by *Future Music Magazine* (2021), is a form of experimental music with characteristics such as distortion, non-musical sounds, atonality and dissonance.

In conclusion, this chapter offers both the social and musical contexts needed to interpret the primary data in later chapters. With the progression of social and legal rights in Ireland is a parallel movement in music towards artists such as SOAK and Kitt Philippa. Music functions as both a reflection of society and a mode of instigating change.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This literature review covers areas of social and cultural history in Ireland and popular music history in Ireland, as both of these areas intersect in addressing the research question of this thesis. It also covers queer archival research outside of Ireland in order to gain perspective on queer research in other cultural contexts.

Social and cultural history in Ireland transects multiple academic disciplines. *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Volume 4, 1880 to the Present* (2018) is indicative of the comprehensive study of Ireland's history in this respect. This literature review focuses on two subthemes under social and cultural history: the rise and fall of Catholicism and cultural change.

Ó Corráin's work, *Catholicism in Ireland, 1880-2015: Rise, Ascendancy and Retreat* (2018), is a comprehensive history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Written in chronological order, Ó Corráin notes that:

> In retrospect, the first four decades of independent Ireland were an exceptional era.
> For the first time in centuries, the Irish Catholic Church found itself without a rival institution
> … and it consequently enjoyed unprecedented influence and power.
> (Ó Corráin, 2018, p. 915)

Given the extensive negative press on the Church in recent decades, it is important to acknowledge the value of Ó Corráin's more objective lens. The author notes the positive ways in which the Church was an integral aspect of Irish identity and part of the formation of a Republic, whilst also reflecting on the more problematic issues associated with authority and power (school systems and the role of women in particular). The study ends in 2015, addressing the same-sex marriage referendum in a single sentence. Understandably, queer history is not the focus of the work. However, considering the significant impact of the Catholic Church on perceptions of LGBTQ+ people in Ireland, it is unfortunate that the referendum is not addressed in more detail. Published two decades earlier, Dunphy's *Sexual identities, national identities: the politics of gay law reform in the Republic of Ireland* (1997) also discusses Catholicism in Ireland but with specific focus on the Catholic Church's attitude towards gay people. This article narrates the experiences of catholicism and homosexuality in the 1970s and 1980s where more liberal ideas such as abortion, divorce and homosexuality were emerging in both cultural and legal terms. What is particularly interesting is how Dunphy aligns the failed abortion and divorce referendums as influences behind the success of decriminalising homosexuality. Fianna Fáil were perceived as 'a traditionalist, Catholic force', decriminalising homosexuality 'implied little cost for the party' but resistance 'left Fianna Fáil open … and might allow its Labour Party

coalition partners to pose as the socially liberal carriers of the Mary Robinson banner' (Ó Corráin, p. 250). Though of course, this is an article that discussed sexual identities and Catholicism specifically, it is relevant to consider the fact that this article was published twenty years before Ó Corráin's work and yet, assertively articulates a connection between gender rights and the decline of the Church. Ó Corráin analysed a much wider time-frame but addressed the women's movement extensively without reference to queer rights or identities. A more accurate history would be inclusive of all identities impacted by the power and control of the Church and that played a role in fighting for social change in Ireland.

Paul Rouse's *Popular Culture in Ireland, 1880-2016* offers an illuminating timeline of changing culture in Ireland. He argues that 'modern popular culture is the product of both the accretion of change and the deepening of traditions over time' (Rouse, 2018, p. 757). The book is divided into four time periods (1880-1920, 1920-1945, 1945-1970 and 1970-2016), and addresses many issues, but what is particularly relevant is its focus on music as a central element in the shaping of popular culture. Rouse (p. 757) discusses how 'commercialisation, growth in disposable income, and revolutions in education and health' are influencing factors behind the development of popular culture with wealth denoting 'the capacity of people with money to shape the world as they have wished … everywhere to be seen in popular culture'. Another major issue in popular culture is the association with alcohol consumption, rising by '47 per cent in Ireland during the 1990s and increased again in the new millennium' (Ibid., p. 755). Alcohol consumption in popular culture is therefore a potentially pertinent consideration in appraising transgender music scenes. This book unfortunately has a similar issue to Ó Corráin's in that queer culture is overlooked in history.

In *Changing History: The Republic and Northern Ireland since 1990* (2017), Parker assesses changing culture in a different way, pointing to the election of Mary Robinson (and later Mary McAleese) as the catalyst for progressive change in Ireland: 'She had an impressive record of successful advocacy behind her, and had been preoccupied with women's rights since the early 1970s and gay rights in the 1980s' (Ibid., p. 6). Her presidency was a time when Ireland was engaging in conflict over contraceptives, AIDS, the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the legalisation of divorce, the uncovering of the scandals in the church and the peace process in the north. Parker's focus on 1990-2007 is comprehensive in its discussion of the social and cultural shifts on the island of Ireland. What is important here is how queerness is an integral part of this history. What is useful about this content is that it is not all about queer history and it is not without queer history; it integrates queer historical moments with the larger

social and cultural history of Ireland. Overall, there is a point to be made in that queer history is often divided from Irish history, a feature present in literature addressing both themes. The purpose of this project is to document the musical lives of transgender people but there is an incentive to be aware of the fact that transgender people should not be entirely separated from larger movements and social shifts.

Irish queer scholarship is currently attempting to address the 'varied and unequal positions and feelings in academia and through research and teaching encounters' experienced by queer academics elsewhere (Taylor, 2018, pp. 71-72). However, it is an issue that has increasing scholarly engagement in more recent years. A particular interest is in creating a timeline of queer history (or case studies of specific decades) based on findings from the Irish Queer Archive and other sources such as interviews. This literature review discusses themes of queering visibility, queering identity and queering politics. The six authors are Kerrigan (2018), Perryman (2019), Corr (2020), Conrad (2001), Casey (2018) and McDonagh (2017).

In terms of queering Irish visibility, Kerrigan (2018) in *Queering in the Years: Gay Visibility in the Irish Media, 1974-2008* is a ground-breaking study which analyses Irish queer visibility and perceptions of queer identity in Irish media. In particular, the first chapter ''Lavender Flying Columns' and 'Guerrila Activism': The Politics of Gay Visibility' provides important insights concerning gay rights and the fact that visibility does not mean equality. Within this chapter, Kerrigan effectively gathers a balanced set of arguments behind visibility as both positive and negative. In some ways, visibility of queer people in Irish media has resulted in perpetuating stereotypes such as the AIDS crisis which 'pedalled stereotypes of the gay community being a high-risk group' (p. 34). Any attempt at positive representation of queer topics, education or visibility of queer people in media was often portrayed in a scandalous manner. In the case of *The Late Late Show*, Kerrigan (p.39) refers to Orla Egan's appearance in 2006 where the show had someone positioned in the audience to make negative comments and evoke debate in order to maximise ratings. Kerrigan's analyses this through the lens of queer theory, linking events and portrayals of queer people to literature from seminal queer theorists such as Michel Foucault and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick which places the history of Ireland within the theoretical framework of queer theory. Kerrigan discusses invisibility in relation to lesbians, specifically referencing the AIDS crisis which dominated queer discourse in the 1980s and 90s. The limitations of this chapter are that there is no mention of transgender people. However, Kerrigan's work is a driving force in the advancement of queer studies that will direct research more specifically on transgender visibility.

Perryman's *Queering Pride: Walking Towards a Queer Future in Ireland* (2019) looks at queering history in a different context, instead focusing on the history that queer people have maintained and continue to share beyond mass media in a more intimate light, such as a walking tour. Perryman engages a very interesting argument which is highly relevant with today's changing attitudes towards the less visible minority identities within the LGBTQ+ community, actively seeking to re-balance the prioritisation of white, cisgender gay men as the dominant queer identity. Perryman discusses the move towards more inclusive walking tours that incorporate lesbian and bisexual women and transgender people within the canon of queer history. Perryman also notes the effectiveness of intimate walking tours in forging a political, informative community aspect that moves away from the associations of alcohol and partying with other Pride events. The most notable aspect of this literature is its mention of Alternative Pride and Trans Pride; these are recent aspects of Pride in Ireland, but their importance is significant in creating more visibility for other identities. These two authors take very different approaches in discussing queer history, but both establish a foundation for this thesis to expand on by focusing more on transgender visibility within Irish history.

Queering Irish identity is a difficulty because of the conflict between Irishness and queerness; often Irish queer people experience a completely different space to what is normally attributed to the stereotypical Irish culture. Corr's thesis entitled *Queer Identities During the Troubles in Northern Ireland: The Birth of Queer Theatre in Northern Ireland* (2020, p.16) discusses how nationalist and unionist queer people operated in the shadier spaces and the bomb risk spaces which were the only places they could congregate, but when they did 'they exchanged their tribal identities for their queer, perhaps more authentic identities'. Corr's research is interesting as it discusses the portrayal of queer identity in theatre during the time of The Troubles and analyses plays as a commentary of the queer experience during that time in Northern Ireland. It is relevant to see how queer identity emerged as an aspect of drama consumption in Northern Ireland during The Troubles. Clear limitations here are the evident focus on gay men but that is attributable to dominant attitudes at the time as opposed to a conscious disregard for other queer identities. Conrad discusses the division of queerness and Irishness in *Queer Treasons: Homosexuality and Irish National Identity* (2001). Conrad makes reference to several conflicts between queerness and Irishness such as Kieran Rose's *Diverse Communities: The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland* (1994), the treason trial of Roger Casement and the opposition between the New York City St Patrick's Day Parade and the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization. What is particularly interesting about this discussion is that traditional Irish values are analysed under the lens of stability and how homosexuality is

seen as an unstable force that would bring down the nation. Those three examples of how Irishness and queerness have conflicted are highly important as a precursor to understanding how cross-identity can be facilitated. The treason case of Roger Casement portrayed the treatment of queer people as villains in the early 20th century, with homosexuality used to prove his treason to the crown as a rebel. What is most interesting about this case is Casement's role as an Irish patriot, as it 'required that his homosexuality be pushed back into the closet or denied' (Conrad, 2001, p. 129). The final example of the division is the New York City St Patrick's Day's refusal to include the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation in the parade.[3]

> ILGO is an 'other- able' group, conveniently enough, and by excluding it physically from the parade, the AOH [Ancient Order of Hibernians] hopes to exclude the people it represents from the narrative of Irish and Irish-American identity.

> (Conrad, 2001, p.133)

In *Radical politics and gay activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1974-1990* Casey (2018) places Irish queer politics in a very interesting light, focusing on the political history of queer activism in a way that is not a linear progression of unity and strength towards legal reform but one that is in constant conflict with itself. The introduction of this article places queer activism within the theoretical framework of feminism, providing two branches: liberation and rights, as the two contending groups that would differ and contend on how exactly to achieve a better life for queer people in Ireland. The main topics addressed by Casey centre on gay isolationism, national liberation and the decline of activism during the AIDS crisis. These topics profile many organisations, including The Legion of Mary, the Irish Gay Rights Movement, The Sexual Liberation Movement, the National Gay Federation, the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Collective, Gay Defence Committee, Gays Against the Amendment, Gays Against Imperialism, Gay Health Action and Gay and Lesbian Equality Network. Arguably one of the most well-known activist groups from the 1980s is the National Gay Federation (NGF) who were portrayed by Casey as an organisation whose 'relevance gradually waned' (p. 14). Casey protects the NGF as the organisation who created the Irish Queer Archive, which of course deserves credit. Casey ends this article with a call for action to delve into queer history in Ireland in order to add the

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[3] Unfortunately, though this text is from 2001, there is still no progress on including queer people in the New York City Parade. Langan in *Timeline of the NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade's LGBT controversy* ends in 2020 where LGBT groups are still not allowed to march. Regardless of how old this paper is, the research in it is still highly relevant to the division between Irish identity and queer identity. Though this text only focuses on gay and lesbian identities, what will be interesting to explore is how transgender identity is received as one more marginalised and invisible in Irish society.

missing narratives from the story. For example, Casey (p.15) notes that 'A complete history of the movement across the island which integrates the kaleidoscopic reality of Ireland's LGBT past remains unwritten'. Overall, the history that Casey creates in this article helps in framing the context surrounding queer activism and the inherent contradictions within each community represented by LGBT advocacy.

McDonagh's *'Homosexuals Are Revolting' – Gay & Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland 1970s – 1990s* (2017) explores a similar timeline to Casey's article, but McDonagh extends discourse on political movements and protests to issues of community building, education and identity – the 'personal is political' (p. 77). McDonagh's work is innovative because it does not present David Norris, Dublin and the decriminalisation of homosexuality as the sole aspects of queer life in Ireland pre-1990s. Instead, there is examination of urban and rural spaces outside of Dublin, studies of other seminal activists and narratives of lesbian and bisexual women within queer history. An interesting point that McDonagh made in relation to music scenes is the identification of disco as a popular aspect of creating community, positioning this environment as a key part in the formation of a queer scene and a medium for political activism.[4] McDonagh's article references protests at the New York St Patrick's Day Parade's refusal to include queer people: 'A group of gay and mainly lesbian women in reaction to this ban marched in the Cork St. Patrick's Day parade. Singing Tom Robinson's anthem "Sing if you're glad to be Gay"' (p. 86).

There is evidence of an increased level of engagement with queer studies in Irish academia in recent years, with only one literature source pre-dating 2017. Whilst all of the works cited offer important and relevant historical contextualization, the inclusion of transgender experiences is not significant. This potentially raises the issue as to whether there are sufficient sources available in order to conduct research centred on transgender lives in Ireland. However, it is difficult to believe that there is no documentation of transgender people's existence in Ireland.

As this thesis is focused on a trans perspective, there is particular interest in exploring what elements of queer visibility are discussed in recent publications. This research looks particularly at Mangaoang, O'Flynn and Ó Briain's *Made in Ireland: Studies in Popular Music*

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[4] See also Hanlon (2022) for an exploration of the emergence of queer club culture in Dublin and its relationship with political activism in Ireland in the late 1970s and early 80s.

(2021) as a central contemporary source. It also focuses on the work of McLaughlin and McLoone.

The history of popular music in Ireland is an increasingly prominent feature of musicological discourse. Outputs often focus on particular scenes, performers and eras in popular music as opposed to literature which creates a timeline of popular music history. One of the most recent examples of a timeline of popular music is Mangaoang, O'Flynn and Ó Briain's *Popular Music in Ireland: Mapping the Field* which is the introductory chapter of *Made in Ireland: Studies in Popular Music* (2021), also edited by these three authors. This work is substantial in showing the overall evolution of Irish popular music, starting with geographical and historical context, moving into the emergence in the 1950s and progressing to more recent examples of popular musicians such as Hozier and SOAK. The limitations of this work are obvious in that it is brief (intended to serve only as an introduction). However, the fact that a non-binary music artist features even in this preliminary section is important to note as it perhaps indicates that popular music in Ireland may be moving towards a scene inclusive of transgender performers.

Rock and Popular Music in Ireland: Before and after U2 (2012) is a publication by Martin McLoone and Noel McLaughlin. The book is seminal, documenting a timeline of popular music in Ireland following the influence of the Rolling Stones and the Beatles all the way to U2's emergence and rise to international fame, and finishing around the 1990s with rave music, cabaret and performers such as Gregory Gray and Sinéad O'Connor. One inclusion of particular relevance to this research is The Virgin Prunes, whose performances often involved cross-dressing, an important example of inclusiveness in history. Though Virgin Prunes do not specifically identify as queer, the desire to disrupt the framework of popular music by using crossdressing as a part of their image in 1970s Ireland is resonant Overall, there is an impression of progressiveness from these writers where they sought to include more than the canon of popular music such as queer performers or performers who did not meet the social norms of their time. The only limitation in this overall timeline is that it has not been updated since 2012. This project aims to expand into subsequent years, whilst also acknowledging the role that pioneers such as The Virgin Prunes may have played in transgender music-making and consumption. In relation to scenes, several academics have explored underground sub-cultures, specifically the genres of punk and rave music. McLaughlin in *Bodies swayed to music: dance culture in Ireland* (2006) discusses the beginnings of rave music in Ireland and its role in creating alternative realities and spaces during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. McLaughlin positions the queer community as directly responsible for rave music with the gay club *Sides*

opening in Dublin in the mid-1980s. Predating this by six years is Flikkers which is situated by Hanlon as 'Dublin's first purpose-built gay nightclub … which was housed in the Hirschfield Centre at no. 10 Fowns Street in Temple Bar in Dublin from 1979 until 1987' (Hanlon, 2022, p. 26). This club was rooted initially in disco but progressed to house music in later years which shows an evolution of musical tastes of queer people into dance music. 'Sides is considered to have brought the clubbing scene to a whole new level in Ireland' (Hanlon, 2022, p. 32) However, little is said in terms of the success or popularity of the rave scene other than noting the hybridisation of genres including 'the pre-modern, the Celtic, the mystical, the spiritual, and so on'. (p. 78). Discussing rave music as a bridge between nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland is an interesting method of creating more unity within Irish people, which would also be an interesting aspect for transgender people partaking in this scene. The links to queerness with rave leads to a belief that transgender people more than likely engage in rave culture. Though rave culture is not referenced extensively in the primary data collated for this study, there are links with dance culture in alternative music scenes. It is of relevance to consider if dance culture facilitates or instigates transgender communities.

