

**GENDER EXPRESSION AND GENDERED EXPERIENCES
OF MALE MUSICIANS IN FINNISH UNDERGROUND
MUSIC SCENES**

Una Harnett
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Author Una Harnett	
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Abstract <p>The aim of this study is to shed light on Finnish underground music scenes and the gender expression and gendered experiences of underground male musicians. The study investigates how male musicians in Finnish underground music scenes portray their gender and display masculinities. The theoretical framework relies on theories and concepts from the field of gender studies, and more specifically critical studies on men, and popular cultural studies of music. The theoretical concepts are mainly developed by philosopher and gender studies scholar Judith Butler and sociologist R.W. Connell.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four semi-professional Finnish male musicians about their experiences regarding male musicianship, gender expression, and gendered experiences in Finnish underground music scenes. The data was analysed by utilising theory-led qualitative content analysis.</p> <p>The analysis showed portrayals of alternate masculinities in Finnish underground music scenes. The gender portrayal of the male musicians used a combination of masculine, feminine, and androgenous features to create the artistic self during performances. There were also experiences of pressures regarding gender expression and what are expected of cis gendered males. The most novel findings were qualities related to vulnerability and sensitivity of male underground musicians.</p> <p>Furthermore, the study paints a picture on current experiences and pressures male musicians have faced regarding a lack of diverse male representation in their youth, in popular culture, and in their personal lives. There is a need for more information on gender discourses regarding male vulnerability and sensitivity in the field of popular musicology and critical studies on men. Through studies, such as this, it is possible to find out more about the structural issues that impact all genders uniformly.</p>	
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Tiivistelmä <p>Tämän tutkimuksen on tarkoitus avata sekä havainnollistaa suomalaisten underground musiikkiskenejen miesmuusikoiden sukupuolirepresentaatiota sekä sukupuolittuneita kokemuksia. Tutkimuksessa tutkitaan aiheita liittyen suomalaisiin underground musiikkiskeneihin, sukupuolen ilmaisuun, sukupuolittuneisuuteen, miesten herkkyyteen, miesroolimalleihin sekä miesten representaatioon. Keskityn miesten maskuliinisuuksien näkyvyyteen suomalaisissa underground musiikkiskeneissä. Teoreettinen viitekehys nojaa teorioihin ja konsepteihin sukupuolentutkimuksen kentältä sekä tarkemmin ottaen kriittiseen miestutkimukseen sekä populaarin musiikin kulttuuritutkimukseen. Teoriat, joita hyödynnetään tässä tutkimuksessa ovat pääosin filosofi Judith Butlerin ja sosiologi R.W. Connellin kehittämiä.</p> <p>Teemahaastattelut suoritettiin haastatellen neljää suomalaista puoliammattilaista miesmuusikkoa heidän kokemuksistaan liittyen miesmuusikkouteen, sukupuolen ilmaisuun sekä sukupuolikokemuksiin suomen underground musiikkiskeneissä. Aineisto analysoitiin käyttäen sisällönanalyysin kuuluvaa teemoittelua.</p> <p>Analyysin mukaan vaihtoehtoista maskuliinisuutta esiintyy suomalaisissa vaihtoehtoympäristöissä. Miesmuusikoiden sukupuolen ilmaisussa on nähtävissä yhdistelmiä maskuliinisista, feminiinisistä ja androgyynisistä piirteistä liittyen artistiminän rakentamiseen. Miesmuusikot olivat kokeneet miehenmalliin sekä cis-mieheyteen liittyviä paineita sekä ahdistusta. Uudenlaisia löydöksiä liittyi underground-miesmuusikoiden herkkyyteen sekä sensitiivisyyteen.</p> <p>Tutkimus kuvastaa tämänhetkisiä kokemuksia ja paineita, joita miesmuusikot kokevat liittyen monimuotoiseen miesrepresentaation puutteeseen heidän nuoruudessaan, populaarikulttuurissa sekä henkilökohtaisessa elämässään. Miesten herkkyyteen liittyville sukupuolidiskursseille on tarvetta populaarimusiikintutkimuksen sekä kriittisen miestutkimuksen kentällä. Tämän tyyppisten tutkimusten avulla on mahdollista saada selville enemmän tietoa rakenteellisista ilmiöistä, jotka vaikuttavat kaikkiin sukupuoliin.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

In July of 2022, I came across an article written by Lotta Lahokoski (2022), in an issue of *Voima* newspaper that concentrated on Men. She interviewed Finnish male actor-singer Antti Autio about the pressures and expectations that come with being a man and a male performer. Autio is known as a musician for his tender lyrics combined with a peaceful and tranquil stage presence. Antti Autio is also very much connected to the Finnish indie music scene, where he is currently one of the most known performers alongside Litku Klemetti, Jukka Nousiainen, and Lyyti. According to Autio, everything a person does in their lifetime can be seen as social and political. Autio also mentions how he has never been “masculine enough as a man” and acknowledges pressures regarding the performance of gender while acting on stage. Something that is talked about in media is how heterosexuality is often seen as a free pass for male musicians. Also femininity can be seen as something scary by males and is often connected to homosexuality. In the same issue of *Voima* newspaper, Maiko Karvinen (2022) implies how the band *Kiss* is a great example of how heterosexual men are scared of their feminine side. In this article it is also mentioned how American rapper Lil Nas X and Finnish singer Isaac Sene are great examples of artists in popular culture who flirt with their feminine features. Kalle Laanterä from a mental health society for youth mentions Finnish musical phenomenon *Käärijä*, who represented Finland in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2023 in an article in an issue of *Länsiväylä*. He sees *Käärijä* as someone who represents a new kind of fresh version of a man. Laanterä sees *Käärijä* as a representative of underground subcultures, where men are allowed to represent themselves more diversly (Ruissalo, 2023.) These articles made me question the one-sided and concise representation of male musicians.

Wessels (2003, pp. 190–209) describes masculinity in music research as something that is often looked at through a visual lens, which is also connected to my standpoint. I am studying extra-musical features in music environments. Leppänen and Rojola (2004, pp. 70–89) state how music has been often perceived as an autonomous phenomenon compared to other art forms in the field of musicology and in music research. For decades, music was studied as its own entity and its own phenomenon by removing it from the social world. It has been seen as something very

abstract. I am intending to study issues related to gender and gendering in music by acknowledging it being part of the social world. By revealing structural issues, we can further diversify the representation of all kinds of people. By conducting four interviews with Finnish male underground musicians. I wanted to gain insight into the representation of gender among male musicians and alternate masculinities in Finnish underground music scenes. This is something that has not been studied in Finland from a similar standpoint.

There still seems to be a lack of diverse male representation in society, which in turn can put pressures on people who identify as male. All genders face pressures regarding structural and cultural issues, however, some more than others. The gender binary¹ has emerged from strict structural requirements that correlate into pressures that affect all genders. I would like to find out if similar issues are found in underground culture, which is often seen as a counter force towards mainstream and popular culture's lack of diversity (see e.g. Bennett, 2004 ; 2019.) My aim is to find out if social pressures and external structures play a role in the gender expression of male musicians. I am concentrating on gender identity and the performance of gender in Finnish underground music culture. Often features that have been considered traditionally masculine have been part of a normative way of musical expression in popular music. Qualities associated with masculinity in the contemporary Western world are often rationality, heterosexuality, sexualization of women, homophobia, and violence (see e.g. Houston, 2012). It will be fruitful to find out more about how different genders view non-normative gender expression in music spaces, and if gender expression and performativity are viewed as safe when one's gender is expressed non-normatively. Of course there is the possibility that white males may explore their gender more safely, because of their normatively safe position in society. My intention is to find out if Finnish underground scenes are safe spaces for musicians to experiment with their gender expression; experimenting with masculine and feminine features. Notably, a lot of underground subcultures are viewed as places where gender queer people are able to express themselves safely. In my thesis, I am also concentrating on the male musical influences and role models of Finnish underground male musicians and if there has been a lack of diversity regarding the male representation. I am contemplating this topic by concentrating on the male role models that have influenced their decisions to get into music, who may be e.g., relatives, friends or role models in popular media and music.

The study can be seen as important because structural issues related to gender roles need more studying, especially regarding music environments. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) local constructions of masculinity can help us get

¹ Gender binary refers to the concept and belief where sex is binary and determines gender. Through this classification gender/sex is divided into two categories (Hyde et al., 2019, pp. 171.)

a better and more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics. Gender dynamics are something that are not studied vastly regarding males. Gender issues are often studied from a female standpoint; but still, it has to be noted how academic studies have been conducted by men for centuries and were therefore viewed from a male point of view. However, in my study, my standpoint is slightly different, for I identify as a woman, who studies men from a critical standpoint.

Gendering is something that has been connected to females, queers, trans, and non-binary people. It will be interesting to find out if alternate masculinities conveyed by males are seen as anti-masculine or just as part of the vast spectrum of different ways to convey male masculinity. Underground music scenes are usually seen as places where experimentation is possible even desirable. Underground environments could be argued to be safer places to experiment with one's musicianship and gender. Performing and experimenting with one's gender may not be something that the participants have thought about, however it is something that may come up during the interviews. On the other hand, experimenting with one's gender in underground culture can be seen as a safer act for males who represent their gender initially in their personal lives in a normative way.

Firstly, in section 2., I am going to go through the theoretical framework of the study. In section 3., I am setting out the methodological background of the study and going through the process of data collection and analysis. In section 4., I am presenting the analysed data and going through the results. Then lastly, in section 5., I am concluding the study by summarising the results and introducing questions that have come up during the study that may need further investigating.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is interdisciplinary and draws theoretically from gender studies, critical studies on men, and popular musicology. I am using academic literature and research that are drawn from the fields of gender studies, more specifically critical studies on men, music sociology, and cultural studies of music. Academic studies on the social world aim towards emancipation (Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen, 2010, pp. 9–36). In the first subchapter I am looking at literature around gender studies and more closely critical studies on men. I am concentrating on gender, gender construction, and the performance of gender. In the second subchapter I am going through literature on masculinities and popular male musicians' performance of gender. In the third subchapter I am reviewing literature and research around underground music scenes and underground culture. Lastly, in the fourth subchapter I am concentrating on the display of Finnish stereotypes and especially Finnish male stereotypes in Finnish culture and how they may differ from underground culture.

2.1 Gender Studies and Critical Studies on Men

The definition and differentiation of *sex* and *gender* are an important place to start. Sex is related to the biological state of a person, whereas gender is seen as a cultural construct, which can be seen as a social, variable, and changeable concept (Herndon, 1990, pp. 11–12.) Judith Butler, an American philosopher and scholar in gender studies, sees the term *gender* as a primary way to distinguish people rather than using the term *sex*. *Gender* is a cultural interpretation of *sex* (Butler, 1990, pp. 9–18.) According to Marianne Liljeström (1996) who is a researcher in the field of gender studies, gender is constructed by using the basis of the biological term *sex*, which is often seen as pre-existing before gender. She sees gender absorbing the biological sex and replacing it (Liljeström, 1996, pp. 120.) Leppänen and her team (2014, pp. 243) describe sex being

related to biological factors such as explicit signs of gender, hormones, and chromosomes. Thus, gender is defined by cultural, social, and historical matters (Leppänen et al. 2014, 243.)

A *cisgendered* person is someone whose' gender identity corresponds with the sex that is assigned at birth. *Cis* is also the opposite of the word *trans*, which both come from Latin. A cisgendered man is assigned a man at birth (seta.fi, n.d.) The group of subjects in my study all identified as heterosexual men and represented a very small portion of Finnish underground male musicians. Heteronormativity and heterosexuality are attributes that are seen as self-evident in our society (Lehtonen, 1999, pp. 121-122). Anything that differs from this is basically seen as non-normative. Lehtonen's views are in line with Butler's (1988; 1990) views on the *sex-gender* distinction and its dichotomies; what it is like to be a "proper man" or a "proper woman". Butler sees gender as a social construct that we create in the social environment we exist in. According to Peltonen (2012), Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti see gender as being culturally defined and as an embodiment of power relations.

According to Butler's theory (2004, pp. 33), gender is performative and consists of what is socially constructed and not something that comes into existence through what a person initially is. The term *doing gender* is often used to describe gender expression in normative social situations. For example, Butler (1990) explains how gender is a social act that we perform, time and time again. Social ideals and boundaries are based on structural binary sex norms that are encoded in our society. Language can affect the way we view gender in the sense of "it's a boy" or "it's a girl" for example. Butler (2004) argues that institutionalised regulations affect the performance of gender. The question that Butler picks up on "is there a gender that pre-exists its regulation, or is it the case that, in being subject to regulation, the gendered subject emerges, produced in and through that particular form of subjection?" (Butler, 2004, pp. 41.) Is there a construction of gender that is not affected by social norms or are all portrayals of gender regulated? The Finnish underground music scene is not something that has experienced institutionalisation, so a display of alternate masculinities can be seen as possible.

The theoretical framework around *gender performativity* is a useful tool when examining today's gender representation of male musicians. A lot of theorists in this field concentrate on the maintenance men and women have to go through to uphold normative beliefs of how each gender should act and live their lives (Acker, 1990; Alexander, 2003; Butler, 1990; Dworkin & Messner, 1999; Georgakopoulou, 2005; Houston, 2012.) According to Butler (1990) gender performativity can have a subversive effect on gender norms. I want to explore male musicians in particular and possible displays of alternate performances of gender, to find out what Finland's

underground looks like regarding its male representation. Garrison (2018) suggests that the undoing of gender is up to people who are part of the gender binary. This is why the display of alternate masculinities and challenging gender norms is so important.

Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities are done critically by men, women, and non-binary people on men, masculinities, and (male)femininities. This type of research aims to question and dismantle male ideals by utilising critical thinking (Hearn, 2004; Aho, Nieminen & Salo, 2021, pp. 10.) The reason why this type of research is defined by the word *critical* is because previous research has mostly concentrated on white men, who are synonymous with genderless people. Studies on men have usually forgotten power dynamics around gender issues which is why critical studies on men can be seen as closely connected to feminist studies on gender (Aho, Nieminen & Salo, 2021, pp. 10–11.) The fact that we are able to talk about men and view men within the context of gender has been achieved through the women’s movement, women’s studies, feminism, and gender equality in politics (Jokinen, 2012, 14). An important quality within the field of critical studies on men is that femininities and feminine attributes are also taken into account when examining men (Aho, Nieminen & Salo, 2021, pp. 12). Critical studies on men have progressed very slowly in Finland because of the lack of support from the men’s movement (Jokinen, 2012, pp. 15). Critical studies on men acknowledge questions of power especially gendered power. According to Hearn (2004, pp. 49–72) critical studies on men should concentrate more on men as a category and how its socially constructed, and not on how these species offer male masculinities. In most Western capitalist societies men are still seen as structurally and interpersonally dominant.

One is not born a man; manhood is something that is achieved² (Jokinen, 2003, pp. 10).

Late Arto Jokinen (2003, pp. 7–9) who has been viewed as Finland’s leading researchers in the field of critical studies on men and masculinities talks about how in spoken language the term masculinity refers to matters, phenomena, and acts that are seen as “manly”. What is viewed culturally as masculine helps us distinguish masculine phenomena, but it can also limit the possibilities of detecting it. Jokinen sees actual people as being placed somewhere in the middle and not seen as fitting extreme ends of the spectrum. Men can even allow themselves to embrace pieces of femininity when they are able to see different versions of how men act in their everyday lives. Jokinen continues by saying how a man is expected to be a “real man” with more masculine than feminine qualities. Masculine qualities can be seen as something men aim for. The more men represent qualities that are connected to the

² Orig. Finn. Mieheksi ei synnytä, miehuus ansaitaan (Jokinen, 2003, pp. 10).

hegemonic version of their gender, the more respected the man is (Jokinen, 2003, 10.) The term and concept of *hegemonic masculinity* was launched in 1985 by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee in an article called *Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity*. R.W. Connell is a known academic in the field of critical studies on men who has written and researched masculinity a lot in their works. Hegemonic masculinity is an academically achieved construct, because of this it is very important to acknowledge the restrictions and limitations regarding this concept (Jokinen, Soikkeli & Kivimäki, 2019, pp. 27). Hegemonic masculinity can be seen as a symbol for a fantasy that men can never achieve (Jokinen, Soikkeli & Kivimäki, 2019, pp. 27), and when it is achieved, influential people who hold institutionalised power may be far from their hegemonic role in their personal lives (Connell, 2005, pp. 77). Bird (1996) talks about masculinity being a social construct and the possibility of differentiating “normative masculinity” from “non-normative masculinity”. Alternative ways of displaying masculinities could be categorised as non-normative masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity usually involves “practices that perpetuate heterosexual male domination over women” (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009, pp. 5). According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, pp. 832) “the currently most honored way of being a man, it requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women to men”.

There need not be any psychological traits which all femininities have in common, and which distinguish them from all masculinities, or vice versa (Connell, 1987, pp. 179).

According to R.W. Connell (2005, pp. 67–68) the concept of masculinity seems to occur always in relation to femininity. Jokinen (2019, pp. 81) sees masculinity as something that cannot be analysed without taking women and femininity into account. Mary Wollstonecraft sees how a lot of good qualities that are considered to be represented through masculinity are just common qualities of human beings (Wollstonecraft 2011, pp. 29). According to Connell (2005, pp. 68) masculinity seems to be a fairly recent historical product that has been used in language for only a few hundred years. Femininities and masculinities organize social relations and occur concurrently but polarly (Jokinen 2003, pp. 12; Connell 2005, pp. 68). Social constructionism often emphasises the fact how only certain parts of gender are being constructed (Liljeström 1996, pp. 120.) The concepts of masculinity and femininity are usually juxtaposed in the field of gender studies to achieve a better grasp on their similarities as well as differences. Both of these concepts play an important role in the construction of a man. Gender studies and critical studies on men offer a language to critically study male musicians and their social world.