Punk music is another example of underground sub-culture or scene, but what is most prevalent is the DIY ethos which has been replicated and applied to many underground scenes. Ryan in 'Fit for Consumption? Fanzines and Fan Communication in Irish DIY Music Scenes' (2021) discusses the popularity of fanzines in Irish scenes which has faced a harsh decline in the last ten years with the rise of the internet. An obvious gap in this writing is any mention of Riot Grrrl or other queer punk movements which may be linked to a lack of development of these scenes coming forth in Ireland. The attention to detail with mentioning of several zines central to the canon of scene culture in Ireland alongside critique in relation to how true they stay to the ethos of DIY culture is an excellent contribution. Ryan (2021) also delves into physical zines versus e-zines and how online-created zines aided in the downfall and decline of zines, connecting to virtual scenes as a potential source of community building.

In relation to identity within popular music history, the intersections between popular music and Irish identity have at times been positioned as conflicting. McLaughlin and McLoone in *Hybridity and National Musics: The Case of Irish Rock Music* (2000) discuss this theme of otherness and popular music. The paper mainly focuses on hybridity, using Van Morrison, Horslips, The Pogues and Sinéad O'Connor as examples of artists who infuse a sense of Irish identity into their music despite a culture which values 'a deep essence of Irishness that withstands historical change' that is 'deeply imbued with the ideologies of the oppressor' (p. 182). Primarily looking at the essentialism of Irishness in identity that is reclaimed from, but

still defined by, outside influences who colonised the country. What is really interesting is when this is compared to Hogan's *Corkonian exceptionalism': identity, authenticity and the emotional politics of place in a small city's popular music scene* (2016). McLaughlin and McLoone discuss the impacts of colonisation on Ireland's popular music, whereas Hogan's Cork is a city that existed outside of the Pale and therefore felt a distant influence of British rule which makes the construction of Irish identity and popular music different. Hogan (p. 23) in particular discusses the feelings of 'otherness' within the Cork music scene as a positive in how the range of music is eclectic in genre and original which gives high levels of freedom for musicians who are 'untainted by "industry" and whose social practices are shaped by a collaborative ethos.' However, there are also negatives in how the scene is pushed to the side and considered inferior to the larger Dublin scene, which has been regarded by participants in Hogan's study as 'less authentic, less special, and less interesting' where the industries are accused of 'bias' and 'superficiality' (p. 23).

There is a highly complex structure of identity within Irish culture, as discussed by McLaughlin & McLoone and Hogan, but there is also a need to discuss that aspect of 'otherness' mentioned by Hogan in the work of O'Flynn's book chapter '"Other Voices" in Media Representations of Irish Popular Music' (2021). O'Flynn's work revolves around the hidden popular music singers in the country, the more alternative, less mainstream artists who do not receive as much attention, and the development of events such as Other Voices as pathways to elevate and create visibility for these musicians. The topic of otherness is highly relevant to this thesis, as otherness is something quite often associated with queer people and will relate quite well to the hidden voices of transgender music-makers in Ireland. There is definitely an importance to O'Flynn's work, as there are very few academic works that mention the more contemporary alternative music of Ireland and the hybridity of Irish music with certain performers such as Damien Rice, The Villagers and even smaller but important mention of Ye Vagabonds who offer an interesting take in the Irish folk tradition while also globalising with a sense of a more international folk sound. Where this work falls short is in the coverage of LGBTQ+ people and queerness within Other Voices. What is slightly ironic about this writing is the discussion of otherness and hiddenness in relation to 'suggestions of alterity, queerness and difference' (p. 154) along with other forms of how the terminology around other voices can be viewed, yet there is only a brief mention of 'artists and bands that associated themselves with LGBTQ issues and sensibilities' (p. 161). This is the only mention, there is no specification on who these artists or bands are. It is odd to discuss other voices while also not highlighting queer voices and instead just grouping them under 'artists and bands'. Other Voices as a festival

and brand may be an area of interest in this thesis to see if there is any transgender representation within the line ups and how they have been promoted within the festival.

Shifting the lens to queer research outside of Ireland is also very important to informing this project. In particular, archives that have been collected surrounding other country's data of LGBTQ+ people. Archives specifically aimed for the queer community are reflected by Cvetkovich as 'archives of emotion and trauma' (*An Archive of Feelings*, 2003, p. 242). This idea of emotion and trauma is reflected in how society has viewed the queer community in the past, the experiences that have shaped the community and the narrative that has been documented from those who have survived. What can be taken from this is that archival research in a queer context is very personal and not particularly shared by the other identities that make up the queer community. In this specific instance, a history of people who have existed in the dark corners of society is being researched by myself, a queer person who has grown up quite visibly and has not been subjected to the same emotion and trauma that has been felt by generations before. There is a sense of carefulness when engaging in a territory that cannot be examined in today's eyes but instead, must be looked at under the context of the time and place. Key authors that will inform queer archival literature are Jack Halberstam (2005), Marion Wasserbauer (2016), K.J. Rawson (2009) and Gina Watts (2018).

Halberstam's writing on *The Brandon Archive in In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) is important in creating this sense of queer archives under that first idea of queer archives as archives of emotion and trauma, as the central aim of creating the Brandon archive is to 'think of the murder of Brandon as less of a personal tragedy … and more of a constructed memorial to the violence directed at queer and transgender lives' (p. 23). In this context, the murder of Brandon Teena is used to analyse the wider area of Nebraska and its treatment of queer people, how that relates to social class and wider cultural norms present in Nebraska that resulted in the murder of a transgender man. This moves away from Brandon Teena and, instead of analysing his existence, the murderers are analysed with reference to document material in written and video formats. For example, the tattoo on one of the murderer's arms that is situated 'as a symbol of white supremacy politics' (p. 27). Returning to the introductory issue of carefulness when examining archival material, Halberstam reflects on this with an example of the negative impact being careless can have. Halberstam's bias of living in an urban area with preconceived ideas of bigotry and coldness in rural areas were attacked during a conference by audience members who were from small towns and rural areas

and were offended by the unfair linking of rural life with coldness and bigotry. There is a need to not overlook subconscious bias when analysing other people as this thesis is continued, as this can be a barrier in effectively documenting a narrative.

KJ Rawson offers an interesting perspective on archives when specifically referring to transgender people within archives. His work, *Accessing Transgender/Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics* (2009), discuss the issue of 'a significant amount of transgender people' potentially being 'anti-history, which can be at odds with the archives' task of preserving transgender materials in contexts that uniformly uplift history.' (p. 126). Anti-history is an interesting construct as it is defined in *ANTi-History: An Alternative Approach to History* (Durepos & Mills, 2018) as something that is not 'a rejection of history as accounts of the past, but rather a rejection of the idea of the past as knowable through history' (p. 431). This may be an obstacle in this project, as someone who is documenting a history of transgender music-makers in Ireland. There may be questions of how this history is constructed and who is informing this history, which is why it is important to give as many voices a chance to aid in documentation. Rawson also discusses the aspect of environmental accessibility when accessing archives, in a way that someone who is cisgender will never have to experience. Examples focus on bathrooms where there are single-user or gender neutral bathrooms available for transgender researchers, if these are not available and are policed then this means that transgender researchers can only access the facility for a short time. What is also problematic about archival research is that it is looking at history from a middle-class perspective that simplifies the very diverse language of gender ambiguity into one archival language that places names on identities which are not used by the people. This makes it difficult to research topics because on one side, labelling identities as transgender would make it difficult for those identities to research their lineage while also not labelling them as transgender would isolate them from findings on gender ambiguity which would leave an impression that transgender people are not as well documented. In one interview with an archivist, Rawson details that outdated language and all forms of key-words relating to gender ambiguity are placed into searches looking for transgender people when even this can produce very little material – whereas files in other sections such as 'Chinese Immigration' or 'Police Files' provide a lot of material on gender ambiguity but it is not catalogued in a recognisable way for research relating to transgender identities. (p. 134).

Marion Wasserbauer's research on the collection of oral histories and archives proves importance to this project, as they return to the original idea of queer archives as archives of emotion and trauma. However, it is seen in the work of Wasserbauer how these archives do not necessarily have to focus on trauma, but can work on celebrating the life of queer people and narrating their lives through music. Wasserbauer's four oral histories reflect on a twenty six year old, twenty five year old, thirty six year old and fifty one year old which creates a diverse set of perspectives all guided through their love of music. How Wasserbauer frames these interviews is by not setting any structured questions and instead, using what the interviewee has been asked to bring with them (songs, music memorabilia, etc.) to guide the narration of the interviewee's life. In this regard, Wasserbauer views herself as not the archivist documenting history but as the co-archivist with the interviewee who is living and making their own history. This is something that is very influential for this project, as it is not intrusive on the history and allows for personal history to be narrated in order to create a collective memory of history within one place, Flanders in Belgium. Wasserbauer's research is a template that can be interpreted in an Irish example and potentially be applied to the musical lives of transgender people in Ireland.

Overall, the literature on the field of popular music history is starting to show more queer visibility but there is a serious gap with very few authors actively contributing content that specifically pertains to queer artists and audiences. What can be seen across the four themes is that there is a lot of content that can be drawn on and that Ireland has a rich history of popular music, the gap is that there are few to no trans performers mentioned within the context of popular music history other than an example of SOAK made by Mangaong, O'Flynn and Ó'Briain (2021). Throughout the current accounts of Irish popular music history there are no visible trans music-makers. This project works on highlighting transgender music-makers in the last decade alongside exploring transgender music consumption and how that has differed from or stayed in-line with Irish popular music canon.

Chapter 4: Reading Between The Lines: Archives and Transgender Music-Makers

4.1 Chapter Introduction

In America, the jazz musician Billy Tipton was discovered to be assigned female at birth (AFAB) after his death in 1989. As previously discussed in Chapter 1 Queer Theory, Tipton received attention in the discussion of gender-ambiguous people before terms such as transgender were defined. Jurich, in *The Female Trickstar* (2004), refers to Tipton as someone who assumed a male disguise in order to advance their musical career. Though it is not possible to determine whether Tipton was transgender or opting to assume a disguise in performance, Halberstam (2005, p.48) relates that 'all must be read and remembered according to the narratives they meticulously circulated about themselves when they were alive.' Another public figure who received similar treatment was Willmer Broadnax, who was also discovered to be AFAB after his death. He was a gospel singer described by Pennington (2018, p.124) as 'a black heterosexual man who was comfortable … being associated with black women's performance techniques. And he did this in a subgenre discomfited by women's vocal power while being a stealth trans man'. Though Broadnax and Tipton represent cases of being outed after their deaths, Katey Red is an active transgender rapper whose career began in the late 1990s. Red is associated with sissy bounce music, a style of New Orleans hip hop. Katey Red argues that sissy bounce is 'bounce music, it's just sissies doing it' (Berk, 2010). The primary difference in lived experiences of Katey Red compared to Tipton and Broadnax is that Red identified publicly as transgender whereas both Tipton and Broadnax lived their lives hiding their assigned sex, otherwise known as living in stealth. These are examples of three different performers who are all prominent examples of gender ambiguity in American cultural history over the past one hundred years. Are there comparable examples in the context of Irish cultural production? This chapter investigates the historical documentation of transgender people and transgender music consumption in Ireland from the 1970s up to the 2010s.

4.2 Archival Sources

The archival sources which inform this search are the Irish Times Digital Archive, Irish Newspaper Archives, GALE's Archives of Sexuality and Gender, The Irish Queer Archive, The Irish Trans Archive, the RTÉ Archives and the Cork LGBT Archives. Whilst a number of these resources are accessible online, COVID-19 restrictions have meant that access to the physical documentation in The Irish Queer Archive and The Irish Trans Archive has not been possible, since these have yet to be digitised. The most useful archival source examined thus far has been GALE's Archives of Sexuality and Gender as it contains content which may parallel resources in the Irish Queer Archive and Irish Trans Archive, including 26 issues of GCN from the 1990s and 66 issues of GCN from the 2010s. The 2000s issues of GCN were analysed in the National Library of Ireland's reading room from the Irish Queer Archive. The Irish Times and Irish Newspaper Archives are excellent in providing context, particularly in relation to how transgender people have been viewed in Irish society. The Cork LGBT Archives and the RTÉ Archives, though relatively small in comparison to other resources, do provide relevant information on transgender history and are mentioned later in this chapter. Overall, these are the archives that have informed findings in an effort to trace transgender music history in Ireland.

The content from *Gay Community News* (GCN) accessed from the archive was limited to 26 magazines from the 1990s, which span the course of a six-year publication period, and then 66 back issues of GCN referring to 2013-2019. Unfortunately, there is little mention of transgender people within the earlier issues. There are brief references to transgender people in the post box section where readers could pay for a small slot to review past articles, or to send short messages looking for love, friends, accommodation, etc. There is mention of a National Trans Line throughout the 1990s that operated on Thursdays from 8-10pm, and references to different events of relevance including an appearance on the Gay Byrne show featuring people who inject testosterone in order to create "a whole new sex" which was reported on the Media watch section of the November 1994 issue (p. 8). There was also mention of the Queers Resources Directories which was an electronic archive mentioned in GCN's August 1994 issue. This was defined as a new library where one could learn about lesser-known identities at the time, such as bisexual and trans people. In the April 1997 issue there is mention of *Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits* (1996) by Loren Cameron which shows that GCN have endeavoured to provide connections beyond those of the gay community. With one or two mentions of transgender people, most of the 44 pages are about venues, stories and events

specific to gay and bisexual male culture with some sections for lesbian and bisexual women. It is safe to assume, based on the content of GCN during this six-year period, that transgender people were not a significantly acknowledged presence even within the LGBTQ+ community. This aligns with John Aravosis's 2007 findings that it was only in the late 1990s in America that the term LGBT was initially used. The 2000s issues, located in the Irish Queer Archive, showed a changing time in Ireland as there are more prominent examples of transgender people appearing in the media actively speaking for themselves (GCN, 2000-2009). However, the majority of these articles are from other countries, with no Irish examples present. This evolution of GCN from the 1990s through the 2000s can be clearly shown in the September 2013 issue which features Laverne Cox on the cover, a transgender actress on the show *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019). As will be discussed later in this chapter, GCN became a driving force in advocating for transgender people in Ireland and giving trans people a platform in order to actively speak for themselves. Though GCN no longer has their post box feature or their discussions due to the rise of the internet and access to a multitude of social features, GCN now has a comparable online community presence. No longer confined to releasing monthly issues, it now shares smaller news articles online and has digital copies of all issues from 2013 onwards online for free.

Richard Ekins is the founder of the Transgender Archive in the University of Ulster which was active from 1986-2010. The Transgender Archive is the first collection in the world on transgender identity to be housed within a university. Ekins has discussed (May 1989, p.11) how 'there seemed to be a need for somebody to collect as much material as possible, without fear or favour, and seek to make it available to all.' Ekins' archival findings extend to the chronology of terminology surrounding trans people, the history of transgender people in a non-medical, sociological context and specific academics who identified within the trans community such as Dr Virginia Prince.[5] It must be noted that Ekins' research is not specific to the island of Ireland despite being based on the island; a wide range of data from numerous locations was gathered and this made it more difficult to find data relating to Ireland. The main reason for this is the fact that Americans led the way in promoting trans visibility. Ekins' work is an important resource as it documents how trans people have been perceived in society from

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[5] Dr Virginia Prince was an academic in America who was assigned male at birth and identified as female, beginning by dressing in female clothing in secret until she finally began publicly living in her true identity in the 1950s. She was an activist for trans people and even appeared on television. Ekins has extensively researched Virginia Prince, which was an example of early gatherings of trans people in the 1950s and 1960s and early activism that would lead to much greater visibility of trans people.

1986 to 2010. One of his books, *Male Femaling*, explores 'the innermost desires and the varied practices of males who wear the clothes of women for the pleasure it gives them (cross-dressers), or who wish to change sex and are actively going about it (sex-changers).' This suggests that Ekins is concerned with exploring the cultural and sociological history of trans people, as opposed to the clinical or medical chronology which tended to dominate research in the 80s. However, Ekins is not without controversy; GCN author Áine Keenan in 1997 critiqued his work *Male Femaling* as 'voyeuristic, patronising and covertly homophobic' (Keenan, March 1997, p. 37) , suggesting that his research is 'reducing the complex issues of gender, sex and sexuality to a scale of eroticisation and fetishism' Regardless of how the archive is realized in academic outputs, it represents an important collection as the first transgender archive on the island of Ireland. In 2010 the archive ceased to be associated with the University of Ulster and was donated to the University of Victoria in Canada. Ekins is now a Fellow at the Royal Society of Arts in London.

Sara R. Phillips is the chair of Transgender Equality Network Ireland and the founder of the Irish Trans Archive which was founded in 2016. What potentially differentiates her from other archivists in this section is that she is a transgender person. She has been a human rights activist for over forty years and played a leading role in negotiating Gender Recognition in 2015 (TENI, 2021). Phillips is also involved in music; she was a member of The Ladygardeners of Yore with transgender singer Deanna Alexandria. Phillips' contribution to transgender history in Ireland is widely acknowledged by LGBTQ+ organisations. The Irish Trans Archive is not yet public as it is still in its infancy which has unfortunately meant that this archive could not be used for the purposes of this research. She has contributed to other archives including the Cork LGBT Archive and the new Queer-in-progress Archive. The Cork LGBT Archive is considered in this chapter as it contains some data on transgender people before the 2000s, mainly the group Friends of Eon, documented primarily from the findings of Sara R Phillips. The Irish Trans Archive will hopefully soon be digitised and will serve to provide more accessible resources for transgender studies in Ireland.

4.3 Documentation of Transgender People in Ireland

Transgender people in Ireland before the 2000s were often viewed negatively in public commentary. An article in *The Sunday World* (1985) by Eddie Rowley creates a disturbing and exaggerated narrative centred on a sex-worker named Debbie who was portrayed as a crossdresser essentially tricking men into homosexuality (see Figure 2a).

(Figure 2a: Sunday World, 1985)

This article uses many derogatory terms: 'The effeminate young man with the pansy step', 'the petite young man with the bleached blonde hair and make-up', 'the bizarre Wicklowman' (Hooker is Male, *Sunday World*, 1985). Homosexuality and cross-dressing are simultaneously categorized as identities to be distrusted and feared. In a second article, Rowley discusses how Debbie wants to have 'the sex-change operation done through the social welfare in England' (Why I Went, *Sunday World*, 1985). This creates further discriminatory allusions, wherein Debbie is someone who does not want to work and is instead someone on the dole who tricks and deceives men, and who takes government money to facilitate their subversive lifestyle. Unfortunately, in the pre-2000s, there was very little opportunity for transgender people to speak for themselves. *Summerhouse*'s (1980) episode 'Freedom to Be Yourself' was revolutionary for three particular reasons: it showed trans people on national Irish television at a time when this was completely unheard of; it portrays them in a positive light that does not ridicule or mark them as a threat; it allows trans people to speak for themselves. Cross-dressing, drag and transgender identity are all included in the commentary (see Figure 2b). The primary

differences between cross-dressing and drag are that drag is entirely performative and it is generally used as a form of entertainment, whereas cross-dressing is specifically because the person likes to wear the clothes and may want to present as that gender for their own personal reasons.

(Figure 2b: Summerhouse 1980, 'Freedom to Be Yourself')

An interview with trans woman Claire Farrell (Phillips, GCN.ie, *#TransgenderAwarenessWeek*, 2020) mentions membership and co-founding of an organisation called The Friends of Eon with another woman named Lola in the 1970s. This is the first known established transgender group in Ireland, and it served as a way for gender diverse people to connect and feel safe. The Friends of Eon are also mentioned in the Cork LGBT Archive, where Sara R Phillips has contributed a membership card from the group (see Figure 2c).

(Figure 2c: Phillips, Cork LGBT Archive)

Membership of The Friends of Eon were trans people and crossdressers who ran a weekly transgender club called Lola's Club in the Parliament Inn in Dublin from 1977-mid 1980s. Orla Egan (2016, p.6) writes about the Friends of Eon in *Queer Republic of Cork: Cork's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Communities 1970s-1990s* in which she recounts how 'transgender people often engaged with, and socialised within, the lesbian and gay communities, but their identities were often not explicitly acknowledged or respected.' This was a rationale for the formation of organisations such as the Friends of Eon. Here is evidence of an existing community of transgender people in Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s. There is also evidence of events by the Friends of Eon at the Irish Transgender Weekend in November 1980 at Killoskehane Castle in Tipperary (Egan, 2016, p. 26). Friends of Eon were mentioned in the *Sunday World* newspaper in 1983, in an informative article outlining the ethos of the organization, wherein people were provided with an opportunity to tell their own stories and provide insight into their own lives on topics such as nightlife environments, trans-related slang, the experiences of wearing clothes that fit your identity and positive exchanges with the garda. The article also includes a section on women's responses to their husbands coming out as trans with statistics showing that 'marriages involving [trans spouses] have no higher break-up rate than normal marriages' (p. 10). Farrell discussed how she began to withdraw from the organisation in the late 1980s because it was moving towards becoming a private club rather than a community organisation. The Friends of Eon ended in the late 1990s (Phillips, 2020). The Friends of Eon have largely remained on the periphery of the queer cultural canon despite having 'at least several hundred practising [trans people], ranging from the age of 16 to well over 60' in the Dublin branch in the 1980s (Des Ekins, Sunday World, 1983).

The 2000s were an important time for transgender people in terms of promoting visibility and engaging in activism. The defining moment at the start of the decade was the death of Dr Margaret O'Regan, who was a trans ally and 'one of just two medical professionals treating transsexuals in this country' (O'Brien, 2000). O'Regan had previously been censured by the Irish Medical Council for prescribing hormone therapy to transgender people in Ireland and was suspended from her practice for one month in 1998 as a result. She stated in 1999 that '50% of transsexuals – those born into the wrong sex – died through suicide or self-mutilation' and called for more attention to treating and helping trans people. Her death was a major loss for a community who were already struggling to receive medical aid in Ireland. Nicholas

Krivenko, a trans man, spoke about gender reassignment and how 'very few of us are fortunate enough to have the necessary medical coverage or personal fortune to cover these costs, thus prolonging the agony' (Krivenko, 2002). Krivenko also spoke about 'the ramifications and invariably negative reactions' that can be caused by presenting transgender identity 'to a predominantly hostile society' resulting in 'depression and ultimately, for many, suicide.' This hostility was felt in the response to Dr Lydia Foy's efforts to achieve gender recognition in Ireland. O'Hanlon's 2002 article describes Foy's efforts to change her birth certificate document as 'politically correct posturing' and describes Foy as someone 'playing the victim' despite having 'good fortune to live during the one period of human history when those who are burdened with the condition known as Gender Identity Disorder are able to seek amelioration of their psychiatric sorrows through the skill of the doctor's knife' (O'Hanlon, 2002). In the same year that TENI was founded, 2006, a newspaper article in the *Irish Independent* highlighted the Transgender Equality Network Ireland and the experiences of three trans women as they talked about their lives. Lynda shared her struggles with bullying in her youth and her battle with the HSE to fund her gender reassignment surgery despite having a medical card and a diagnosis. Sara discussed the physical and verbal abuse she received as a child for being feminine, and how she attempted suicide five times before finally deciding to seek medical help surrounding her gender identity. Tiffany had very different experiences as she was never bullied and never felt suicidal, but she was also twenty years younger than the other two participants. She sought to go to Thailand as it is cheaper there, and she could no longer wait for the HSE to fund gender reassignment surgery. In the GCN magazines of that time, there are few mentions of transgender people. On average, there are about five to nine mentions of transgender people in per year in GCN. This still demonstrated how invisible transgender people were at the time, with the majority of these mentions being in the letter section where a reader would call for more attention to be placed on transgender people or thanking the magazine for having one section on transgender people, or in the post box section where men were often looking to pursue sexual and romantic relationships with transgender people. The language these people used were either TV, which stood for 'transvestite', or crossdresser (see Figure 2d).
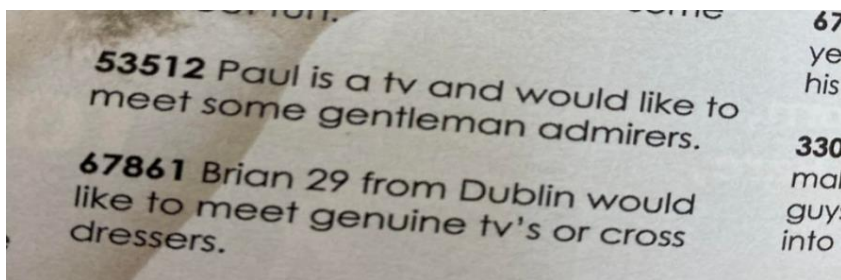
(Figure 2d: Postbox, July 2007)

Some examples of these post box exchanges include 'If there are any TV's cross dressers into S&M leave a message' (46127, Post box, September 2003) and 'Brian 29 from Dublin would like to meet genuine tv's or crossdressers' (67861, Post box, July 2007). There are examples of some transgender people pursuing these relationships as well: 'Paul is a tv and would like to meet some gentleman admirers' (53512, Post box, July 2007). The letters section, where readers could contribute their views on articles from the previous issue offered various opinions regarding transgender people. Declan Crotty's letter discusses how:

> 'I am a gay man, I am not transgendered. I feel that I have to make that distinction very clear because more and more I am lumped in under the same umbrella with people who were born into the wrong gender. I love being a man, I have no interest in changing gender' (Crotty, LGBT without the T?, Letters, July 2009)

Crotty's opinion garnered a response in the subsequent August issue from Deirdre O'Byrne:

> 'I am glad to see that Declan Crotty acknowledges that all trans people who are also L, G and B should be included in the community, especially since it is not possible for a trans person to have an attraction for another human being without someone, somewhere, considering them to be a homosexual … It isn't possible to be a challenge to society's attitudes towards gender without also being a challenge to attitudes towards sexual orientation. And that is why T belongs in the LGBT community.'   (O'Byrne, The T in LGBT, Letters, August 2009)

(Figure 2e: Buck The System, July 2007)

July 2007 was the only issue in the 2000s that featured a transgender person on the front cover. This was Buck Angel, 'the world's first [AFAB transgender] adult movie star' (July 2007, p. 13). The interview with Buck Angel (see Figure 2e) was very focused on his porn career and his identity as a trans person, with some invasive questions such as 'What age were you when you decided to live as a man?', and some offensive statements such as 'I have to admit that when I first saw a naked picture of you, I was a bit freaked out'. Despite what the interviewer was saying to him, he did not seem to mind which could reflect a difference in the culture, where some transgender people in the 2000s often just got used to these sorts of comments and questions. Despite this, the 2000s facilitated a major shift in visibility for transgender people.

(Figure 2f: GCN, Cover, September 2013)

The 2010s have seen far more celebration and visibility of transgender people, with many covers of Gay Community News magazine featuring high profile transgender people. In the September 2013 edition, there was a spotlight on *Orange is the New Black* star Laverne Cox who is a transgender woman (see Figure 2f). She spoke about the lack of opportunities for trans actors but how 'media representation of trans people is taking steps in the right direction' (p. 21). In the July 2014 edition, a transgender man discusses the problem with derogatory language directed at transgender people – 'those who want to keep on using the word "tranny" need to question why it's so important to them' (p. 25). Katherine Lynch also receives hate for her association with the show 'The Centre' which featured a transgender character named Nuala who was 'the butt of many jokes about her gender identity' (p. 37). Deirdre O'Byrne, inspired by the words of Panti Bliss, said: 'When strangers shout at me across the street the same jokes that are on this show, that feels oppressive. When Ireland's national broadcaster says to those

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of us who dare express our gender, that they consider our gender to be a legitimate target of ridicule, that feels oppressive' (p. 37). McCarthy (2014) focuses on Roisín, a transgender woman who states how she 'can relate to how Panti and people from the gay and lesbian community feel about the effects of homophobia, but in terms of abuse you can step it up a few notches if you can't tick the male or female box.' Roisín discusses not being able to go to college and get a full-time job, which is a big difference to the GCN issue a year later. The March 2015 issue focused on *The Bill & Us*, highlighting the stories of five young transgender people in Ireland. These were Daniel Zagórski, a transgender man who was born in Poland but moved to Ireland when he was 11 and had a difficult time due to being rejected by his parents and also fighting against obstacles created by his principal such as enforcing him to use either the female or wheelchair accessible toilets. Malachy Noble, who identifies as trans masculine, spoke of Pink Training as a space where he 'met real life trans people for the first time. We had a really unique bond because it was only a small number of people talking about really personal, private issues together' (p. 21). Toryn Glavin, who identifies as female, had major problems with the Gender Recognition Act as it focused on the binary identities with the transgender community, and she didn't feel it was applicable to anyone under 18. Glavin also cites issues wherein she would have to get a doctor to tell her that she is transgender. Cearbhall Turraoin, who identifies as gender fluid, actively debated the Gender Recognition Bill with ministers for the inclusion of non-binary people. It can be seen that transgender people became more visible in the 2010s as they continued to come out in the media actively talking about their lives, their struggles and the change that needs to be made in Ireland.

4.4 Documentation of Transgender Music-Making and Consumption in Ireland

One of the earliest recorded examples of music consumption by transgender people in Ireland before the 2000s is the Friends of Eon, mentioned previously in relation to the documentation of transgender people in Ireland. Sara R Phillips discusses in the Cork LGBT Archive how trans people and crossdressers ran a weekly transgender club called Lola's Club in the Parliament Inn in Dublin from 1977 to the mid-1980s. Use of the name 'Lola', also the name of one of the co-founders of the organisation, is an interesting choice because of the song *Lola* by the Kinks whose lyrics note: 'Well I'm not dumb but I can't understand Why she walked like a woman but talked like a man Oh my Lola'.

(Figure 2g: The Virgin Prunes)

In relation to music-makers in Ireland The Virgin Prunes, formed in 1977, provide an important frame of reference (See Figure 2g). They are referenced in Noel McLaughlin and Martin McLoone's *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland: Before and After U2* (2012, pp.129-130) with a recollection of how the audience 'became increasingly angry on discovering that the blonde, long-haired and heavily made-up Guggi was not female as they had initially assumed (an aspect revealed during the set by some figure-hugging clothing around the crotch)'.

The performance of gender is an important consideration when developing a transgender music history for Ireland, one of which involves appraising the differences between crossdressing and drag. Hearns and Kremer (2018, pp.12-13) state that cross-dressing means 'to wear clothes of another gender/sex; a form of gender expression,' whereas drag is defined as 'the act of dressing in gendered clothing and adopting gendered behaviour and mannerisms as part of a performance whether for entertainment or political commentary'. These distinct descriptors, presenting only one academic interpretation, already posit problems when seeking to define music performers. The crossdressing of Guggi and Gavin Friday in The Virgin Prunes can arguably function both as a way of life and a form of performance art. The voice of the

artist in each individual case will, where possible, provide clarity in this respect as research progresses.

(Figure 2h: The Virgin Prunes)

In the case of The Virgin Prunes, their perspective is outlined in an interview from 1983: 'We don't try to say we are that, the clothes that we wear sometimes, we never tried to assume them in a feminine way. Because I don't try to look like a woman either. He (Guggi) can seem like a woman sometimes. I really like the clothes. People ask why we wear dresses: there is nothing to explain' (Rognant, 1983). From this we can gather that this is less performative, and more akin to Hearns and Kremer's definition of crossdressing, where they actively wear the clothes simply because they want to. Regardless of the potential issues with definitions and identity, The Virgin Prunes have challenged gender stereotypes for over forty years. This suggests that there may also be less publicly known musicians who have shaped the trans cultural history of Ireland. The intention is to trace these artists during the course of research. The Virgin Prunes were viewed quite negatively in media, wherein crossdressing was combined with social commentary against a backdrop of what was still a strongly Catholic society. Rovitsky discusses cross-dressing in music and how it 'became increasingly popular, especially in the goth movement, new wave and the new romantics.' (p. 76). Cross-dressing for women, for example wearing suits, were originally adopted as acts of rebellion, discontent and empowerment – though they eventually became a fashion statement. 'As the subculture gained

prominence, it was slowly integrated into the capitalist machinery it rebelled against.' (p. 80). However, for men cross-dressing in women's clothing, this still is a challenge to gender stereotypes and is often met with shock, anger or disgust. They were described by Rognant (1982, p.28) as being 'at the frontiers of Western prohibitions: Satanism, paganism, transvestism and homosexuality'. This is evidenced by their shock value, particularly their 1978 concert supporting the Clash where 'Gavin Friday's trousers split at the crotch revealing his genitals' (McLaughlin and McLoone, 2012. p. 128). The fact that transvestism is aligned with Satanism potentially presents trans people as something to fear.