2.2 Masculinity and Performance of Gender in Popular Music

In this subchapter, I am looking at literature around gender performance of male musicians in popular music, and ways they present feminine and masculine attributes as artists. Culturally masculinity is created and represented in rock lyrically, visually, and through musical choices (Soilevuo Grønnerød, 2008, pp. 16). Male musicians have been the centre of attention in rock music while female musicians have been seen as a minority. Cohen (1997, pp. 17) mentions how rock is viewed as naturally male, and scenes (where the music happens) maintain this conception. Frith (1990) argues that pop has affected the formation of gender roles during adolescence. Performativity is described by Rossi (2003, pp. 12) as an ongoing and repetitive bodily, linguistic, and visual performance and presentation of gender.

Richard Middleton (2007, pp. 103-124) has spoken about how gender comes to be in popular music. Especially when looking at the singer and instrumentalist *John Lennon of the Beatles* and how he expresses gender in various and distinct ways. Middleton connects Lennon's performances in *I am the Walrus* and *Glass onion* with the term '*cock rock*' which is mostly used when describing hard to heavy rock performers of the 1970s to the 1980s. Lennon then again shows a very different side of male masculinity in his performance of songs like *If I Fell* and *In my life*. Frith and McRobbie (1990) mention the problematic nature of the phenomenon '*cock rock*' and how it seems to have initiated an ideal version of an over masculine rock musician who wants to highlight their masculinity during musical performances. Frith and McRobbie (1990, pp. 325-326) explain how a '*cock rock*' musician is seen as an hypermasculine and vigorous being. Ideally, vulnerability is something that is left aside and brought forth only when rock ballads are being performed. They describe rock being a combination of typical male features with hints of female features. Frith and McRobbie are possibly referring to feminine and masculine attributes that are been portrayed by the male musician. Elvis Presley was someone in popular music who contradicted the stereotype of the hypermasculine man. His way of portraying masculinity has been compared to film stars like Marlon Brando, James Dean, and Montgomery Clift. This representation of a man has been seen as more masculine than before but at the same time more feminine (Klinkmann, 2023.)

According to Soikkeli (2003, pp. 142) the mythological version of a male rock musician involves having a rough lifestyle and dying young or at a significant moment when an artist has created their best work. These artists have been for example Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon, Jim Morrison, and Kurt Cobain. In Finland Rauli Badding Sommerjoki, Cisse Häkkinen, Arto Sotavalta, Albert Järvinen, as well as Finnish actor Matti Pellonpää have represented a similar rock lifestyle. Ian Biddle explains how for a man to become gendered he needs to display "a kind of openness

to vulnerability” and “an openness to hurt” (Biddle, 2007, pp. 125–129). Any type of emotional reaction from a pop star can be seen as a sign of vulnerability because it is seen as being part of the act to “bare it all” (Hawkins, pp. 2009, 186). Also in the jazz world, Provost (2017) mentions how femininity with female jazz instrumentalists is not seen as a benefit because of its male dominance. The world of jazz is seen as a masculine environment. According to these studies, gender must be represented in a hegemonically and heteronormatively masculine way, for a performer to achieve their goals.

Houston’s (2012) article on men who play in indie rock bands, shows us a slightly different side to male masculinity, where white men can express themselves authentically during performances by bringing vulnerability and sensitivity to the table. This can be seen as a privileged position, not just for being male, but because indie rock musicians are dominantly white. The way Houston talks about creating alternate masculinities in alternative music spaces is very closely related to my thesis. Houston (2012) proposes the idea of gender fluidity in specific underground social locations. Qualities that are associated with masculinity in the contemporary Western world are rationality, heterosexuality, sexualization of women, homophobia, and violence. A more realistic and truthful representation of male masculinity can be achieved by observing men who represent or advocate alternate masculinities. In Houston’s study alternate masculinities are connected to indie rock males who show feminine sides of themselves in their music and during live performances (Houston, 2012.) It is stated that indie masculinities represent a more ‘enlightened’ form of masculinity compared to traditional rock (Reynolds and Press 1995, pp. 205-207).

Because of the lack of information on masculine gender expression in music and especially in the context of Finland’s underground, I saw it fitting to gather more information and study the matter in question. According to Jokinen, Soikkeli, and Kivimäki (2019, pp. 24) representation brings forth issues that have been absent. This can be seen by observing the word *representation* which means re-presenting something that has been left aside and which needs to be brought forth. My aim to explore the male representation of Finnish underground male musicians regarding gender and how gendering is in line with Jokinen, Soikkeli, and Kivimäki’s (2019) perspective on bringing forth representational issues.

2.3 Underground Music Scenes

Art worlds are seen as not only being created by the artists themselves but by a large amount of people who are involved; critics, gallery owners, teachers, jazz club owners, audiences, patrons, and people who are involved in the making of the tools that are

required in art making (Becker, 2008). The music scenes that the study participants have taken part in are small and mostly constructed by active Finnish bands or other underground actives. They are part of Finland's underground music scenes and its *DIY culture*. It seems that mainstream culture needs underground and DIY cultures as a counterforce to challenge its value systems (Karjalainen & Kärki, 2021, pp. 123). *Underground* as a term is very hard to define because of its vastness and it being context-bound. Underground music may consist of various styles of music, such as experimental pop, sound art, noise, improv, or extreme metal (Graham, 2016, pp. 10). *Underground* is sometimes defined by its musical genre, or it can be defined by its accessibility (Beçut, 2019, pp. 43). Beçut continues by explaining how in Bucarest, Romania for a music scene to be defined as underground is through the amount of spectators, which should be under 3000 (Beçut, 2019, pp. 43). Thus, Finland is a much smaller country than Romania regarding its population. *Underground musicians* may want to resist mainstream culture politically or just be satisfied in making music for smaller audiences (Graham, 2016, pp. 10). *DIY culture* can be seen very much embedded in underground culture. Bennett and Guerra (2019, 1) define do-it-yourself (DIY) cultures place in the present as a cultural practice that challenges mass-produced and commodified forms of culture. The ideology seems to lie in the anti-hegemonic attitude regarding aesthetic and lifestyle politics (Bennett & Guerra, 2019, 1.) Bennett (2018) has described do-it-yourself culture as something that "has developed from a punk-focused ethos of resistance to the mainstream music industry" and then endorsing its aesthetic towards a broad sphere of alternate culture production. He continues by saying how *DIY* has achieved a level of professionalism that ensures aesthetic (Bennett, 2018, pp. 140-145.)

Kaikko (2015) uses the term *underground* rather than *subculture* to describe marginal music environments that adults are active in. Subculture theories have been used originally to describe youth cultures. Kaikko sees them as multifaceted voluntary cultural activities that happen outside of institutions (Kaikko, 2015, pp. 2-3.) I decided to use the concept of *underground* instead of *alternative* to describe the Finnish music scenes the study participants took part in. The music that was made in these environments could be described as alternative but I found the term underground more fitting. Underground can be seen as a lifestyle choice. Finland's underground is seen to be derived from the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s that made musicians such as "M.A. Numminen, singer Rauli "Badding" Somerjoki, poet Markku Into, and author Jarkko Laine". Nowadays, Finnish underground culture consists of small groups that have access to "like-minded people all over the globe via the internet". However, *underground* is still bound in local possibilities and resources of each individual environment (Karjalainen & Kärki, 2021, pp. 123-125.)

According to Longhurst (2007, pp. 52–53) the term underground can be used concurrently and alongside the term *scene*. I found the term *music scene* to be a more suitable term for my study compared to music environment. *Music scenes* are used to describe the environment and everything that is connected to underground culture in a more abstract way. The term *music scene* is closely connected to subcultures and underground independent environments. Essentially a music scene is a platform where one is able to perform their music (Rautiainen-Keskustalo, 2013, pp. 324–325), however Iivonen (2023, pp. 4) sees that the term as being loaded with a lot of meanings that differ from its origins. The term *scene* was first used by journalists in the 1940's to describe the bohemian subculture of *jazz*. Later the term *scene* has been used to describe environments where dressing up and conducting a certain type of lifestyle are connected to the music genre (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, pp. 2.) The term *scene* was primarily used by journalists and also in everyday contexts. Subsequently there became a need to use the term in academic research to describe contexts where fans, producers, and musicians collectively shared their taste in music and had a need to distinguish themselves from others (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, pp. xvi). The term *scene* has been used in scientific articles since the 1990's. *Scene* is also used in similar contexts as the term *subculture* which has been used to distinguish seeing culture as a vocation and calling, and breaking free from the term *high art* (Hebdige, 1979; Bennett, 2006.) *Scene* is a looser concept that can be seen as something that builds around the music itself (Kruse, 2003, pp. 133). Scenes involve a broad spectrum of musical activities; performance, production, marketing, promotion, and distribution (Bennett, 2006, pp. 96). Andy Bennett, a professor of cultural sociology, has been able to examine how local ecologies shape music within a specific milieu by collecting ethnographic data on emerging youth cultures and scenes (Grazian, 2004, pp. 205). It is important to distinguish how the subjects of my study work as musicians in Finnish underground music scenes which exist on the margin.