(Figure 2i: Dana International, *The Late Late Show*, 1998)

Dana International's 1998 interview on *The Late Late Show* demonstrated a very positive experience where Irish people openly applauded and celebrated Eurovision's first transgender winner. Gay Byrne referenced the controversial statement on Dana International's win by Pat Kenny who referred to the victory of 'he, she or it' and said the audience were applauding a freak show (Moloney, *Kenny unapologetic at 'it' jive over Euro winner*, 1998). Her response to people attacking her identity was: 'I am what I am and I'm feeling what I'm feeling and it's up to you to judge whether I'm a woman or not … You can call me a cow if you would like I would feel comfortable, I don't care what you call me as long as you let me live my life' (Dana International, YouTube, 1998). Ted Swedenburg's (1997) paper 'Saida Sultan/Danna International: Transgender Pop and the Polysemiotics of Sex, Nation, and Ethnicity on the Israeli-Egyptian Border' discusses Dana International before her appearance on Eurovision and her popularity with the youth of Egypt. 'The popularity of Danna in Egypt is indicative of widespread skepticism on the part of many Egyptian youth regarding the version of modernity being offered up by the state' (p. 100). In this same way, when reflecting on

Ireland's cultural changes at the time with the scandals of the church and the legalisation of homosexuality – Ireland was also going through skepticism of what has been offered to them in the past. With that in mind, people like Dana International appearing in the public eye exposed the Irish people to something many had not seen before. Dana International's presence, and the Irish response to her interview potentially suggests a definitive shift in Irish culture towards a more accepting society that certainly merits further research.

Despite the rising visibility of transgender people in newspapers and media, references to transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland during the 2000s are sparse. The central focus relates to transgender singer Anohni and the film *Breakfast on Pluto*. Anohni's transition was quite public and developed over a long period of time. During the 2000s, Anohni, as lead singer of Antony and the Johnsons won the Mercury Music Prize for an album which contained 'deeply personal songs about [Anohni's] transgender experiences' (Carroll, The man with the golden voice, 2009). Anohni was born in Sussex in England but has links to the island of Ireland.

> I was born in England, but my father's Irish, and I have aunties in Rosslare and relatives in Donegal. I think that some of the Irish experience of music is alive in my music. There's a lot of spirit and emotion and soulfulness and sometimes sadness, an acute perception of things that comes through a lot in the Irish relationship to music (Kelly, *Lou Reed's protégé hits all the right notes*, 2007).

Though Anohni is not Irish, her affinity with Ireland as a transgender professional musician is important in terms of shaping attitudes in Irish media in the 2000s.

(Figure 2j: Breakfast on Pluto, 2005)

In a shift from music artists to contexts surrounding transgender films about music. *Breakfast on Pluto* is a 2005 Irish film featuring Cillian Murphy as a transgender woman named Kitten in the 1960s and 1970s (See figure 2j). Though this film is set in a time period before the 2000s, the release date contributes to the visibility of transgender people in Ireland during this time period. Neil Jordan, the writer/director of the film, has previously featured transgender characters in his films. *The Crying Game* (1992) featured a transgender woman who was the love interest of the film's protagonist Fergus (played by Stephen Rea). These early depictions of transgender people in Irish media are heavily important to their time and aid in showing this gradual shift towards more contemporary acceptance of transgender people. This film also features Gavin Friday, who was previously discussed in relation to the crossdressing of The Virgin Prunes. *Breakfast on Pluto* has very prominent musical themes as the story moves from Kitten travelling with a glam rock band to working as one of the singing and dancing Wombles. What is interesting about this film is how the soundtrack portrays transgender experiences for the audience at that time. "Me & My Arrow" by Harry Nilsson (1970) is about 'a boy named Obio who is the only round-headed human in a pointy-headed world' by Pemberton (Me and My Arrow, 2012) resulting in him being harassed. Another song, "Good Looking Woman" by Joe Dolan (1970) opens with the lyrics:

'When God created a woman for me

He must have been in a beautiful mood

To show the world what a woman could be

When he created a woman like you'

Though this song is not about a transgender woman, it can quite easily be applied to the context of transgender women when used in the soundtrack of *Breakfast on Pluto*. During this time, there was not many examples of songs about transgender people or songs made by transgender people. The soundtrack is determinedly eclectic, with songs such as "Paddy's Irish Clan – Fuck the British Army" as a political statement on Irish identity, and The Rubette's – "Sugar Baby Love" and T-Rex "Children of the Revolution" expanding the range of genres featured, itself a commentary on the complexity of trans-ness and Irish-ness. Neil Jordan, the writer/director, reflects on how 'Kitten saw the whole world through songs' (Abeel, 2005) and this played a real importance of using music as the medium to portray her life.

In contrast to the lack of sources regarding transgender music-making in the 2000s, the 2010s are a decade of change in how transgender people are perceived. This is the decade where transgender people were becoming more visible as music-makers in Ireland, particularly in the latter half of the decade. Trans-Fusion, a transgender arts festival, was established in 2013 in Dublin. This festival included an art gallery, workshops, coffee mornings for specific identities, transgender history talks, screening of transgender films, picnics and most importantly, the Gotta Get It Out of My Head event which features musicians, ballets, poets, etc. This is an event which works towards promoting transgender artists in Ireland, one of which is Stunt Lover, a trans-fronted band who debuted their first single at the 2016 Trans-Fusion festival. Originally a 2008 band who played Fringe Festival, Life Festival and Electric Picnic – their lead singer. Kaylee Bear, struggled to perform for a few years after transitioning. 'I still get nervous about how any particular crowd, or any particular person in an audience, might react negatively or aggressively [especially when it's at a bar]' (Kay-Bear, 2016, GCN). Another transgender singer emerging during this decade is Keeley Moss, who in the 2010s was a member of the band Session Motts. Moss asserts: 'I don't write about love – I don't think I could write a love song. I don't have a head to talk about falsehoods' (McGoran, 2017). Moss is interested in true crime, in particular she is invested in the death of Inga Maria Hauser, a German backpacker who was murdered in Northern Ireland in 1988. Moss had written seventeen songs surrounding the unsolved murder. 'I wanted to chronicle Inga's life and give a voice to this woman who had

it ripped away from her'. Though Keeley is transgender, it is not something that she discusses. Much of her story is more invested in giving a voice to Inga Hauser rather than discussing her identity and influence as a transgender music-maker. This is in contrast to some other music-makers of the 2010s such as ELM, an Alternative Baroque Pop band. Three of the four founding members (now only a duo act) identify as genderfluid, transgender and gender non-conforming. In 2016, their single *Concentrate* discusses the isolation that is experienced by transgender people and was compared on entertainment.ie to Hozier's *Take Me to Church* (2013).

Hozier's rise in the 2010s is associated with political and social activism in music, including LGBTQ+ issues and domestic violence. In 2019:

> a fan tossed the flag on stage during the 29-year-old's performance of "Nina Cried Power." He displayed the flag on stage during the rest of the set, and when he ended the show with his mega-hit "Take Me to Church," he grabbed the flag again waved it in front of the cheering audience, and waved it like a cape. (Henderson, Hozier Waves a Trans Pride Flag, 2019)

The appearance of a famous Irish musician waving a trans flag is an example of a very different country to one that so quickly ridiculed transgender people in Ireland only two decades before. This has allowed more prominent trans music-makers, such as SOAK and Kitt Philippa, to be more visible and successful artists on the island of Ireland. SOAK won the Irish Choice Music Prize Album of the Year in 2015 and their 2019 album *Grim Town* has also been very successful. Kitt Philippa has had three of their first singles nominated for Best Song by the Northern Irish Music Prize and their release of *Human* in 2019 was later the winner of Best Album in the Northern Ireland Music Prize 2020.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

In seeking to document this history, there is an awareness of the challenge of investigating an issue which has, at first glance, been ignored by Irish society until recently. Despite the lack of access to physical archives, digital archives have been an excellent resource in filling in the gaps regarding documentation of transgender people, transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland. In order to move forward, the most significant resource will potentially be through oral histories, wherein transgender people will be offered the opportunity to share their experiences.

Chapter 5 The Other of the Other's Other: Constructing the Soundtrack of a Transgender Person in Ireland

5.1 Chapter Introduction

Otherness and marginalisation are familiar tropes in Irish history, with Price (2013, p.222) referring to how Ireland's status 'as a colonial "other" rendered her perpetually queer and outside the realms of the normative imperial centre'. This otherness is a central concept discussed in queer theory, particularly the othering of the queer community as 'outside' of the binary understandings of heterosexuality, potentially threatening a collapse of boundaries and 'a radical confusion of identities' (Fuss, 1991). This othering is still an issue as can be seen in the cutting down and burning of pride flags erected in Waterford City Hall and the appearance of Straight Pride posters (Brent, 2021) along with the words 'Pedo Bar' painted on the wall of a building with an arrow pointed directly towards PantiBar, a gay bar in Dublin (Burns, 2021). Despite queer people being othered in a broad sense, this othering also exists within the community, with groups such as The LGB Alliance in Ireland positioning themselves as a group who want no relation to 'radical gender identity ideology', which they are 'increasingly dismayed at' because it holds that 'some people are born "trans" and should therefore transition as young as possible' (Black, 2020).' This transphobic rhetoric is in direct conflict with Kennedy and Helens' (2010) study on 121 transgender people, of whom 80% stated that they knew they were transgender before they left primary school. In relation to the othering of transgender people in music, there is little understanding surrounding the musical lives of transgender people in Ireland, as LGBTQ+ music fandom often considers only gay and lesbian communities. This chapter explores what music is significant within Irish transgender people's lives.

This chapter delves into the results of a survey conducted with 230 transgender people living on the island of Ireland. 88% of the participants are aged between eighteen and twenty-four. 8% of the participants are aged between 25 and 34. 2% of the participants are aged between 35 and 44, with the remaining 2% aged between 45 and 64. There are no participants over the age of 64. 49% of the participants identified as non-binary, 32% identified as male, 10% identified as female, 7% identified as Other and 1% preferred not to disclose their gender identity. Of the 7% that identified as Other, identities such as transfeminine, transmasculine, demi guy, demi-girl, T girl, genderfluid and femboy are disclosed. When asked about how the

participants participate in music, 213 disclosed they are listeners, 117 disclosed they are musicians, 57 disclosed they are songwriters, 20 are composers, 13 are producers and 10 are DJs. Only 2% of the participants made music in a professional capacity.

This chapter explores three areas of the survey. The soundtrack of a transgender person in Ireland looks at the songs which have resonated most with transgender people, and that they have chosen as songs that represent their lives. Transgender music icons and music-makers explores the musical icons that have influenced and inspired the participants of the survey. Finally, scenes, venues and transgender music consumers and music-makers examines how accepting and safe scenes and venues have been for transgender music consumers and music makers in Ireland.
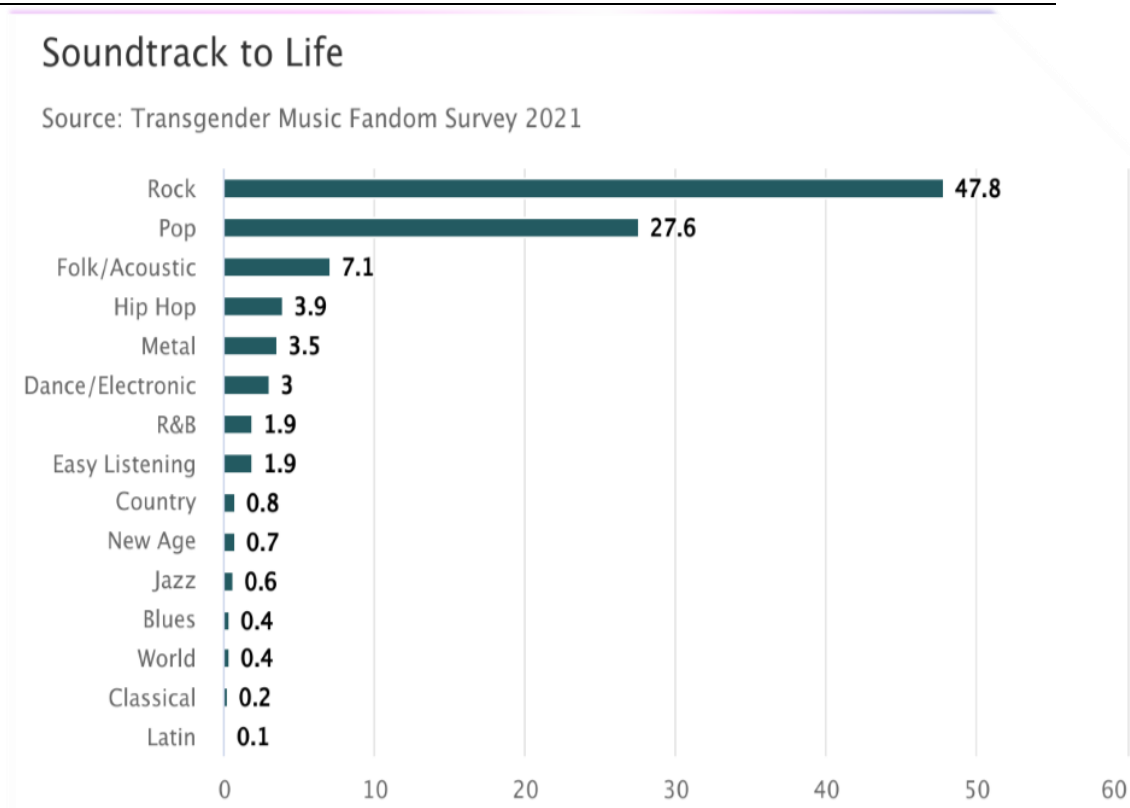
5.2 Soundtrack of a Transgender Person in Ireland

In a survey conducted from July to September 2021, one question posed to participants is 'If your life was made into a film, what songs would be in the music soundtrack?' The idea of a soundtrack to life arguably offers personal and meaningful insights into the consumption of music by transgender people. As Ruud (2013, p.17) explains:

> Tell me the stories about your memories about music, which artists and genres you identify yourself with, and then it will be clearer where you come from and belong to, and what you move towards and hold as important in life. And when we are caught up in music, such as we feel it in our body, and the feelings tell us that this is real or genuine, all these stories come along. Or blends together to a bigger story about ourselves – that we believe in, not as a construction, but as lived and embodied experience.

I decided to ask about individual soundtracks to life in order to provide perspectives on the lived experiences of transgender people in Ireland in a way that does not have to be explained through words. Naturally, it also led to correlations in particular genres, artists or songs amongst participants.

There are three central findings that arose from this question. The first is that rock music is the most popular genre mentioned in the soundtrack to life; the second is that Cavetown was the highest mentioned artist; the third is that Wrabel's *The Village* and Cavetown's *Home* are the two most frequently mentioned songs in responses.

Soundtrack to Life

Source: Transgender Music Fandom Survey 2021

Genre	Value
Rock	47.8
Pop	27.6
Folk/Acoustic	7.1
Hip Hop	3.9
Metal	3.5
Dance/Electronic	3
R&B	1.9
Easy Listening	1.9
Country	0.8
New Age	0.7
Jazz	0.6
Blues	0.4
World	0.4
Classical	0.2
Latin	0.1

(Figure 3a: Soundtrack to Life)

Fifteen genres are identified in the soundtrack to life section. These are rock, pop, folk/acoustic, hip hop, metal, dance, R&B, easy listening, country, new age, jazz, blues, Irish traditional, classical and Latin. Findings therefore indicate an eclectic range of musical interests within the community. These genres were defined by creating a spotify playlist of all 740 songs and then using a spotify analytics tool to collect data. These songs were then cross-referenced by going through each song, searching its genre and gathering key words. For example, any genre using the term rock, such as soft rock, indie rock and punk rock, were placed within the one genre. Rock music represented 47.8% of the total genres mentioned in the soundtrack to life section. Pop music is mentioned by 27.6% respondents. Folk/Acoustic music made up 7.1% of answers, with Hip Hop, Metal and EDM all averaging around 3% a. R&B and Easy Listening are both at 1.9%. Country, New Age, Jazz, Blues, Irish Traditional, Classical and Latin are all under 1%.
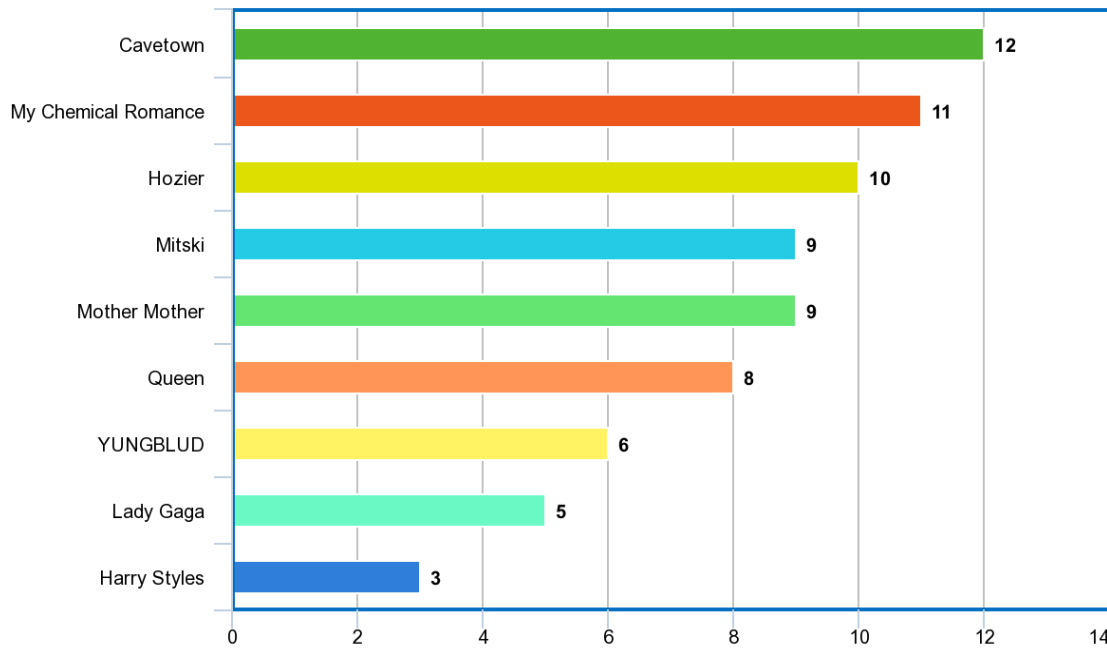
(Figure 3b: Most Mentioned Artists)

A total of 542 artists are mentioned in the soundtrack to life which exemplifies a broad spectrum of diverse artists (see Figure 3b). Though this showcases very little statistical value, it does aid in directing us towards particular artists that are either transgender themselves or have, in some way, shaped certain parts of transgender people's lives in Ireland. From this data, the artists that were spoken about most prominently by survey participants were focused on to highlight their importance to transgender people. Cavetown, My Chemical Romance, Hozier, Mitski, Mother Mother and Queen are the most frequently mentioned artists, with Cavetown receiving twelve song mentions.

Cavetown is a particularly interesting artist because, as one participant puts it, 'He's out as trans himself but even before coming out, a lot of his music really resonated with people in the trans community'. Cavetown is an artist who started his career on YouTube in 2012 and slowly began to build a following. He now has seven albums with a total of 7,774,350 monthly listeners on Spotify.

Mother Mother, who are mentioned nine times, are described by another participant as a band who 'speaks a lot about the feeling that your body is not as important and not as 'you' as your mind is'. Mother Mother is a Canadian indie rock band whose songs, though perhaps not on purpose, resonate with transgender people. Their song body's lyrics "grown tired of this

body/A cumbersome and heavy body," is reflected by Davis & Key (2021, *WHY DO TRANS PEOPLE LIKE MOTHER MOTHER?*) to be a perfect gender dysphoria anthem. David & Key discuss how Rolling Stone released an article on this topic, asking lead singer Ryan Guldemond felt on Mother Mother's rising queer fanbase. His response was that:

> It's such a high honor and huge compliment whenever it's suggested that our music might serve as an adequate soundtrack to a courageous journey of self-discovery that often rubs against societal norms… We're huge cheerleaders for the outcasts and the other.
>
> (Guldemond from *TikTok Is Giving a Niche Indie Band's 2008 Music Millions of New Streams*, Hissong, 2020)

Lady Gaga, who received 5 mentions, is also referenced in qualitative responses. One participant states that 'I think Lady Gaga is popular within the community as she has always shown undying support of the LGBTQ+ community, and I feel many of her songs such as "Born This Way" are songs trans people can easily sympathise with.' Another participant states that 'She experienced a lot of hate towards her identity and people questioning it. She is so accepting and loving of everyone.' One other participant simply stated: 'Do you even have to ask? She's literally a queen'.

My Chemical Romance is the second highest mentioned artist with a total of eleven mentions. Gerard Way, the lead vocalist, is particularly prominent in the survey with participants mentioning how 'Way uses he/they pronouns and has openly talked about gender identity and how they identify with the female gender', his 'stage personality often broke gender roles' and how 'some of his songs can be interpreted as exhibiting gender dysphoria. He is also vocal about his support for LGBTQ+ people'. One important aspect to approach here is that Way is non-binary, and 'they/them' pronouns are quite prominently used with non-binary people. However, Way uses He/They pronouns, meaning that you can either refer to Way by He/Him pronouns or They/Them pronouns. Every non-binary person is different.

Mitski, an artist with nine mentions, expresses 'a mom vibe' that 'makes you feel loved, but also makes you cry your eyes out. Quite like how many trans people's relationship with their parents are' for one participant from the survey. Another participant mentioned how they think Mitski's music 'explores more existential themes' which are 'very relatable to the trans experience'. This is clarified by another participant in discussion of the themes of 'feeling unloved and trauma, which a lot of trans people can relate to'.

Queen, receiving eight mentions, are referred to as a group which 'challenged gender norms and cis conformity' and had a 'very liberal connection and relationship with gender especially for their respective timeframes'. Freddie Mercury, in particular, 'has a special place in trans people's hearts for defying gender norms earlier on and normalising different expressions of gender to a wider group.'

YUNGBLUD, who had 6 mentions, is noted to have 'a genderqueer style and expression' and is a supporter of the trans community. Three participants are very clear that YUNGBLUD has a large fanbase of transgender listeners, and two participants also referred specifically to his song, "Mars", which is about a transgender woman, as an example for why they listen to him.

Harry Styles, despite only having 3 mentions, is brought up numerous times by participants stating how 'He dresses outside the gender binary, experimenting with feminine and masculine styles while making it look normal and effortless', 'He tends to break gender norms and that makes nonbinary people feel great about themselves' and 'He makes a lot of his transgender fans feel seen'. From the findings, it can be seen how music consumption is connected to positive role modelling for transgender people.
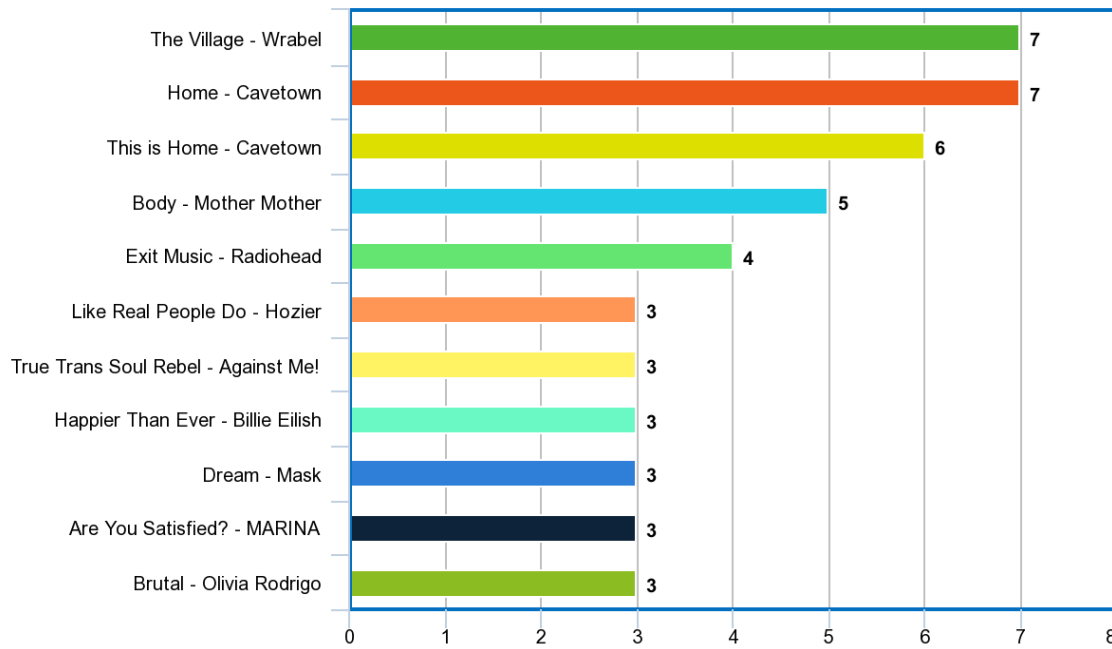
(Figure 3c: Most Mentioned Songs)

There are 740 songs mentioned in the Soundtrack to Life. Some people met the suggestion of three songs in their answer, but many far exceeded three songs, contributing to a very large collection. With regard to decades, 17.7% are from the 2020s which is significant given that this represents only two years. The 2010s is the most prominent decade as 50.4% of these songs were released in the 2010s. The 2000s account for 14.3% of the song mentions; the 1990s have 7.6%, the 1980s have 4.5%, the 1970s 4% and the 1960s have 1.5%. Of all of the songs, only 11 of these are mentioned more than two times. Though these findings are not statistically significant, it does showcase that there is not one singular transgender experience but many complex different life experiences that are represented in each participants' lives by many different songs.

Some participants state that their identity is distinct from their musical interests, whereas others linked music as a key factor in helping them to realize the source to their identity. Wrabel's *the Village* and Cavetown's *Home* are both mentioned seven times. *The Village* is a very important song to many transgender people, as the themes explicitly explain a transgender experience. 'Don't dare, don't you even go there, Cutting off your long hair', 'Wake up, go put on your makeup, this is just a phase you're gonna outgrow'. The overall message of the song is acceptance of self, but acknowledgement of the fact that society does not always accommodate difference. *Home* by Cavetown is similar in that it addresses themes that can be related to a

transgender experience. 'I'll cut my hair, to make you stare, I'll hide my chest', 'Time is slowly tracing his face, but strangely he feels at home in this place'. As noted previously, Cavetown is the most mentioned artist, and this is further reflected in the fact that two of the three most frequently cited songs are by Cavetown. The other songs referenced multiple times are "Body" by Mother Mother, "Exit Music (for a film)" by Radiohead, "Like Real People Do" by Hozier, "True Trans Soul Rebel" by Against Me!, "Happier Than Ever" by Billie Eilish, "Mask" by Dream, "Are You Satisfied" by MARINA and "Brutal" by Olivia Rodrigo. Mother Mother's "Body", which is mentioned five times, is noted by one participant as a 'really is a good metaphor for how body dysphoria can feel for some people': 'Take my eyes, take them aside', 'I've grown tired of this body, cumbersome and heavy'. "Exit Music (For a Film)" is mentioned four times. The opening lyrics 'Wake from your sleep/ The drying of your tears/ Today we escape, we escape' resonates with the idea of breaking free of societal expectations.

Hozier has been praised previously for waving a trans flag at his concert while singing "Take Me To Church". As one participant put it, 'you're telling me take me to church is about cis people?'. "Take me to Church" is such a powerful song for the LGBTQ+ community because of its open disapproval of the actions of the church. "Take Me To Church" is not actually a highly mentioned song in this section, instead, Hozier's "Like Real People Do" is mentioned by three participants. "Like Real People Do" is perhaps a less overt song of protest than the more high-profile "Take Me to Church"; the song is about bog bodies, which are dead bodies that have been preserved in bogs. However, it resonates in other ways:

> The lyrics tell a story of two people who get into a relationship with a lot of baggage.
> However, neither of them want to share their past. They want to move forward and forget. In
> order to achieve this, they don't tell each other the weight that they are carrying.
> (Hupman,2021)

For transgender people, coming out to their partners can be a terrifying experience, especially if there is potential for their partner to harm them. This is true in any interpersonal interaction. Songs such as this aid in allowing transgender people to express their feelings in ways words cannot describe.

5.3 Transgender Music Icons and Music-Makers

Icons are an interesting aspect of the LGBTQ+ community. Gay men are often associated with female icons who exert what is referred to as a gay sensibility as icons, defined by Sikov (2008, p.89) as 'multiplicitous, a subculturally dependent assemblage of tastes and styles that changes over time and exerts various forms and degrees of influence on the mass culture from which it springs'. Middlemost (2019) defines four defining features of a gay icon: Successful, outspoken, diva (Cher); Overcoming obstacles (Judy Garland); Talking the talk, walking the walk (George Michael, Madonna and Lady Gaga); problematic or monstrous (Joan Crawford). In terms of music, Beyoncé, Whitney Houston, Dolly Parton, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, Britney Spears, Mariah Carey, Kylie Minogue, all function as gay icons (Guilbert, 2018). One participant in the survey stated, 'I don't think 'trans music icons' have the same cultural power as gay icons have had'. However, transgender music icons are mentioned, as in the frequent reference to Cavetown. Three artists noted in the question on icons (but less prominent in the soundtrack songs) are SOPHIE, David Bowie and Laura Jane Grace. One participant stated that 'SOPHIE was not only the leading light in the emergent nebulous musical genre of Hyperpop she was also incredibly original, her impact on music, as someone who introduced whole new textures of sounds into the musical vernacular of musicians, is hard to overstate'. Thirteen participants mentioned the resonance that SOPHIE has had as a transgender person who is largely responsible for the development of Hyperpop. She unfortunately passed away at the start of 2022, and many comments regarding SOPHIE mentioned the loss they had felt in losing such an important role model.

David Bowie is a prominent cultural icon known for challenging gender boundaries. One participant notes how 'He performed unashamedly without regard for the shackles of gender expectations'; another reflects on how 'he always blurred the boundaries of gender, and wasn't afraid to be himself whatever that might be'. In regards to why they regard Bowie as an icon, one participant stated how 'it was just kind of a confirmation for young me that I could be more than boy or girl'. The song "Rebel Rebel" made one participant feel 'more at home with my body'. The opening lyrics of "Rebel Rebel" are 'You've got your mother in a whirl/ She's not sure if you're a boy or a girl'. This openly discusses the idea of transgender identity, with Bowie singing about how 'We look divine … I love your dress/ You're a juvenile success'. Bowie used his platform to back the othered, which is reflected in one participant's answer:

> 'The whole glam rock scene and anything else super visual in that flamboyant way seems to resonate. Brazen nonconformity is also a pretty dreamy idea to trans people who are either themselves nonconforming, or physically androgynous by being midway through or

early in their transition.'

Laura Jane Grace is the lead singer of the punk band Against Me! and has been out as a transgender woman since 2012. A participant stated how:

'She makes great music about trans issues but also about non trans related things. She is still vocal about trans social and political issues outside of music. She burnt her birth certificate on stage in protest of a bathroom bill and that's pretty iconic'.

One album of particular importance to participants in the survey is titled *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*. This album, according to one participant, 'incorporated transgender and queer themes into many of their songs'; it 'is about Laura's personal struggles being a transgender woman' and is 'a staple in both the punk and trans/queer community'. Laura Les from 100 gecs is another example, an American based hyperpop duo who became famous more recently through TikTok. "Money Machine", which trended through TikTok, reached 62,171,736 listens on Spotify which is a high engagement rate considering how niche the genre of Hyperpop is. In reference to the song *How to Dress as Human*, one participant declared:

I had never heard a song that so explicitly talked about dysphoria, made be an out trans person. It's frustrating to always have to search for representation, especially when it's inauthentic or hidden so it can get past censors. this was the first time I felt a musician had understood my experience of transness, fully and honestly.

Brian Molko is mentioned three times in reference to icons. One participant explained how 'his style is extremely androgynous and he only advocates for trans and acknowledgement'. Brian Molko is the lead vocalist, guitarist and lyricist of the band Placebo. In particularly his vocals are quite high in register, contributing to the androgyny of the performer. One participant reflected on how 'I watched I watched a Placebo concert in Russia on YouTube and during the concert, Brian opened the concert by saying "ladies and gentlemen and those of us who find ourselves in between"'. Another spoke on why they felt Brian Molko is such an icon for them, stating that 'the first time I saw Brian Molko from Placebo in a skirt and makeup, I realized how fluid gender can be even for those who are cis let alone other trans people'. Another icon referenced for their dress style is Harry Styles. 'He dresses outside the gender binary, experimenting with feminine and masculine styles while making it look normal and effortless'. The breaking down of gender norms in Harry Style's aesthetic is very influential for participants, one participant spoke on how 'he makes a lot of his transgender fans feel seen, he does a lot of things that are stereotypically "not for men"'. Many participants reflected on this aspect of Harry Styles not conforming to the traditional norms of male identity, and the

influence it has over their personal identity. These people are emblematic of trans sensibility and in how they have influenced music styles.

Memorabilia is another way in which music is consumed and understood, as these artefacts possess associations with certain moments in a life with music. Memorabilia is defined as an object deliberately kept as a reminder of a person, place or event, and which are directly meaningful to their memories (Petrelli, Whittaker and Brockmeier 2008). Sometimes there are physical items associated with such as t-shirts, badges, albums or newspaper articles, but there are also other forms of memorabilia in a digital age, such as pictures and videos that are saved on phones or uploaded to websites. The question that is posed to participants is 'What is your most memorable experience relating to transgender musical icons? Can you explain why this musical memory is so notable? e.g., a particular concert, gig or show, an important album from your youth, memorable song, music festival, TV or radio show.'