The underground world that the study participants are part of are Finnish underground music scenes and environments. A large amount of different mediums are seen within music scenes; clubs, performance and rehearsal spaces, and music shops (Gaines, 1991, pp. 47–65). Social media, the internet, magazines, and television, and the internet have helped music scenes broaden their fanbase. Kearney (2017, pp. 155–186) sees live shows as being essential to rock culture. The alternative and underground scenes my study participants have been part of can be seen as part of underground rock culture. In rock culture the performers are said to create memorable, entertaining events and live shows that are often preferred by fans because of their spontaneity and vigour. However, in underground spaces the live performances are carefully crafted even if the performances seem spontaneous, authentic, and unplanned (Kearney, 2017, pp. 155–186.) According to Aronoff and Gilboa (2015)

music spaces can be seen as safe or discriminative. Nevertheless, the role music and music spaces play in the lives of minority groups is huge. The four male musicians of my study have been part of Finland's music scenes for twenty to thirty years, and have performed mostly in Finland but also outside of it.

2.4 Ideal Male Representation in Finnish Culture

The music environment the study participants are part of is the Finnish underground. Finnish underground music consists of different music scenes that are closely connected to one another because of Finland being a small country. The reason why I am not defining specific underground music scenes is because the interviews were done anonymously to achieve a safe environment for conversation and the possibility to talk about gender issues and gendered experiences as freely as possible. Benedict Anderson's (1983/2006) theory on how nations are ideological constructions that appear through culturally shared meanings represents the concept of how Finland can be seen as a new nationality, *an imagined community*, that has been surrounded by a lot of different cultures. According to Hall (1992, pp. 293–295) national identity is constructed through a narrative that is told. In most cultures they focus on a myth that is told continuously to folk. Skaniakos (2010, pp. 131–134) argues in her dissertation how the Finnish epic *Kalevala* has affected the construction of Finnishness. Finland has been colonised by Sweden and Russia which may have impacted the identities of Finns. However, Finland has been a very well educated country for the past century because of Finland's compulsory education. Popular culture has been acknowledged to have affected the construction of national identities (Bennett, 2000; Zuberi, 2001). Skaniakos (2010, pp. 184) describes how in the rock-documentary *Saimaa-ilmiö* Finnishness is represented through the alcohol use and vulgar humour of the male musicians. The Finnishness also comes true in the Finnish rock aesthetic and lyricism.

According to Kallioniemi & Kärki (2009, pp. 62) the concept of Finnishness is vague and contradictory. Finns are described as shy and reserved, taciturn, close to nature, unpretentiously authentic, prone to drinking alcohol, being fans of ice hockey, liking heavy metal, exotically marginal, and having melancholic music filled with minor chords (Sallinen-Kuparinen, 1986; Kallioniemi & Kärki, 2009, pp. 62; Kärki, 2021, pp. 201). According to Virtanen (2015) often the troubles of Finnish men are seen to be down to a lack of interpersonal support systems. Heikkinen, Mantila, and Varis (1998) suggest men are the ones who are indicated to be in the centre of the myth of a silent Finn. Finnish people are described in the media to be rude which is often attributed to 'Finnishness' (Gidick, 2022). According to Kärki (2021, pp. 201) stereotypes exist because there is a "grain of truth in them".

Jokinen (1999, pp. 7) mentions how a lot of Finnish men seem to view themselves clearly as men and do not traditionally question what it is like to be a man. Antti-Ville Kärjä (2008, pp. 191–226) studied Finnish men in music videos and how they are never seen dancing on screen. However, *Antti Tuisku*, who is seen as a gay icon in today's Finnish popular music, contradicts with this hegemonical portrayal of a Finnish man. According to Kärjä's (2008) study there seems to have been a very one-dimensional representation of Finnish men around fifteen years ago. It seems as though this has changed while observing today's representation of Finnish men in popular music, for example Benjamin Peltonen, Pete Parkkonen, Isaac Scene, and Käärijä. Can a similar type of representation be found in Finland's underground music scenes? Karjalainen and Kärki see Finland as a nation that is being redefined and how there is a change to be seen in the nature of Finnishness. Through social media people are divided into 'bubbles' of like-minded people and so Finnishness "feels like ancient history" (Karjalainen & Kärki 2021, pp. 169–171.)

3 METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach is said to help with understanding our surroundings and our social world better. A qualitative approach can capture the *emic perspective*, the perspective of the participant's world. Research done using a qualitative approach is able to recognise different perceptions and experiences of social reality, and to study and understand phenomena with as much depth as possible (Williamon et al. 2021, pp. 31–32.) Qualitative studies give a very detailed view on phenomena, which is important when wanting to understand something unknown more comprehensively, or when wanting to get more information about a certain cultural setting or environment. My approach towards Finnish underground music scenes is something that has not been studied within a similar context before. I am shedding light on phenomena related to gender representation of men in popular music which needs more exploration in the field of popular musicology.

In this chapter, I am introducing the methodological background of the study and the data gathering process. The study's methodological standpoint is qualitative and it relies on content analysis. Four semi-structural interviews were conducted in Finnish. I translated all of the following interview quotes that are presented in section 4, from Finnish to English. My aim was to conserve the initial meaning with each quotation, when translating each section. I am concentrating more on individual cases and semantics when observing the interview data. The study's approach is theory led, so the reasoning and analysing of the data can be seen as abductive.

3.1 Research Questions

Here are the research questions that I am set out to answer in section 4. The aim of this study is to shed light on how gender and gendering is perceived and presented by Finland's underground male musicians.

The precise research questions are:

1. How do underground male musicians see themselves presenting their gender in Finnish underground music scenes?
2. What kind of displays of male masculinity are found in Finnish underground music scenes from the perspective of Finnish male musicians?
3. How do male musicians observe gendered behaviour in Finnish underground music scenes?

This study is a pioneering effort to study gender performance and gendered experiences of Finnish underground male musicians.

3.2 Data Collection and Informants

I conducted four semi-structured interviews to get an overview of the experiences of a group of people, at a certain time (Williamon et al. 2021, pp. 18.) The study was planned using a constructivist perspective. The interviews were conducted individually, which can allow a more accessible way of conducting a study and gathering data for a researcher who is starting out (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, pp. 61). Individual interviews seemed to be a good way to approach this topic because of its personal and somewhat intimate nature. I aimed to achieve deeper conversations and the possibility for the participants to speak more freely through conducting the interviews individually and anonymously. A semi-structured interview is a great way to gather data because here a subject is given the opportunity to talk about themselves and their experiences as freely as possible. In a situation like this, a study participant creates relevant information and is seen as an active party in the study (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, pp. 35.) Oinas (2004) sees interviews as a good way to investigate themes and topics that have not been researched much in the past. Oinas also mentions how an interview gives a researcher the freedom to study unknown dynamics more carefully. I decided that semi-structured interviews could be a good way to gather sufficient and valid information that could be further investigated in later studies. Through conducting semi-structured interviews, I wanted to gather information on

the experiences of male musicians regarding gender roles and stereotypes in Finland's underground music scenes. My aim was to find out if men's gender roles are something to consider when studying Finnish music scenes. I also wanted to find out if gender issues are something that forty-something males think about consciously, and if it's a discourse they acknowledge. Sharp and Nilan's (2015) study on queer identity was also conducted through semi-structured interviews. The data consisted of interviews with young women about their queer identity and experiences within alternative music scenes. It gave me more knowledge on the gathering process of the research data and possible methodology.

I began the data gathering process by contacting Finnish male musicians who are part of in Finland's independent music scene and underground environments. The chosen participants were cis gender males in their 40s and early 50s from mid-sized cities in Finland. Three of the participants had an higher educational degree and one had studied graphic design at a vocational school. The participants had siblings or relatives who had influenced them in getting interested in music. The participants were from working class and middle-class backgrounds who had started performing late in their teens. They all called themselves semi-professional musicians because none of them had studied music professionally at an institution. They had all engaged in other art forms as well as in music; visual arts, literature, filmmaking, and graphic design.