Many participants talked about the moments they had experienced in concerts, listening to songs for the first time, and watching performances that reflected a sense of euphoria. One participant discussed how Hozier took their trans flag on stage and performed "Take Me To Church" while waving it. Another participant that was also at that concert stated 'a fan gave him a transgender pride flag and he displayed it proudly during the set. He wore it as a cape during many parts of the gig, and the audience chanted Trans Lives Matter.' Hozier's YouTube videos, articles and songs have provided meaningful memorabilia for participants. In relation to why he is so important as transgender musical icon; one reflected on how he 'has vocally supported the community on many occasions, including absolutely destroying washed-up comedian Graham Linehan on twitter. He featured an Irish non-binary activist in his music video to Nina Cried Power'. Many note their personal feelings when discussing their memorabilia. 'I started crying profusely, cause it just described me so accurately'; 'in that moment I knew that ultimately everything would be okay'; 'It's one of the few times I've been brought to tears on the first listen of a song'; 'it made me feel safe and like I could be myself'; 'It's easy to feel out of place in the music world when there's no one like you fronting any band'. Some participants shifted from the original question into other spheres, such as their personal memories of interacting with live music, 'to be at a concert surrounded by other people like me in the community really just, made me happy, I hadn't cried like that before'. A number

of respondents spoke of specific experiences that defined their lives and sense of trans identity. In reference to "The Elephant in the Room":

> I came across "The Elephant in the Room" by the Axis of Awesome during the time I came to terms with my being trans and relearning to navigate society in this weird between state, coming out at work and so on. And that song gave me this wonderful feeling that you can bring across these important messages of being accepting and leaving people be in a humorous but serious way. It stuck with me so much that when I started giving educational workshops and trainings on trans issues, I adapted this method of being serious but also light.

Another reflected on their memories of the first Scissor Sisters album:

> The first album I bought was the first Scissor Sisters album, when I was 11. I remember in the sleeve it had photos of the band and for Ana Matronic (who is a straight woman but an amazing ally) she mentioned a joke about being "a gay man trapped in a straight woman's body". Which was a Joke at the time, because in 2004 nobody knew trans men existed, I certainly had never heard of them, the joke being that she was attracted to men and very camp. And I remember thinking that that sounded about right for me, "a gay man trapped in a woman's body", even though I didn't come to terms with being trans at all until I was 24.

Finally, one discussed a concert they had attended with their brother:

> I think a notable memory is when I saw the band AJJ at a gig in Dublin with my brother. Before they came on they had Crywank and an artist called Jordaan Mason play before them. Both of them played songs with nonbinary and trans themes in them, and I couldn't believe I was hearing that in person, standing in a pub next to my brother. I think it was the first time I had encountered trans music without having to actively search it out, or trans art in general. It was a very surreal moment, and when I shook AJJ's hand afterwards I had a strange realisation moment that he, this artist I looked up to, was clearly supportive of trans people, of me. It sort of felt like I had a place in this world all of a sudden.

These responses reflect the capacity of music and music scenes to create a sense of safety or connection for transgender people. In some cases, it offers pivotal moments in terms of life lessons. For others, the power of music is noted as a means to self-realization. 'Most music I listen to shares some aspect of my identity and who I am, which is why I listen even if the idea of the song isn't even inherently about being transgender'.

5.4 Scenes, Venues and Transgender Music Consumers and Music-Makers

Musical fandom is diverse and dependent on a range of personal and social factors. A fan, as defined by Hills, is 'somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme, band; somebody who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom, and can quote their favoured lines or lyrics, chapter and verse' (Hills, 2002, ix). As discussed previously, fandom can be associated with music as representative of the soundtrack

to a person's life; it can be about icons and the influence they have as role models for transgender people; it can also be about social factors such as music scenes and music spaces. The questions regarding scenes and venues asked:

From very non-inclusive to very inclusive, how inclusive do you feel these types of venues are for transgender people in Ireland?

'Was any negativity directed towards you in these music spaces for being transgender?' Do you interact with any music scenes, venues or communities? (e.g., Electronic Dance Music scene, Vinyl Collecting, Grunge Scene, Music Songwriting Groups, etc.)

Is there any reason why you might not interact with music scenes, venues or communities?'

What music scenes, venues, or communities did/do you participate in?

What kinds of music genres can be heard in these scenes, venues or communities? and

As a transgender person, what has your experience been like of those scenes, venues or communities?

The music scenes that are most prominently mentioned in this section are the Hyperpop Scene at 5%, Rock Scene at 35%, Gay/Queer Scene at 5%, Irish Punk Scene at 25%, Dance at 15% and the Metal Scene at 15%. As mentioned previously, we have mention of SOPHIE who was a hyperpop artist. Participants in the survey stated how the hyperpop scene is 'amazing, incredibly inclusive because the pioneers of the genre are trans'. Another talks about how 'hyperpop is one of the few communities made by trans people and still heavily featuring trans people'. DIY (Do-It-Yourself) has acted as an ethos for communities to create their own musical genres, spaces and culture for decades. This is most notable with punk music but can be applied to other genres such as hyperpop. The Rock scene is noted to be 'uncomfortable at best, not just for trans people but often for women'; another stated how 'mostly people have been very accepting but here and there I've met the occasional bigot'. There are mentions of slurs being thrown at participants while entering or leaving a venue, and mixed responses are evinced in relation to the rock scene. This is interesting when compared to responses given for the soundtrack to life section, wherein rock music represented 47.8% of the genres mentioned. This suggests that musical interests are not directly linked to a specific social community or scene. Some participants had positive experiences with scenes, such as the Irish Punk Scene where people stated how it is easy to find trans communities, or the EDM scene where one

participant noted the accommodation of unisex toilets so that there is no gendering placed on a person's musical experience.

Participants are asked about their experiences with different venues. Music venues 'can be an intimidating and exclusionary environment' for transgender artists (MacRae, 2022). A study by Music Victoria list six ways in which transgender people experience exclusion or discrimination in performance venues: 1. Violence, including physical, verbal and psychological abuse of a transphobic nature; 2. Misgendering, the use of incorrect pronouns, dead names or assumptions of gender identity; 3. Inadequate spatial planning and facilities, such as bathrooms, changing rooms and venue entry and exits, 4. Security, body policing and surveillance, specifically unreasonable standards of identification or requests to disclose personal information, 5. Censorship and exclusion, in the contexts of music, performance, and marketing, the erasure of gender diverse identity and language, and exclusion from participation, and 6. Commodification of gender identity, such as tokenism.
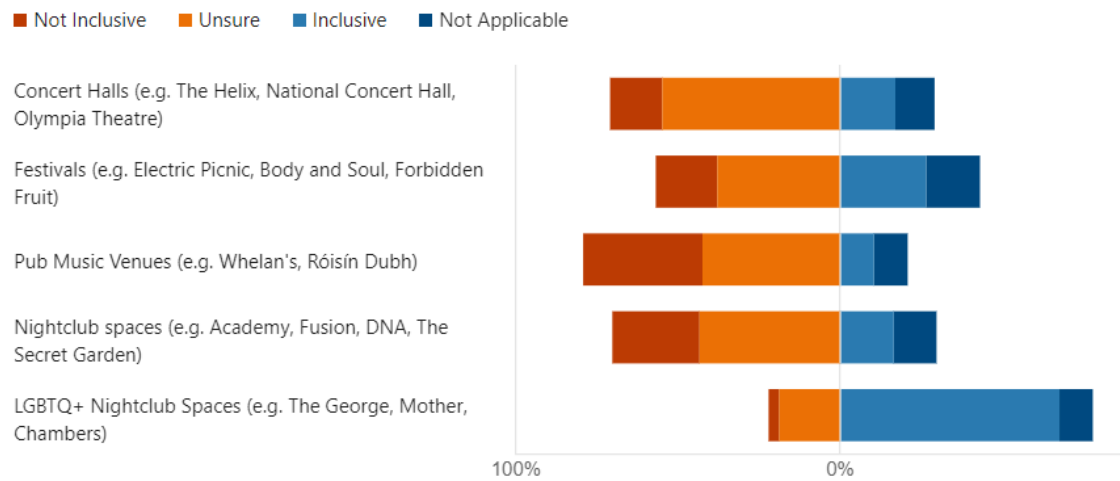
(Figure 3d: Inclusivity in Venues)

The primary graph gathered in this survey is used to gauge the level of inclusivity in a variety of venues (See figure 3d). These are: Concert Halls, Festivals, Nightclubs, Pubs and LGBTQ+ Nightclubs. LGBTQ+ Nightclub Spaces are regarded as mostly inclusive (96.5%), though some participants noted how they could be looked down on in these scenes for being regarded as 'not trans enough'. Safarty (2016) feels that queer spaces are not inclusive of participants' nonbinary identities. One participant in Safarty's study relates gender privilege to

not being trans enough. Specifically, Safarty relates how they could not relate to the danger and violence towards binary transgender people, and how they felt that by adopting a transgender identity, they are claiming to experience the same persecution. A non-binary participant in the Music Fandom study, who reflected on feeling 'not trans enough' in LGBTQ+ nightclubs, shared how their feelings are more linked to other transgender and queer people assuming their non-binary identity as a steppingstone to a binary transgender identity. In that same way, there is an association of gender privilege placed on the participant, as they are seen to be identifying with another word so as not to be thrown in with other transgender identities. This participant is also a drag performer, which furthered this narrative from peers, despite drag as an art form not having any relation to a person's gender identity. This is an issue within queer scenes, with many people gatekeeping on how a certain identity should look, and when an individual does not fit into that narrative it is used to deny them.

In particular, the most prominent non-inclusive spaces are nightclub spaces at 60% and pub music venues at 77%. One participant states how they personally had negative experiences with staff at pub music venues regarding their visibly trans friends using the bathrooms of their gender identity. Another participant stated they were employed as a DJ in a nightclub before coming out and losing their post. Festivals seemed more positive with 59.5%, with concert hall experiences noted as 53.5% inclusive. When asked 'Are you aware of any individual, group or organisation that promotes trans music artists in Ireland?', 91% of 120 participants said that that they are not aware.

One participant mentioned Club Comfort. Club Comfort is named in Finnan's article 'At 80 Parnell Street, Clubbers Find Comfort' (2018), as a safe space for queer and trans people. Its founders are Jack Colley, Roo Honeychild and Cian Murphy. Club Comfort fosters a general attitude of respect, with security staff trained to deal with harassment and ensure safety. The space engages in 'the idea of a more communal DJ hemisphere' where many different groups can connect. Roo Honeychild, for example, is a transgender woman who DJs in the space. Club Comfort refutes a number of conventions associated with nightclub environments. The name 'Club Comfort' relates to the dress code, being able to rave in comfortable clothes like a track suit. It has also hosted parties for transgender rights such as when an anti-trans group from the

United Kingdom planned to visit Dublin. 'They raised money for the group Mermaids, which advocates for the rights of transgender people'.

Another response from participants is the Nameless Faceless magazine, which features various queer artists in Ireland. Acts such as Smoothboi Ezra, Cherym, SOAK, Babylamb, and Molly Noise are all examples of acts featuring transgender people who are given a biographical focus in their magazine in 2021. When asked 'Is there any reason why you might not interact with music scenes, venues or communities?', 7% mentioned COVID; some noted that they only came out during the pandemic which meant their ability to engage in trans communities in a physical context are not possible. 20% mentioned how bathrooms are a central issue when going to venues. Anxiety around bathrooms is shared by one participant who stated, 'I am always nervous to go out [because] I don't know if I pass or not and thus, I don't know what bathroom to use'. Participants discussed how they have been removed from bathrooms by staff members, and there is a clear sense of apprehension in some responses.

Negative spaces have impacted on performers and consumers entering venues. One person in particular is a performer who stated: 'I used to play regularly at a pub, but I heard too many bad stories, I started turning down gigs. I suppose I then ended up paranoid about trusting any scene venue or promoter, most of which at my level were cishet male led'. A comment that stood out is 'I don't [want to] enter a place that will tolerate me; I'll interact with more music scenes when I can guarantee I will not just be safe but actually included.' Some people mentioned accessibility as they lived with disabilities or lack of accommodation due to spaces being too hard to get to or being too expensive. In reference to disabilities, one participant noted how:

> I often need to sit if I'm somewhere for a long period of time due to muscular issues and either the singer asks everyone to stand, my friends would be cut off from much of the show to stay with me which I don't want or people working at the venue don't understand, as my disability is hidden, and give me grief for taking up space from others.

Some related it to feelings of social anxiety surrounding big crowds or loud noises, feelings that other transgender or queer people may gatekeep against them and some simply stated that they just did not have the time to commit to engaging in music scenes.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

The survey serves as a means of collecting the perspectives of transgender people in the 2020s on music, musicians, spaces and fandom. Through this survey there have been many

findings on transgender music consumption, which leads to the next chapter – focusing on transgender music-makers.

Chapter 6 Capturing a Moment in Time: Interviews with Transgender Music-Makers in Ireland

6.1 Chapter Introduction

The survey conducted on transgender music fandom documented the experiences of transgender music consumers; the interviews sought to document the experiences of transgender music-makers in Ireland. A total of nine findings are explored in discussions with four transgender music-makers based both north and south of the border in Ireland. This chapter appraises the lives and experiences of transgender music-makers on their beginnings, career development, obstacles, their place in spaces, scenes and venues, and the lineage of transgender music-makers in Ireland.

6.2 Findings

Finding 1: Participants had very differing beginnings in their music careers.

The initial section of the interviews centred on the beginnings, career evolution and obstacles in their musical lives. These participants were found through Instagram initially, and from there – participants who were interviewed mentioned names of other transgender music artists that may be interested in taking part. Though unintentional, the sample of these participants led to an equal spread of participants both north and south of the border. Participant 1 is a trans man, participants 2 and 3 are non-binary (assigned female at birth) and participant 4 is a trans woman. It is relevant to note that the non-binary participants are assigned female at birth because both note that they are often misgendered as women and this has led to experiences of misogyny in the music scene despite not identifying as women.

Both parents of participant 1 are musicians, so music is very much a part of his life from a young age. Participant 4 also referenced that the experience of being from a musical family. 'Both my parents play a lot of musical instruments, as do most of my family, but it's mostly traditional Irish musical instruments, and then acoustic guitar, rather than, say, electric guitar.' In contrast to this, participant 2 reflected on how none of their family members are interested

in music. Despite this, cultural events in Derry, including concerts at the Millennium Forum inspired the participant to engage with music. 'I asked mammy for a tin whistle from Dublin, and she brought it back and I learnt it all in one day.' Participant 1 has worked in electropop music but has also incorporated folk/acoustic approaches into their practice; participant 2 works in punk rock music; participant 3 is an indie-pop music artist; participant 4 is an industrial musician with interests in electronic and noise music. Participants 1, 2 and 3 all reflected on the importance of the guitar as one of their first instruments that made them serious about taking part in music. Participant 1 states 'I got a guitar for Christmas when I was 14, and I just learned the guitar myself, started writing songs, started some bands.' Participant 2 was also in their teens when they began to become interested in guitar, whereas participant 3 got their first guitar at the age of 9. Participant 2 talked about YouTube and Ultimate Guitar as the primary form of education in musicianship and guitar. All participants discussed their musical education as in some way related to being self-taught. Participants 2 and 3 are both self-taught artists whereas Participant 1 was self-taught and then went on to formal training through third level education. Participant 4 was self-taught in instruments but took courses with colleges such as Berkeley and other online providers in order to learn how to create electronic music. Participant 4, in particular, talked about how her family had an impact in delaying engagement with the genre she actually wanted to work in:

> around the PlayStation One era, there was a game, it was Music 2000 or something. And effectively, it was a really limited, basic tracker, or sequencer. And you just kind of put stuff together, and it played in sequence. And the response from my family was incredibly negative, because to them electronic music is not real music.   (Participant 4)

This influenced the participant to make music in other ways, and they went on to be a bassist in a rock band for ten years before finally engaging with industrial music. Participant 1 reflected 'I think I set up my first band when I was 15 and I kind of spent my life playing in bands like guitar, bass, drums, singing, just whatever'. Participant 2 discussed how they 'used to do like from Shania Twain right up to Wheatus, the Venga Boys and then all of a sudden, I realised that I could actually write music, that this wasn't a thing where you are just sat there doing cover music'. This led them to become a bass player in a band. Participant 3 was initially a solo artist but became the lead vocalist of a band.

Finding 2: Participants' careers had similarities and differences in their development.

With regard to career evolution, participant 1 discussed how he primarily performed in 'more alternative smaller venues and maybe some medium sized venues and festivals'. In terms of festivals, he has performed in both Irish and UK festivals – with the most high-profile being one of the big tops in Electric Picnic. Participant 2 reflected on how their band has always been careful when deciding whether or not to perform in a certain festival or venue:

> We always try to look out for like if they're involved in any sort of sexual abuse allegations or you know, just not great people, then we stay away from them. We only select, you know, we only want to play venues who are going to make sure it's a safe place for everybody because we are queer. So, like we would play anywhere just as long as they're not fucking wankers [laughs].   (Participant 2)

Participant 3 discussed how they played Glastonbury and Electric Picnic in the same summer, which was a defining point for their career. As an industrial artist, participant 4 reflected on how her band never truly achieved success despite being actively gigging for six or seven years: 'there was a lack of cohesion and vision towards what we wanted to do musically.' Each participant had a different path in terms of career progression. Participant 1 has moved between being a solo artist and a part of many bands throughout his career as a multi-instrumentalist; participant 2 has always been in one band; participant 3 is a solo artist who enlisted a backing band to work for them; participant 4 was a band bassist before deciding to work as a solo artist in a genre she always wanted to explore. When asked about whether or not they are signed, each participant had a range of answers. Participant 1 reflected on how 'eventually there was one time of my life where I managed to sign a record to a record company which was an amazing experience, but besides that I was independent before and I'm independent now.' Participant 2 had a very different answer, as their band is signed and has a manager. They feel confident that this still affords them creative freedom. Participant 3 has never been signed, which they relate to their identification as a true indie artist and the fact that their identity may not subscribe to a relationship with a label. Participant 4 reflected on how 'I've been independent… I don't know if I'd ever be particularly inclined towards being signed, except by a small label, and there's always the potential for a small label to suddenly be swallowed by a larger one. I don't particularly want to sell CDs – the future is very, very digital.' Participant 4 has engaged with listeners primarily online, and this has worked for them as an

independent artist. 'An album is soon to come out and people have bought the cassettes before they are even ready.' Participant 4 has a small but devoted following as an industrial musician, and this, for her, is something she has worked hard to achieve.

Finding 3: There are mixed experiences in relation to obstacles relating to gender identity that have gotten in the way of participants' musical careers.

Participant 1 notes how he is not aware of any obstacles relating to gender identity; he relates this to the fact that he is easy going and perhaps oblivious to other people. Participant 2 reflected on how they are female-bodied, and how their experience of both their gender identity and sex they are assigned at birth impact on their reception

> People don't take you seriously, it's a boy's club at the minute on our scene and that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to encourage young female, non-binary, trans, anything, like just to stand up and use the space because it's not the man's club anymore, it's for everybody and like everybody should be able to make music freely.   (Participant 2)

The experiences of participant 2 are echoed by participant 3, who has noted how their experiences of being assigned female at birth have led to them being discriminated against more because of how they appear rather than how they identify. Participant 4 reflected on how she is perceived in the music industry as a trans woman, which often means being considered as niche. Participant 4 is keen to emphasize the fact that her musical identity is not only about the trans experience, and that being trans is not all she has to talk about. Participant 4 reflected on how certain friends have grown fearful about coming out as trans, as there is the perception that venues may not be as willing to offer them gigs:

> 'Oh, do you compose your own music? Who's your producer? You should do this instead; I think maybe if you smiled more at the audience…' This stupid shit. So, that's what cis women get. Trans women get that plus a lot of other weird shit. You can tell trans women are women because we get the worst, shitty misogyny, filter off. (Participant 4)

Another point noted by participant 4 as an obstacle is their voice, which became an issue when booking gigs. One particular experience was where she called a venue to book a gig and said her name and the person on the other phone said, 'Is it though?' Misogyny is mentioned by participants 2, 3 and 4. For participants 2 and 3, despite not identifying as female, they are subject to misogynistic commentary. Participant 4, who is a trans woman, is discriminated against for being a woman or for being transgender. The links between gender identity and

assigned sex still play major roles in transgender people's identities and the way they are treated by society.

The next series of questions focus on venues, spaces and scenes. Specifically, the sections that are explored are Communities and the Music-Maker's place in them, Trans-inclusive and Cis-exclusive venues, spaces and scenes and Music and its spaces as a means for identity development. The questions that were posed to participants are: What communities or spaces specific to trans people have you interacted with? Can you explain the role that music plays in those communities or scenes? How do you fit within those communities or scenes? Is there such a thing in Ireland as trans-inclusive venues, spaces, scenes? Have you had any experiences of being excluded from spaces because of your gender identity? In what way has music, and the spaces in which it is played and performed, helped you realise your own gender identity? In relation to spaces, reference is made to both physical and cyber environments; several responses are limited due to the fact that participants had come out relatively recently.

Finding 4: Participants' views on spaces specific to transgender people are limited, as many have not heard of or interacted with many of these spaces.

When asked what communities or spaces specific to trans people the participants have interacted with, participant 1 stated how he has been involved in Pride every year, whilst also taking part in many queer scenes such as Street 66 and Panti bar. Participant 1 also discussed being a part of Irish trans groups on Facebook and also maintaining regular contact with Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI). He was also a part of festivals such as the Lady and Trans Fest in Sweeney's, where he performed as part of a band. Participant 1 also referenced alternative nights such as Fallopian Tunes, which he notes is during the time when he identified as lesbian. Alternative is a term described by Hesmindhalgh, Jones & Rauh (2019) as referring to forms of culture and cultural production, that stand outside or in opposition to the mainstream, thus positing a challenge to conventions. In relation to alternative music scenes, Participant 1 discussed how:

> you find that there's gender minorities there as well, because I don't know why, I don't know if it's something like they're drawn to that music, because they feel like they are in a minority and so is the music, is a bit alternative, certainly for me maybe that was why, that's why I'm kind of drawn to that music.   (Participant 1)

Participant 3 discussed how they could not even think of spaces they had interacted with members of the trans community. They went on to state that they could not think of any space that would accept non-binary people as transgender. Participant 3 expressed how new they are to identifying as non-binary, and how those accounts for their lack of knowledge on trans organisations available to them. However, in relation to discussing transgender people in music, participant 3 observes:

> I know that there's a lot of people in the punk scene, not the male punk scene, more the female non-binary, trans, punk scene in Belfast specifically … I know that they always sort of group together and play gigs, because they know that if it's all of them, it will be a relatively safer place for trans people to come watch a gig.   (Participant 3)

Participant 4 discussed being active in online communities such as Discord. The groups she is a part of are mainly with other creators she collaborates with in her music. She noted separations between music production groups and trans related groups, noting that there are no real musical outputs to the trans related discords she is a part of. Participant 4 is also a member of the industrial goth scene and has also attended similar night spaces to participant 1 such as Street 66. Participant 4 reflected on how she has stayed away from Panti-Bar due to the associations of middle classness and also, with a more specific example, its lack of political views. In particular, she compared Street 66 and PantiBar during the Eurovision in Israel. 'The way I've seen it described in two images is … like Street 66 boycott Eurovision, raising money for like Palestinian charity. Pantibar? Eurovision night and it's like side-by-side.' Participant 2 discussed more in relation to LGBTQ+ organisations such as The Rainbow Project (https://www.rainbow-project.org) which has offered their band platforms in the past and has worked to promote them. It is interesting to note from this how participants have gravitated towards scenes that offer space spaces as opposed to scenes that are specifically designed for transgender people. There is a clear absence of a defined transgender music scene in Ireland.

Finding 5: Most of the participants felt some level of exclusion in music venues.

In terms of trans-inclusive spaces, participant 1 discussed club nights like Spice Bag that reminded him of the nightlife in London. 'If you go to London, you can just go and be whoever you want to be and it's just fine'. Participant 1 took this time to bring up other things that are very important to him in an inclusive venue, such as bathrooms. Participant 1 spoke

about not going to spaces where they feel it would be a problem, as they have had negative experiences in the past:

> I've had cubical doors kicked in on me telling me to get out of the ladies' bathroom. This is a dilemma so I'd stroll into the women's and they'd be like what the hell are you doing here or people are kind of doing double takes going are they in the right place or… At one point it actually did kind of get a little bit violent when someone kicked in the door on me
>
> (Participant 1)

The issue of bathrooms for participant 1 is reflective of a problem experienced by most transgender people. In a study conducted in America on 27,715 transgender people, '24% of respondents had been told or asked if they were using the wrong bathroom, 9% had been stopped from entering or denied access to a restroom, 12% had been verbally harassed, physically attacked, and/or sexually assaulted when accessing or while using a restroom' (James et. al, 2016).

Participant 4 mentioned a difficult intersection because the music that is played in LGBTQ+ spaces and her own interests are not compatible. In talking about spaces that excluded them, Participant 3 discussed how this related to their appearance and how no one would assume they are transgender. If they were to exclude them, it would be because they assume they are a lesbian, as this is how they know people to see them in the past. Participant 4 mentioned "Fairytale of New York" as one song that has made her feel very excluded in music venues:

> but like if a bunch of cis straight people scream 'faggot' I don't care what piece of music they're listening to, I am immediately concerned about my fucking wellbeing. And to cut a long story short, it's because I don't have this tooth anymore, because two guys screamed that and kicked the fucking head off me in my early twenties.   (Participant 4)

Participant 2 spoke more on how they are made to feel as a performer:

> just to do with people coming to see shows, they would make you feel excluded. They would try to you know sort of force themselves on you, try to go with you at times, try to put you down, try to laugh at you.   (Participant 2)

On that topic, other participants mentioned how uncomfortable they could be made feel by consumers. Participant 4 discussed how some people could message her on Instagram with 'Did I see you in a bar in Dublin?' and this would create a sense of alarm for her well-being and safety knowing that this person knows the city she lives in. Participant 3 discussed how they have been fetishized by consumers, as is a problem for many transgender people but 'especially non-binary people because there is a fetishization of people with biologically female bodies but looking like little boys, it's not gay.' In a study conducted by Anzani, Lindley, Tognasso,

Galupo & Prunas (2021), one experience of a participant discussed the 'symbolic fragmentation of the body, which is separated from the rest of the person and considered as a mere instrument for the sexual pleasure of others.' An example is one participant who shared experiences of 'Being talked to like I was a sex toy, like being transgender was simply for the enjoyment of someone else'. Others in that study discussed how they are spoken of as a fun experiment, or as a legal way to explore their fantasies. This has made professional employment more dangerous when performing abroad in venues they do not know, because they are not sure if they are going to be targeted in venues. On another note, participant 4 mentioned 'women's collaborative spaces' as one space where they would presume exclusion:

> But a couple of times I think I could have been like I do not want to step in here because even at best they're going to be like oh sorry, this is for women only. And I'd be like yes, I know and then it'll just be fun and awkward which I don't want, so I'm just not going to do that.
>
> (Participant 4)

Finding 6: Participants related back to their own personal experiences to show how music and music spaces have helped in developing their sense of identity.

On the question of music and spaces as means for identity development, participant 4 presented some perspectives on scenes: 'there's a misunderstanding in my opinion of genre by a number of people where they go oh, it's rock if it's these things and it's punk if it's these things and I'm like no, you've got it backwards'. Participant 4 believes that the scene shapes the genre: 'a group of people doing a style of music in a certain area, with a certain aesthetic, with a certain clustering of signifiers is a scene and that continues to evolve and change over time.' In this way, she talks about how people in scenes naturally gravitate towards common interests which allows for exploration and expression of gender based on the degree of acceptance and permission. In this way, musical and creative experiences are potential means of affording greater self-expression in more holistic terms. Participant 1 discussed how music opened doors for him to be able to progress socially, specifically in more alternative scenes: 'When I was growing up, we didn't really have a word for trans. Actually, I think when I was growing up it was something like I remember being a teenager and seeing this programme called *My Transsexual Summer* (2011) and I was like oh my God that's me, like what the hell'. He also mentioned visibility of other music-makers like him made him feel more inspired to start taking an active role in music-making. Participant 3 also discussed how 'I was born in the early 1990s and there weren't words for those things. So, me and my friends that are that age,

we always knew that we weren't down the middle but we didn't know what was going on'. Participant 3 talked about how inspired they are by a drag performer named Gottmik. Gottmik is a drag queen featured in Season 13 of RuPaul's Drag Race and is the first trans man to compete on Drag Race:

> They act so feminine, and it doesn't bother them because the whole time we're saying gender is fluid or whatever, and then you say, 'Oh, when you're a trans man you have to have a beard and a six pack and all the rest of it', but they sort of broke that mould. And seeing that on TV, that was the first time I think I saw someone on TV that got what I meant. I didn't want to be a masculine man, I kind of want to be a little fruity guy, like this kind of feminine and just doesn't care.   (Participant 3)

Participant 3 also talked about their music-making in this context, and how they have used song writing in order to express feelings in a sort of 'public-secret' format. They are confessing their thoughts in a poetic and somewhat abstract manner to make the meaning of lyrics subtle, yet personally resonant. Participant 2 related their experiences of music-making to their upbringing. In Northern Ireland, they talked about how they came from a straight white family background that followed the cycle of dating someone, falling in love, having children, having kids and raising a family and they are one of the few to break that cycle. 'My family always called me the Ugly Duckling … because I'm the rare one out of them'. Participant 2 also related to the experiences of Participant 1 with regard to scenes and how they helped with realising the participant's identity.

Finding 7: Participants expressed limited engagement with other transgender music-makers in Ireland, with some stating they do not know any.

On the subject of relationships with other trans music makers, participant 1 discussed how he has seen a lot more non-binary performers on the global stage, but has yet to see any trans male music-makers in the Irish music scene, a situation which he finds disheartening:

> you always try and find yourself in other people and whatever line of your career or whatever your passion is you always want to find people similar to you so you can identify and you can bounce ideas around or idealise or whatever you want to do   (Participant 1)

Despite feeling like there is a lack of representation of trans men in the Irish music scene, participant 1 retains hope that maybe there are other trans men out there in the scene and he just has not met them yet. If not, he hopes to serve as inspiration for more trans men to take part in music. Participant 4 talked about how she has served as a safety for people in her circle to come out as trans:

_____

a number of people would have been part of the scene and then over the COVID period have messaged me and been like hey, _____, so how do I, what's the… how do you trans a gender? And I've been like okay, and I think about five/six people now at this point have like updated their pronouns and you know, various other things over the last two years.

(Participant 4)

Participant 4 related this back to anti-trans groups and says that they're right in one way, in that there is a social contagion element where once someone sees what is possible, they might start thinking about it and therefore, may start realising that this relates to them. This relates to participant 1's views of representation, where one can inspire peers to come out and this may also be why trans people in music are still invisible; there is not enough representation out there to convince trans music-makers that they will be safe. When asked about why transgender people lean more towards alternative scenes, participant 4 stated 'I don't think we make these choices; these choices are made for us'. She proceeds to talk about how she knows a woman who played in a punk band because it was an excuse for her to wear a kilt. Participant 4 talked about how she gravitated towards the goth scene because she could wear makeup, fishnets and skirts. She mentioned some stereotypes around trans women such as the belief that all trans women play bass guitar or that trans women in music orient themselves towards music that heavily distorts the voice such as Laura Les of 100 GECS and SOPHIE who both use overpitched vocals. Participant 4 suggests that this could be because they have voice dysphoria: 'I think generally trans women tend to orient themselves more towards music where they're not going to feel put out by questions like "oh who's the guy singing on this album?"'. Participant 4 discussed collaborating on her upcoming album with another Irish trans woman in a related genre which is rare as she has mainly collaborated with people from the UK and the US.

think as a whole scene in Ireland, look we're a small country, we've a small number of people, it's just going to filter and filter and filter down, the number of people specifically working in the sub-genre of music I'm into is going to be very tiny anyway and then trans again, much, much, much smaller.

(Participant 4)

Participants 2 and 3 did not have much to add on the topic, as they are both still quite new to their identities and other trans music-makers do not necessarily know they are transgender.

Finding 8: Participants all had gender diverse role models in music that inspired them, but none of them are Irish examples.

When asked about a lineage of transgender music-makers, participant 1 discussed the more recent inspiration he has felt from artists such as Ezra Furman and SOPHIE. When

growing up, participant 1 gravitated towards David Bowie as a source of musical inspiration but also because he had long hair, was wearing dresses and was just incredibly ahead of his time. Another artist he mentioned was Brian Molko from Placebo.