The participants where not asked prior to the interviews if they identified as cis males; however, they all described themselves as male during the interviews. The interviews were carried out in a safe environment that was very familiar to all of the participants. By choosing a familiar space, I wanted the study participants to feel as safe and as open to conversation as possible. I gave out forms with more information on the data gathering process and about confidentiality regarding the handling of the data. I decided at an early stage that the data would be handled by pseudonymisation. All four interviews were recorded by using a zoom portable audio recorder. Recording the interviews during the data gathering process is said to increase the reliability of the data (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006). After conducting the interviews, the data was transferred from the audio recorder to my external hard disk which was protected with a password. Because of the pseudonymisation, I came up with aliases for all of the study participants. The interview data was approached through a constructivist perspective, where the world is viewed as a social construct created by human beings (Williamon et al. 2021, pp. 18).

Study participant Elias has a Bachelor's degree outside of music and has not studied music professionally. His brother influenced him in getting interested in music. He has played music for several decades and has been part of several Finnish underground bands. He started out by playing keyboards in bands but has also sung

backing vocals and has been the lead singer of several bands. He has played gigs actively for nearly thirty years.

Joel has a degree in visual arts and has played music since he was young. His relatives have played music around him and so influenced him musically. He started out playing drums but later became a vocalist for several bands as well as played keyboards. A lot of people he has worked with have also been self-taught in music, but he has also worked with musicians with a high degree in music. Joel has surrounded himself with different types of artists throughout his career. He has played gigs actively for over thirty years.

Anssi has a master's degree outside of music and started playing music in his late teens. Anssi's parents had records in which he became interested in at a young age. He started playing bass guitar late in his teens which still is his main instrument till this day. He has been part of several well-known Finnish underground bands that have represented different musical genres. Anssi has played gigs actively for over thirty years.

Oliver has a degree in graphic design and has played in several Finnish underground bands for close to thirty years by starting out as a guitarist but later on moved onto other instruments. He grew up in a neighbourhood where a lot of Finnish underground bands were starting out which influenced him in becoming interested in music. Oliver has played gigs actively for over thirty years.

The open-ended questions I used during the interviews were to keep the conversations flowing and for the participants to be able to speak about the themes I had chosen as freely as possible. I was able to develop the themes during the interviews according to what came up. Later on, I would go over each interview to find more specific codes, and quotes to include in the thesis. This way of approaching the data helped me in finding the most relevant information regarding themes of gender expression, performance of gender, and possible novel findings.

3.3 Data Analysis

The interview data was collected by using open-ended questions and analysed abductively by using qualitative content analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyse, identify, and interpret patterns of meaning, also called themes, within the qualitative data. It is a method that offers flexibility because it is theoretically unbound in commitments (Braun & Clarke, 2017, pp. 297.) A helpful tool was to go through the interview data and come up with questions and themes related to the initial research questions that worked as an anchor when going through the data. Juhila (2023) explains how coding can be seen as the first step to further any type of qualitative

analysis. The coded data as itself is not applicable but it is a great way to further the analysis. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990, pp. 12–13) events/actions/interactions are given conceptual labels that are then grouped into categories and subcategories. Open coding, which was used to analyse the interview data, is supposed to enhance comparative questions that help in understanding the issue at hand. The initial point of coding is to “simplify” and compress the plentiful data that has been gathered (Juhila, 2023). The interview data brought forth a lot of themes and topics that would have been interesting to dive into more closely, however, I had to narrow down the information into topics and themes that were most relevant regarding this study.

Grouping the data into categories helped in finding similarities and differences between the study participants. This way of approaching the data helped me in finding the most relevant information concerning gender expression, performance of gender, gendered experiences, and also novel findings. When transcribing the interviews I had to be very careful that the identities of each participant were preserved in the most truthful way as possible, but also in a way that was not recognisable. Translating interview quotes from Finnish to English was part of the analysis. It must be acknowledged that during this process there is a possibility of misunderstanding issues that were discussed during the interviews. This is why it is very important to have an understanding of why the translation is seen as part of the analysis.

3.4 Ethical Considerations and Responsibilities as a Researcher

One of the main ethical concerns was the preservation of the study participants’ identities. Specific cities or towns in Finland are not mentioned to avoid identification. The fact that I chose English as the language to write my master’s thesis in had a lot of benefits regarding restoring the identities of the participants. The Finnish dialects of the participants were also preserved because of the English translations. All of the study participants were Finnish speaking and the interviews were done in Finnish. Each participant was told about the pseudonymisation. The fact the chosen citations were translated into English helped in conserving the participants’ privacy.

I also had to acknowledge the fact that I am part of the Finnish underground myself which affects my positioning as a researcher. The actuality I have tacit knowledge³ on Finland’s underground music scenes may have influenced the study

³ Tacit knowledge refers to a form of implicit knowledge. It is something that can be shared by people from a similar environment (see eg. Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013; Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000.)

in a positive light even though the chosen standpoint was not ethnographic. This also comes with a lot of possible biases that I had to acknowledge when analysing the data. I also had to think about my positioning as a researcher in relation to the study participants. I am a twenty-eight-year-old musician and musicology student who identifies as female. The topic in itself implies a feminist standpoint epistemologically and so may have affected the way the participants reacted to the issues that came up during the interviews.

Ethical principles regarding academic research was something to consider when designing the study. In research ethics, issues to be aware of are honesty, thoroughness, and accuracy in preparation of the study design and when conducting it. One has to use ethically sustainable data acquisition methods when conducting an academic study (Keiski etc., 2023). I gave out research permission forms (Keiski etc., 2023) that were signed at the beginning of each interview. I also presented each participant with more information on the study in question and information about how the recorded data would be handled. Richardson, Välimäki, and their research team (2014, pp. 35) mention how one uses power when doing music research in the academic world by making choices whose voices should be brought forth, by choosing groups of people and viewpoints.

All of the participants were male so I had some prejudice around the fact they might feel uncomfortable talking about gender issues. The problematic nature of research bias can affect the approach of the phenomenon. In prior to the conducted study, there are always presumptions and hypotheses' that affect the approach and methodology. Too many presumptions may also impact the chosen research design. This is something I tried to take into account when coming up with ways to approach the study and its design. It is important to try to find a neutral and common ground as a researcher. It is also important to notify that I am very familiar with Finland's underground scenes through being a musician myself, who spends time in these environments. Though, all of the study participants have been part of Finland's underground scenes for thirty or so years, which has been before my time. The interviews concentrated more on their past experiences. One has to think about what kind of ethical decision one makes when interviewing men. The construction of gender that one chooses to portray through research is important to be acknowledged (Eerola & Pirskanen, 2021, pp. 65.)

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This is a theory-led content analysis in which its theoretical framework draws from gender studies and critical studies on men. The interviews consisted of conversations around music, gender, stage performance, performance of gender, musical influences, Finland's music scene, sensitivity, male role models, and gender discrimination. The way the participants viewed their performing persona varied a lot with each individual. The two singers out of the study subjects shared similar experiences regarding performing in front of crowds as male musicians. The two instrumentalists developed a way of performing their gender through music which reflected on their choices on stage. There was a sense of variety regarding the gender presentation of the subjects. Each participant brought out different sides of male masculinity in musical contexts and in their personal lives.

In the first category 4.1, I am concentrating on the male role models of the study subjects, masculinity, and male ideals and stereotypes. In category 4.2, I am investigating how the participants view male musicians as male role models and how they view themselves as male performers. I am also looking at how these role models in music have impacted them as performers. In category 4.3, the performers discuss sensitivity and vulnerability regarding their gender and the portrayal of their authentic self. In category 4.4, the participants discuss gender representation and gendered discrimination on a general level and in Finnish underground music scenes.

4.1 Images of Manhood

Elias: [being a man] It's very contradictory - - between what you should be and what you are in reality - - the ideals are more limiting than what we are [in reality].

In the previous quote Elias talks about pressures related to being a man and the limiting factors that come with it. In this category, I am looking at how the participants describe what being a man means to them on a personal level and how they connect both femininity and masculinity with being a man. I am also concentrating on their male role models and if they have influenced the participants in any shape or form during their upbringing. The term manhood is used as the heading for the subcategory, which relates to the stereotypical way of describing male identity. The term manhood often refers to a homogeneous and one-dimensional group of men. I also see a lot of stereotypes and pressures linked to the term manhood.

The study participants talked a lot about how men in their personal lives have shaped the image of what being a man means to them on a personal level. All of the study participants had had male role models who had influenced them in becoming initially interested in music as children. The role models of their personal lives were either fathers, brothers, or other close male relatives. None of them mentioned female role models that might have influenced them musically during their childhood. Nevertheless, Elias and Oliver both highlighted the fact that a lot of their favourite music is being or has been made by female musicians. Trans or non-binary role models were mentioned, however, this could be something that just did not come up during the interviews or has to do with generational exposure. Minority content was not very visible in any context during their childhoods in the late 1970s till the mid 1980's.