> he was incredible as well and again it wasn't these people weren't coming out and saying I'm trans, they were simply expressing themselves differently through their gender appearance I suppose. They were just playing with gender but the things that that did for future generations I think was incredibly important   (Participant 1)

The idea of tracing a lineage for participant 1 is highly important because he states how there is really nothing there for him to know what came before. David Bowie and Brian Molko, as he stated, are playing with gender rather than identifying as trans and though this is inspiring it is not a part of transgender identifying musicians. 'I wish I could automatically just say pick out ten people from our history that I would just know'. Participant 1 is adamant they are not a pioneer for what they are doing, and that all they want to focus on is writing songs that people will like and enjoy, and hopefully create more visibility for Irish trans men. Participant 2 talked about how they do feel that they're continuing a lineage: 'you want things to get better, you don't want that they stay the same like because there's so much room for improvement.' On the question of whether they are a pioneer, similar to participant 1, they felt that they are not setting a new bar or introducing a new concept, but they have hopes that one day they will be more prominent in the music industry and working towards creating more representation for non-binary artists. Participant 3 talked about Laura Jane Grace from Against Me! as emblematic of how transgender people have become more visible in music. Participant 3 is a more ambivalent about being a pioneer or role model, because they are both an active non-binary and lesbian activist, but they said that they will continue trying to be an influence for whoever is listening. Participant 4 talked about the Irish music industry and its general reluctance to accept difference in any form. When asked about whether it bothers her that her music is not as well represented, she stated:

> if I wanted to make music that would be well regarded immediately and publicly and be in the charts, I should have had the good sense to be born cis, I should have always been very skinny and I should have immediately started on my career before I was able to walk and I also should have had the good sense to be born to wealthier parents. So realistically I'm not bothered by it, this simply comes with the territory as it were, I am aware of the nicheness of my music and I'm never expecting any kind of mainstream or substantive appeal.   (Participant 4)

Participant 4 feels she is part of an emerging generation of people who are trans, doing music in a specific scene or related scene rather than as part of any lineage. She personally does not feel 'descended' from Dana International and cannot identify anyone who links to her. There

are many trans people she is contemporaneous with such as Ada Rook and Katie Day. Personally, she sees herself as a continuation of the scene and an evolution. Though she says she is not a pioneer, she does acknowledge she is a part of a new wave.

Finding 9: Each participant had words of advice for transgender music-makers, relating to their own experiences.

When asked 'Reflections of a transgender music-maker in the wider Irish music scene today, are there any benefits or what is your take on it?', each participant had words of inspiration for the generation ahead. Participant 1 discussed how as a musician you're supposed to put yourself out there, you have to write up press releases and you have to find what sets you apart from everyone else. He warns to be careful of press exploiting your difference and stay true to yourself. Participant 1 has made a conscious effort not to exploit the fact that he is trans, but he states that his own experiences without role models suggests that change is needed. Participant 2 feels that there are nicer people in the queer music scene and that queer spaces can be safer and more encouraging for emerging musicians. Participant 3 talked about how 'They have started to bring out a lot more funding that is specifically for the underrepresented … We're just getting into an equity over equality situation now'. Safe and Sound, a place that offers more opportunities for gigs, is a notable mention of a space participant 3 felt is distinguished for trying to make gigs safe for vulnerable people.

Participant 4 took a different approach when talking about identity.

> Irish people have an identity based on negation to an extent … we often see ourselves as being not British and not American … So what's actually ironically useful is if you look at the conservative transphobia in the UK, or the Republican transphobia in the US, Irish people probably more naturally, unless they're shitheads, sympathise. (Participant 4)

The perks of this negated identity however, for participant 4, is that Irish musicians tend to be more receptive towards each other compared to musicians from other countries who have had tendencies to be very egotistical and not interested in collaborating with 'smaller artists'. As a trans woman, participant 4 feels it is possible to live on the fringes and no one is there to kick her out of the fringes, unlike other places where it is not possible to exist.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

Through gathering the perspectives of music-makers, there is room here to capture a moment in time for what it is like as a transgender music-maker in Ireland. Though these participants are anonymous, their perspectives are all of professional music-makers who are all rising performers in their respective genres and locations. Though there are some very negative experiences, there are also many positive ones, and this represents a powerful assessment of what it is like to be a transgender music-maker in the 2020s. The main findings from the interviews are: participants had very differing beginnings in their involvement with music; participants careers had similarities and differences in their career development; there are mixed experiences in relation to obstacles relating to gender identity that have gotten in the way of participants' musical careers: participants' views on spaces specific to transgender people are very limited in discovery, as many have not heard or interacted with many of these spaces; most of the participants felt some level of exclusion in music venues – which is similar in ways to the survey where some venues are regarded as being less inclusive than others; participants related back to their own personal experiences to show how music and music spaces have helped in developing their own sense of identity; participants discussed very limited engagement with other transgender music-makers in Ireland, with some stating they do not know any; participants all had gender diverse role models in music that inspired them, but none of them are Irish examples – which is also a case in the survey where the participants who named gender-diverse role models never mentioned any who are Irish; finally, each participant had words of advice for transgender music-makers, relating to their own experiences. Now that the data is gathered, this thesis will conclude by using the data that has been gathered in all three chapters in order to create a documented history of transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland.

Chapter 5 A Concise History of Transgender Music-Making and Consumption in Ireland: Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis sought to cover a variety of areas to assess the progression of transgender music-making and consumption to the present time and to capture a moment in time, documenting the present for the future so that the cycle of invisibility in documentation of transgender people is broken. This thesis was guided by the overarching research question: What is the socio-historical context of transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland, and how has it shaped the experiences of transgender people?

The central findings of this thesis stem from multiple areas, as explored through chapters two, three and four. These areas are documentation of transgender people in Ireland, documentation of transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland, soundtrack of a transgender person in Ireland, transgender music icons and music makers, scenes, venues and transgender music, and interviews with transgender music-makers.

The first main finding regarding documentation of transgender people in Ireland is that transgender people in Ireland before the 2000s were often viewed negatively in public commentary with an example of Debbie, a sex-worker who was reported on in 1985 to be essentially a crossdresser, tricking men into homosexuality. The Friends of Eon was the first established transgender group in Ireland and was co-founded in the 1970s by Claire Farrell and another trans woman named Lola, who ran a weekly trans club called Lola's Club in the Parliament Inn in Dublin from 1977-mid 1980s. The 2000s were an important time for transgender people in terms of promoting visibility and engaging in activism. During this time, TENI was founded in 2006. In addition, the world's first trans male adult movie star featured on the cover of GCN July 2007. The 2010s have seen far more celebration and visibility of transgender people. Multiple transgender people have featured in GCN magazine covers and main segments including Laverne Cox, an American trans actress.

Regarding documentation of transgender music-making and consumption, there is a return to the Friends of Eon's co-founder Lola who ran Lola's Club weekly. There are links of the name Lola to transgender topics through The Kinks song *Lola* who sing about a transgender woman. The name Lola's club could have been used as a hidden signal for transgender people to know it is a safe space for them. With regard to bands, the Virgin Prunes were a prominent finding. The Virgin Prunes are a band who formed in 1977 who were known for crossdressing which shocked and angered some members of audience during a performance. This band are

an example of a challenge towards gender stereotypes over forty years ago. Dana International is a transgender performer from Israel who won the Eurovision in 1998. She appeared in Ireland for an interview on the Late Late Show where she was received quite positively by the Irish audience who openly applauded and celebrated her win. Despite the rising visibility of transgender people in newspapers and media, reference to transgender music-making and consumption in Ireland during the 2000s are sparse. The two main examples are Anohni, who is a transgender singer with family in Ireland, also a prominent former member of Antony and the Johnsons, and Breakfast on Pluto. Breakfast on Pluto is a movie about a transgender woman named Kitten in the 1960s and 1970s. It heavily features music as the playlist was curated by Gavin Friday, former member of the Virgin Prunes. Kitten moves from travelling with a glam rock band to working as one of the singing and dancing Wombles. This movie combines a sense of Irishness with songs such as Paddy's Irish Clan – *Fuck the British Army* with other unique songs that play onto the transgender experience such as Joe Dolan's *Good Looking Woman*. In contrast to the lack of content regarding transgender music-making in the 2000s, the 2010s are a decade of richness. Trans-Fusion started in 2013, which is an arts festival based in Dublin featuring an event called Gotta Get It Out of My Head which features transgender musicians among other creatives who perform on stage. Major transgender acts that emerged in the 2010s include ELM, a four-piece alternative baroque pop band; SOAK, a non-binary musician who is a winner of two Album of the Year awards and prominent artist; and Kitt Philippa who is also a non-binary musician and has also been a recipient of Album of the Year along with three of their first singles being nominated for Best Song.

In the soundtrack of a transgender person in Ireland section, it was identified that rock music is the most popular genre out of fifteen mentioned with pop music following behind. Cavetown was the highest mentioned artist out of a total of five hundred and forty-two artists, having a total of twelve mentions. Wrabel's *The Village* and Cavetown's *Home* are the two most frequently mentioned songs out of seven hundred and forty songs, both receiving seven mentions each. Though this is not statistically significant, it does showcase that there is not one singular transgender experience but many complex different life experiences that are represented in each participants' lives by many different artists.

Regarding transgender music icons and music-makers, SOPHIE, David Bowie and Laura Jane Grace are all mentioned as prominent icons who were not mentioned as prominently in the soundtrack to life section. The nuance in genres between these artists is interesting with SOPHIE being a hyperpop artist, David Bowie being considered glam rock/pop/art rock artist

and Laura Jane Grace a punk artist. In reference to memorabilia, many participants talked about the moments they had experienced in concerts, listening to songs for the first time, and watching performances that reflected a sense of euphoria. Some participants shifted from the original question surrounding memorabilia into other spheres, such as their personal memories of interacting with live music. Overall, there is a clear blanket of safety that music can provide for transgender people. In some cases, it can provide teaching moments that have aided some participants in introducing positive life lessons to transgender people who are currently in transition. For another, it's the power music can play in listeners realising their own identity.

When discussing scenes, venues and transgender music consumers and music-makers, the rock scene is the most mentioned and not in a positive light. It is an important finding that despite rock music being the most mentioned genre in the soundtrack to life, the rock scene is suggested to not be an inclusive space. LGBTQ+ nightclubs are regarded as mostly inclusive though there have been participants discuss being looked down on in these scenes as 'not trans enough'. The most outstanding non-inclusive spaces are nightclub and pub spaces. Negative spaces have impacted on performers and consumers entering venues with some refusing to be there due to hearing about negative incidents from other transgender people in the past. 20% of the participants mentioned how bathrooms are a central issue that have stopped them from partaking in scenes and venues, due to poor past experiences or hearing about poor experiences from other transgender people.

When interviewing four transgender music-makers, there were a total of nine findings. Participants had very differing beginnings in their music careers. Participants careers had similarities and differences in their development. There are mixed experiences in relation to obstacles relating to gender identity that have gotten in the way of participants' musical careers. Participants views on spaces specific to transgender people are limited, as many have not heard of or interacted with many of these spaces. Most of the participants felt some level of exclusion in music venues. Participants related back to their own personal experiences to show how music and music spaces have helped in developing their sense of identity. Participants expressed limited engagement with other transgender music-makers in Ireland, with some stating they do not know any. Participants all had gender diverse role models in music that inspired them, but none of them are Irish examples. Finally, each participant had words of advice for transgender music-makers relating to their own experiences.

This research has boasted ample opportunities for more exploration in this area. Firstly, due to COVID-19 interfering with research into the archives until the later stages of the thesis

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– a project focused more on physical archives and the documentation of transgender music-makers and music consumption is an important one in defining the past. Additionally, though there are only four interviewees in this study, there were more who were interested in taking part and it is unfortunate that they could not be included due to the limitations of time and space in this thesis. More focused research on transgender music-makers and their experiences would give more opportunity to interview participants and gain a wider sample of data. Finally, an opportunity to conduct fieldwork in scenes where transgender people make and consume music would open more doors in understanding how transgender people experience music and how it may differ between scenes and between cities.

Appendices

Appendix A Terminology

Androgynous

A person whose gender identity is both male and female, or neither male nor female. They might present as a combination of male and female or as sometimes male and sometimes female. (TENI, 2021)

Crossdresser

A person who wears clothing, accessories, jewellery or make-up not traditionally or stereotypically associated with their assigned sex. Crossdressers are typically comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth, but crossdressing can also be an initial stage of exploring one's gender identity prior to coming out as trans.

(TENI, 2021)

Deadname

To deadname someone is to call or refer to them by the name they no longer use, AKA their dead name. The former name is usually their birth name, from before their transition. While technically you can deadname any person who now uses a different name, the term is used in relation to trans, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary people, and it is considered a violent act. (Resnick, A. 2021)

Drag

To do drag is to dress up or present yourself differently than your everyday gender, usually for expression or performance. Dragging is not an indicator of a person's gender identity. A drag queen or drag king is also distinct from a trans person.

(Teo, Y S., *What is drag?* 2021)

Dysphoria

Term used to describe the discomfort caused by an incongruence between one's true gender and their sex assigned at birth. (TENI, 2021)

Gender Binary

The gender binary is the idea that there are only two genders: man and woman. These genders are considered opposite to one another. Different expectations are placed on each gender in terms of behavior, roles, dress, and more.

(Abrams, M. & Ferguson, S. 2022)

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that people use to refer to others. They are a useful way to replace nouns such as names. Using the wrong pronouns can be offensive or even harmful. Ignoring a person's pronouns can also imply that people who are under the transgender umbrella — such as those who are transgender, nonbinary, or gender non-conforming — do not exist.   (Selby, J. *What Pronouns Are and How to Use Them*, 2022)

Queer

A range of non-normative gender and sexual practices and is able to move freely between the fixed identity categories of male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual.   (Taylor, J. *Playing it Queer*, 2012)

Transgender Binary

An umbrella term for those whose current gender identity is the "opposite" binary gender category (male or female) as their birth-assigned sex category. (Bradford & Catalpa, 2018, p. 4)

Transgender Non-Binary

Various umbrella terms for gender identities that fall outside of the binary of man or woman and thus do not conform to traditional gender roles. (TENI, 2021)

Transgender/Trans

An umbrella term which refers to any person whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. This includes non-binary identities. (TENI, 2021)

Appendix B Outdated and/or offensive words used in Archival Research section

Gender Identity Disorder - This diagnosis was removed from the DSM-V and replaced with Gender Dysphoria.

Sex-Change Operation - Generally considered derogatory; has been replaced by the terms 'transition' or 'surgery'

Transsexual - The term 'transsexual' is hotly debated in trans communities with some people strongly identifying with the term while others strongly rejecting it.

Transvestism - Crossdresser is the preferred term as transvestite can be understood as a medical term.

Appendix C Interview Questions

1. How do you identify?
2. So, how did you become a musician?
3. How has your career evolved over the years
   Venues, Audiences, Were you signed/independent
4. Are there any obstacles from your gender identity that have gotten in the way of your musical career?
5. What communities or spaces specific to trans people have you interacted with?
6. Can you explain the role that music plays in those communities or scenes?
7. How do you fit within those communities or scenes?
8. Is there such a thing in Ireland as trans-inclusive venues, spaces, scenes?
   a. What are your experiences on them?
9. Have you had any experiences of being excluded from spaces because of your gender identity?
10. In what way has music, and the spaces in which it is played and performed, helped you realise your own gender identity?
11. How has your relationship with other transgender music-makers, or lack thereof, impacted on your sense of identity within the wider Irish music scene?
12. How do you feel transgender music-makers experiences differ from cisgender music-makers?
13. Do you feel that you're a part of a lineage of trans or non-binary performers?
14. Were you inspired by a transgender or non-binary role model or do you feel you're a pioneer?
15. Reflections of a transgender music-maker in the wider Irish music scene today, are there any benefits or what is your take on it?
16. Is there any other transgender music artists you know that you think I should speak to for this research?

Appendix D E-Survey Questions:

1. *Mandatory question* By participating in this online survey you agree for this survey data to be housed by Microsoft Forms. Please state yes or no to consenting to this data being housed by Microsoft Forms.
2. How old are you? (Tick box category: 18-25, 25-40, 40-60, 60-80, 80+)

3. How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Short answer question, used to group identities in order to assess the sample of this survey and if it is sharing opinions from more than just one or two identities)

4. If your life was turned into a biopic film, could you describe the music soundtrack (songs and artists)? (Long answer question which will list preferably around 5 songs)

5. Do you participate in music-making in any form? E.g. songwriting, performing, etc. (Multiple choice question detailing: Performing, Songwriting, Jamming in your room, Singing in the Shower, Music Teaching, Other (Please Specify)

6. What music scenes, venues or communities were/are you involved in? (Short answer question)

7. Can you describe what those scenes, venues or communities like? (Long answer question)

8. In what way have these scenes, venues or communities helped you come to terms with your own gender identity? (Long answer question)

9. How has music impacted your sense of identity? (Long answer question)

10. Have you encountered any transgender music-makers, be they amateur or professional, in Ireland? If so, could you provide names and indicate the genre of music they play? (Tick Box: Yes, and specify names and genres or No)

11. Has the visibility of transgender music-makers, or lack thereof, impacted on your sense of identity? (Short answer question)

12. What is your most memorable experience relating to transgender musical icons? Can you explain why this musical memory is so notable? e.g. a particular concert, gig or show, an important album from your youth, memorable song, music festival, TV or radio show (Long answer Question)

If you would be interested in engaging with this research further through an interview, you can leave your email here. (Tick Box: Yes and leave email, or No)

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