The participants were asked about what being a man meant to them and what it means to be a male musician. The answers varied with each participant, and they mainly concentrated on one or the other. The themes were approached separately, either through what it is like to be a musician or what it is like to be a man. It seemed hard for most of the participants to combine these two features during the interviews. Elias and Oliver seemed to have shared experiences regarding unrealistic expectations and pressures of being a man. Joel concentrated a lot on male stereotypes and male role models in music. Anssi did not want to acknowledge gender initially when asked questions connected to it and seemed uncomfortable when talking about gender. He wanted to see himself as a music-maker and did not want to connect gender to it. Elias felt that gender was often seen dualistically, by connecting certain attributes or ways of being to one gender. Elias seemed to find a lot of pressures related to what being a man meant on a societal level. The following quote dives into Elias's feelings about what it is like to be a man.

Elias: [being male] It means unreasonable expectations and restrictions as human beings, and social demands, in which some are recognisable and can be good demands, it's quite nice to achieve those goals. Having self-confidence and having the guts to do what one wants and being able to speak one's mind. Some of these features can be connected to femininity. I think the characteristics are quite universal. - - masculinity features a lot of excluding elements; if you're something, you can't be something else and these features can't exist at the same time.

In this interview extract Elias describes being male as something that involves a lot of restrictions and expectations. He sees masculinity and qualities related to it as very demanding. Masculinity can be seen as an attribute that is often linked to being a man but should not be seen as a synonym for what a man should be like or what qualities or characteristics he should pursue. Elias describes an ideal man as confident and “able to speak one’s mind”. This is something that may be attached to an ideal version of a masculine man, which can be associated with hegemonic masculinity as well as hypermasculinity. According to Mosher and Sirkin (1984, pp. 151) a boy who is hypermasculine can be someone who fails to attain masculine ideals and for this reason experiences shame and self-deprecation. These can be people who do not connect with the ideals related to what a hypermasculine man should be like and who see themselves as outsiders. They may feel a need to fit in by attaining attributes connected to hypermasculinity and hegemonic masculinity.

Elias: My male role models have come from, like somewhere high up, like from the entertainment industry or imagery related to fantasy worlds or from comics or films, and not from someone close. Maybe my male version of a role model is shaped by masculine fantasies and ideals. The closest thing to male role models for me have been my male relatives and they have been quite staid and quiet and reserved, or they haven’t expressed their emotions very openly.

The way Elias describes his male role models that are influenced by the media and fantasy worlds can be seen as a way of trying to conform to hegemonic masculinity but failing to do so, as Jokinen (2019, pp. 27) describes it. Trying to achieve an idyllic version of a masculine man can be seen as somewhat unachievable. Elias mentions excluding elements related to being a man and how his ideal male role models have come from popular culture. He acknowledges these role models as stereotypical representations of male masculinity. Elias seems to be conscious of the pressures that come with identifying as a man and the masculine attributes that are attached to it. However, Elias’s feelings related to identifying as a man contradict with his feelings of wanting gender to be mentioned less. Structural changes can be achieved by acknowledging the restrictions regarding gender stereotypes. When looking at representation it is important to be noted how social, cultural, political, and historical factors and context must be considered (Jokinen, Soikkeli & Kivimäki, 2019, pp. 25). Repealing gender stereotypes regarding men is achieved by discussing gender representation.

Finnish male stereotypes can be found in Elias’s description of his male relatives. Jokinen’s (2019) arguments are in line with Elias’s, as in how Finnish men are often seen stereotypically as reserved, staid, and quiet. The Finnish word *jäyhä*⁴ is used by

⁴ The Finnish word *jäyhä* translates into a staid person. It is used to describe a quiet, rugged, and reserved person. (Kielitoimiston sanakirja, 2023; MOT English, 2023).

Elias to describe stereotypical Finnish men. Elias's feelings about being a man can also be seen as hard and contradictory. It seems that if one differs from the normative way of representing as a man, it is seen as somewhat odd. The struggles of being a man according to Elias, come from a limited male representation. Elias explains how he has not grown up with a father, which may have impacted the limited representational exposure he has had in his youth. He explains how his role models have mainly come from comic books and can be viewed as ideal and stereotypical representations of what men should be like. Alternate male role models seem to have been scarce for the study participants. Although, it could be argued that the participants have had a need for alternate masculinities especially when referring to musicians. Both Elias and Joel mention David Bowie as an inspiration, who can be seen as an androgenous and gender fluid performer. Bradley and Page (2017, pp. 583–595) discuss Bowie's deviances related to gender identity as a performer, musician, and artist. He is described as someone who has worked outside of what has been seen as normatively acceptable in society. Stevenson (2006, pp. 5) associates Bowie's artistic persona with performativity and theatre, Bradley (2017, pp. 393) further develops this idea and sees it being related to Butler's theories on gender performance and gender fluidity. Bradley finds Bowie's way of performing gender being done electively and not being culturally enforced.

Oliver: Something good that has come from my upbringing is that I have always had both, a grandfather and a father. And they have both been men who have been very straightforward, unbelievably direct, and very hurtful, and rude at times. But they have never had submissive attitudes towards women or anyone for that matter.

Oliver describes how he sees his male relatives as role models. He sees his father and grandfather as very typical Finnish men. The way Oliver describes his father and grandfather during the interview seem to fit the stereotypical image of a Finnish man, for example rude, quiet, and reserved (Markkola, Östman & Lamberg, 2014, pp. 7–8; Kallioniemi & Kärki, 2009, pp. 62; Kärki, 2021, pp. 201, Gidick, 2022). Oliver explains how he does not remember witnessing abuse or repressive behaviour regarding gender as a child. Oliver describes his male role models to have treated people around them equally and not being repressive towards any groups of people. He also calls himself a feminist and feels he has had great male role models in his life. Oliver describes how his male relatives have been rude at times towards people around them. Positive attributes connected to Finnish male masculinity are honesty, diligence, straightforwardness, and being down-to-earth, while negative attributes are unsociability, sullenness, and alcohol abuse (Markkola, Östman & Lamberg, 2014, 7–8.) However, Oliver does describe how his paternal role models have been equally fair to people of all genders. He finds the hurtful comments addressed by his father and grandfather being related to what they are like as people rather than signs of gender

discrimination. Oliver's relatives seem to possess a lot of qualities related Finnish male masculinity.

Oliver: Well, I can't connect bigger values to it [manhood]. I am a people person and people are people to me. -- the masculinity-femininity distinction is I guess real. But then again how much of it is created by language and culture? ...well I guess a lot of it. So that people grow up to be like that.

Oliver, like Anssi, sees people as genderless and not something he thinks about when meeting new people. However, he acknowledges how one's gender may be seen as a social and cultural construct. Oliver seems to be aware of gender distinctions and stereotypes, and how they are shaped by environmental models (see e.g. Bigler & Liben, 2007, pp. 165). He acknowledges the concepts of femininity and masculinity but on the other hand seems unsure of their appearances. Oliver seems to find gender as something other than distinct feminine and masculine characteristics.

Joel: But the comparing that happens [between different genders] I guess I am a pretty average [man], I have some of those features that [men] are accused of or that are mentioned, for example why can't men open up more or talk more. Is he lying on the sofa, watching the same old video tapes. Tapping and playing the same old war games and so on. -- I'm probably a very typical man. But what I don't think I possess, what nowadays is called toxic masculinity, that I'd like to pick fights or fight on streets, I'm not like that. I naturally get on with everyone who I meet or who get on with me, so conflicts don't usually occur.

Joel acknowledges stereotypes that are associated with being male and feels as though he possesses a lot of these characteristics. He points out it in the previous extract how he does not possess qualities that could be viewed as toxically masculine. Joel does not feel a need to get into fights or a need to relieve aggression by being violent. According to Mosher (1991) attributes that are connected to hegemonic masculinity, that reflect hypermasculinity, are aggressiveness, being status-seeking, competitiveness, taking risks, violence, anti-femininity, and being sex-focused. Joel acknowledges male stereotypes and feels he possess some of the attributes of a stereotypical masculine man. However, he bring up elements he associates with hegemonic masculinity or hypermasculinity, and these characteristics seem to be far from what how he represents as a man. Joel feels that men can be a lot of different things concurrently and may seem naturally rougher compared to other genders. He underlines the fact how the most important thing is to let men portray a version of themselves that seems natural to them. Soikkeli (2003, pp. 146-147) explains how a young boy may have a high sense of brotherhood that is constructed often by the media that is consumed, and through hobbies. Then when this boy gets older and steps into a public lifestyle, one has a need to reproduce manhood in a way that is socially acceptable and present at that time, so that they are able to fit the current culturally appropriate model of a man.

Joel: I understand that some men are more manly and some are more womanly or... more feminine.

Joel first uses the adjectives manly (finn. miehekäs) and womanly (finn. naisellinen) to describe men but then leans more towards the term feminine. By examining the previous quote, it seems as though he connects both femininity and masculinity with men. Joel mentioned later on in the interview how he seems to possess attributes related to both femininity and masculinity while performing on stage. It seems that Joel finds qualities related femininity and masculinity as suitable ways to portray his performing self.

Participant Anssi does not want to acknowledge gender as an attribute but wants to see individuals as genderless without taking too much notice of gender distinctions. When asked, Anssi did not want to connect any stereotypes to men. However, he did emphasize positive outcomes regarding the #MeToo⁵ movement and how the phenomenon helped in restricting an unpleasant and abusive side of men. Anssi believes men represent themselves more freely nowadays compared to a century ago.

Elias: Stamina and persistence and vitality. I think they are positive features. But they are probably connected to femininity also, I think. I think they are desirable things to pursue.

When examining the interviews from a sociological perspective, it could be stated that the social world and the environment where the participants have grown up in has shaped their gender identity. Social factors can be seen as features that differentiate people from each other (Autonen-Vaaraniemi, 2021, pp. 143). Hegemonically masculine ways of portraying male masculinity are seen as repressive by Elias. He finds vitality, stamina, and persistence as positive masculine attributes and sees them being applicable when reflecting on feminine features. The previous masculine characteristics described by Elias can be associated with hegemonic masculinity. Jokinen (2003, pp. 8) discloses how action-taking, dominance, the execution of plans, rationality, competitiveness, physical strength, and violence are all attributes connected to masculinity in Western culture. It could be argued that these characteristics represent men in a certain light where they are considered to be machine-like; strong, vital, and unwavering. Elias considers these attributes to be positive. It must be stated that these qualities should not be automatically seen as representations of bad and devious human beings. The problematic nature of these characteristics lies more in the one-sided and narrow representation of men. The fact that men should act as a masculine homogeneous group and be one-dimensional is questionable. People who identify as male can represent different sides of male masculinity and their gender.

⁵ In 2017 the #MeToo movement addressed issues related to abuse in creative industries, including in music (Raine & Strong, 2018, pp. 6).

Elias: Negative masculine traits are for example pursuing a leading position that you know that involves a lot of status and goods and when you don't adapt to these ideals conflicts arise. When you don't want to conform to these standards, that are ideals, it of course raises discrepancies. Can I be accepted even though I don't accept these things that are generally accepted? So that's what raises conflict in a way, and what I connect with having a need to repress others and wanting to take more for oneself than give to others. So that's part of being a man, even though [the problem] is disguised by connecting it to practices related to working life or somehow it's polished and said to be related to conventions of [a successful man's] working life or something like that.

Elias describes negative qualities related to masculinity as a need to pursue a leading position, even though it does not fit the ideals of what the person would like to achieve. It seems that he finds these actions being related to a need to pursue masculine things even when they contradict with one's own authentic and true self, because stereotypically a man is to possess only masculine qualities. Elias sees certain standards laid out for men which one must comply to, this is in line with West's and Zimmerman's (1987) theory on *doing gender* which was further developed by Butler (1990). Elias gives a description of a successful man, who is implicitly malicious in nature but acts sophisticatedly and in good manner in situations where these qualities are needed, which as a result hides abusive behaviour. Elias may be referring to hidden abusive behaviours that are only seen via microaggressions. According to Rowe (2008) microaggressions are implicit assumptions and prejudice; looking down on people, discrimination, or being bias when certain groups of people somehow differ from the norm. The phenomenon is hard to witness or exemplify without audio-visual content because the actions and behaviours are often so subtle (Rowe, 2008, pp. 45.) It seems that Elias sees male dominance as an abused version of male masculinity. He describes these people being men who try to get what they want in their working life and therefor are dominant.

Elias brings up a lot of restrictions related to what being a man is like and how he would like male representation to be more broader and less limited. Joel acknowledges the fact that there are a lot of different types of men, and how they should be allowed to represent themselves in a way that is true to who they are as people. Elias brings up issues related to the patriarchal culture⁶ we live in and its problematic impact on the Western social world. Oliver acknowledged a lot of similar issues as Elias, but talks about these issues on a more personal level. Anssi wants to see the world as genderless rather than acknowledging gender differences, while Elias

⁶ "The long-term structure of the subordination of women" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 839). Male supremacy in a society where men hold the power (Kantola, 2010, pp. 82).

described gender being often polarised into two categories. Elias describes how men and women are often seen as polar opposites in what they should act or be like according to their gender. The concept of gender polarisation was first brought forth by sociologist Sandra Bem whom defined it as being “the ubiquitous organization of social life around the distinction between male and female”. Women and men are seen to have completely different kinds of behaviours and interests which are seen as polar opposites (see e.g. Bem, 1994; Dennis, 2012.) Oliver and Joel both acknowledged the fact that gender and gender differences are issues that should be discussed more in order to achieve a better understanding of social issues and to change prevalent issues in social structures. Oliver finds being a man a free-pass and acknowledges how privileged his positioning as a man is in our society.

4.2 Portrayals of Masculinity in Underground Music Scenes

In this category, I am concentrating on the representation of men and alternate masculinities in Finnish underground music scenes. I am going to examine how the study participants perceive themselves as male performers, in comparison with male musicians in popular music. I am also concentrating on how the study participants challenge gender norms and hegemonic masculinity. Most of the study participants had male relatives who had influenced them becoming initially interested in music and music-making. Joel mentioned his uncle, who was an artist and musician, who influenced him in ‘picking up the drum kit’ for the first time. Elias had an older brother who was interested in music and who seemed to inspire him to gravitate towards music and performing arts. Oliver grew up in a neighbourhood where a lot of local bands were starting out, and this inspired him to start playing and making music. Anssi’s parents had albums that he remembers having an impact on his musical interests. He became especially interested in rock music through his parents’ albums and through his friends.

Both Joel and Elias have been instrumentalists and lead singers in bands, while Anssi and Oliver have mainly been instrumentalists. All participants mentioned artists that could be seen as more ‘artsy’ and who represent the more alternative side of popular music. Artists who influenced and impacted the study participants where for example; David Bowie, Jarvis Cocker, Captain Beefheart, and Nick Cave. Some of the performers that were mentioned have been described as androgenous by researchers in popular music (see e.g. Wessels, 2003; Bradley, 2017). The role of aesthetics is something to take into consideration. Are male performers in underground scenes trying to perform certain gender roles influenced by role models in popular music or are they directly challenging heteronormative gender roles during

musical performances? If they are challenging heteronormative gender roles, is it something that is done consciously? According to ethnomusicologist Pirkko Moisala (2001, pp. 90) music as a phenomenon is always connected to the vast field of semantics that can be viewed as being gendered. Some of the choices made on stage can be related to aesthetical choices that appear as playing with one's gender. These choices can exemplify characteristics that are related to choices that may be connected to underground aesthetics.

Elias: Of course, one always performs something but is never very conscious of what one is performing. You are probably looking for a safe space where to perform your songs and be there while being self-confident.

Elias describes how everyone performs something when on stage and acknowledges how one may not be conscious of what one is trying to portray during a performance. Social gender norms may affect the choices of a performer unless one has a need to challenge these stereotypes. There seems to be a need to challenge gender stereotypes among the study participants even if it is not done consciously.

Joel: -- femininity and masculinity -- they are things that get muddled up together and can happen at the same time. I remember when I was younger, how I heard [on stage] the nickname 'gay Irwin'⁷ thrown at me. I've flirted simultaneously with femininity and in a way with masculinity.

It seems that Joel feels comfortable with "flirting simultaneously with femininity and in a way with masculinity". Attributes related to femininity and masculinity are close to one another and may get "muddled up together" according to Joel. It seems that Joel finds qualities related femininity and masculinity as something that all genders may possess concurrently. Joel also mentions during the interview how he has considered a lot of male artists from the past to have played with stereotypical attributes related to the gender portrayal of women and men. He also sees himself as a performer who plays with these gendered qualities. Butler (1990) suggests androgenous clothing can help blur gender lines. Joel sees the combination of femininity and masculinity as a resource when constructing one's performing self. He mentions how he has been called a homosexual by members of the audience for his heteronormatively deviant presentation as a male performer. It seems that Joel has played with gender roles on stage and performed in ways that may have differed from a stereotypical cisgendered male performer, and because of this has been harassed by the audience. This can be an example of how underground scenes are seen as places

⁷ Antti Yrjö Hammarberg known professionally as *Irwin Goodman* was a popular Finnish singer and composer who was especially known for his character, who represented common working-class Finnish people via humorous protest songs (Liete, 2004, pp. 45; Lindfors, 2004, pp. 292; Karjalainen & Kärki, 2021, pp. 3). The word 'gay' being used in front of Irwin refers to a gay look-a-like of the famous singer Irwin Goodman.

where possible alternate masculinities are being portrayed differently than in mainstream culture.

Elias: I have started to think about performance styles later in life and how could one perform in more interesting ways. For example, I've liked Jarvis Cocker, who is someone that comes first to mind intuitively when I think of a good performer. He does cool and nice small accentuated gestures, and the way he engages with his audience like a dandy (Finn. *veijari*) but at the same time he's very precise and sharp in a way.

In the previous quote Elias brings up Jarvis Cocker of the Britpop band *Pulp* and his ways of performing to audiences. Jarvis Cocker can be seen as someone who has influenced Elias a great deal as a performer. He sees Cocker as a performer who is sharp-witted, good, and perceptive, who engages with his audience in a special way. Jarvis Cocker seems to be a performer who challenges gender norms but at the same time seems cool and presentable. Elias uses the Finnish word *veijari*⁸ to describe Cocker's identity as a performer, which could be loosely translated into 'rascal' which can be associated with the word 'dandy'⁹. *Dandyism* can help an artist mask themselves and play with their self-image (Hawkins, 2009). Hawkins suggests that David Bowie can be seen as a representative of *dandyism*. Joel also uses the Finnish word *keikaroiiva*¹⁰ during his interview to describe a man's way of performing when combining feminine and masculine features. Elias uses the same term to describe Jarvis Cocker's style of performing. Bowie and Cocker seem to have similarities in performance styles and use of aesthetics related to dandyism when on stage. Hans Wessels (2003, pp. 190–209) suggests that Jarvis Cocker can be seen as someone who challenges male masculinity. Cocker in his childhood was someone who was mistaken for a female, and his manhood and masculinity were repeatedly questioned. Cocker's voice has also been described as weak and high-pitched. Wessel finds pop and rock environments as excellent places for Cocker to represent himself as someone who challenges gender norms. Elias's perceptions of Jarvis Cocker as a performer seem to be in line with Wessels. Elias and Joel use performers like Cocker and Bowie as examples of men who play with gender roles and combine feminine and masculine features in their performances. Britpop performers, like Jarvis Cocker, have been famous for having qualities that are associated with introverted and nerd-like characteristics. Elias's experiences of being introverted and shy are similar qualities that are apparent in indie rock performers. These qualities are in juxtaposition with qualities related to phenomena of 'cock rock' and '80's hair metal'. Masculinities associated with

⁸ The Finnish word *veijari* translates into rogue and rascal (MOT English, 2023).

⁹ Dandy refers to dandyism which was passed down from 18th century to the 21st century as an identification for eccentricity and peculiarity. A dandy exhibits themselves outward as a superior being, but may refer to various characteristics, from sensual and sexually naïve; to rough, bold, and vulgar; or even someone who is passive and regressive. Dandyism is seen as a mask for oneself (Hawkins, 2009, 1–13.)

¹⁰ The Finnish word *keikari* can be translated into the English word *dandy* (MOT English, 2023).

phenomena like *'cock rock'* and *'80's hair metal'* have similar qualities that can be associated with hegemonic masculinity. *'Cock rock'* does contain imagery and characteristics that are seen as feminine; however, a lot of its initial meaning is wrapped up in hypermasculinity (Frith & McRobbie, 1990.) It is not surprising that a performer from an 'artsy' Finnish underground background identifies more with Jarvis Cocker than with Van Halen's David Lee Roth. Frith and McRobbie (1990) suggest that generally rock as a music field can be seen as very masculine. Indie rock musicians seem to challenge ideals related to masculine rock (Houston, 2012). Participants Elias and Oliver, both describe themselves as shy and more vulnerable which can be easily connected with the softer side of indie rock than with heavier music.

Joel: -- if you think about for example Led Zeppelin, well it is a very feminine band. For example, Robert Plant's way of performing, it's very feminine. And David Bowie for example, he is both of those things at the same time [feminine and masculine] and probably more feminine when he was younger. He is androgenous.

David Bowie is someone who Joel mentions when describing feminine men and is described by Bradley (2017) and Bradley and Page (2017) as androgenous and gender fluid. Joel also mentions Robert Plant of the band *Led Zeppelin* and his way of performing, combining feminine features with highly masculine features. This is something that Frith and McRobbie (1990) acknowledge but rather associate Led Zeppelin as part of the *'cock rock'* phenomenon, which seems to ignore vulnerability. Robert Plant does have a high-pitched voice and long hair which can be associated more with femininity. Joel finds Plant as someone who flirts with femininity while performing to an audience. Plant's femininity may be associated with his bodily gestures and choreographies on stage. During the interview Joel mentions how men may sing with a falsetto, to achieve a more feminine sound with one's vocal cords. Robert Plant is someone who uses his falsetto a lot in Led Zeppelin's discography. One's feminine side during a performance is something that seems to be connected to the portrayal of male masculinity.

Joel: I think they alternate [femininity and masculinity in a performance]. If I throw in something provocative, then I think that in one's performing self, there are more bits of femininity compared to one's personal life. Of course, it depends on the situation [fem. and masc.].

In Joel's descriptions of himself as a performer, he seems to challenge gender norms during his performances in similar ways as David Bowie. Although, he does associate attributes related to femininity and masculinity with all different genders. Joel finds combining feminine and masculine features as a resource when constructing one's performing self. He feels he flirts with different sides of masculinity, when performing to an audience, by combining masculine and feminine features in his

performances. Joel describes himself as being more feminine on stage compared to how he behaves in his personal life. He does not find his bandmates to have been conscious of how they have performed on stage, but rather that they have wanted to combine and try out different things. He also describes himself as someone who is physically very expressive during performances.

Elias: I have probably thought about wanting to dress up and look more masculine or be more energetic [on stage]. Or then it's connected to my character traits [as a performer] that I probably don't like that that much. I am probably more introverted than energetic.

Elias's description of himself can be seen as quite the opposite of Joel's. Elias has felt a need to be more energetic on stage which he sees as something that contradicts with his authentic character. It seems that Elias is interested in music and performers that represent a similar side of masculinity to how he wants to perform his own gender identity on stage. This could also be a reason why he is influenced by Jarvis Cocker, Nick Cave, and Captain Beefheart. It comes across in the previous extract that even though he sees himself as an introverted person and someone who does not express themselves greatly on stage, he has felt a need to be more masculine as a performer and has considered dressing up to look more masculine. It seems that Elias sees a male performer as someone who needs to act a certain way and perform one's gender in a way that fits the stereotype of a masculine male performer. In an earlier quote from the interview Elias describes how one wants to feel safe on stage and be self-confident. It is possible that Elias has wanted to conform hegemonic standards when performing which can make a performer feel safer on stage.

Anssi: I can't remember situations, where we would have had conversations with bandmates on how we should perform or something. The most essential thing in these groups has been, and still is, the music. Then everyone can exist in it and live in the music in a way that they like. The way it appears to others varies.

In this quote, Anssi does not feel he has portrayed or thought about portraying anything particular on stage. However, later on in the interview he remembers bands and situations when he and his bandmates have expressed themselves on stage non-normatively, Anssi mentions how he has used performativity in his performances but only when the bands or events have been aesthetically more theatrical. During these performances he has embodied a certain role before walking on stage which has often involved hosting the event in question. Anssi explains how he could host an event and embody a certain character and decide to keep it up through-out his musical performance. Nevertheless, the bands he currently plays in do not involve characters or alter egos which he thinks serves the purpose of the bands. Previously, he has however had face makeup on and has sometimes dressed up in androgenous outfits. Often these performances have involved some sort of dramatization, as mentioned previously. Anssi describes his experiences regarding playing with characters and

dressing up for a performance as having a need to accentuate something in the music. He underlines the fact that there has always been an important reason in deciding to dress up. Anssi has not felt restriction regarding gender expression in Finnish underground music scenes. He also describes his performance self as the most authentic version of himself but says he has also looked up to and been inspired by performers with big physical gestures. Inglis (2006, pp. 41–51) states how performers value live performances as a way of expressing themselves creatively, connecting with members of the audience, and expressing themselves authentically, which seems to fit Joel and Anssi's descriptions of their performing selves. Even though Anssi has had problems with insecurities when starting out in music, these feelings have lessened by listening back to live recordings of himself playing. He tries to choose at least one person in the audience during each performance to perform to, so that a good performance is achieved. There seems to be a display of alternate masculinities within Anssi's descriptions of his artistic persona and portrayal of gender.

Elias describes how sometimes he has felt his aggression on stage as a performer and sometimes in the heat of the moment he may have broken a keyboard on stage. However, he seemed to refer to this happening during a state of flow when one performs with so much passion that they forget their surroundings. Elias has not had characters or alter egos in the bands he has performed in as a singer or instrumentalist, but he has known men in Finland's underground music scenes who have embodied characters on stage. These performers have painted themselves with phosphoric paint and had certain rituals as part of their performances. They have dressed up as characters and been part of "some sort of fantasy worlds". These gender portrayals seem to have similarities with the way David Bowie has represented himself as a performer and created otherworldly colourful alter egos (Bradley, 2017; Bradley & Page, 2017). Elias explains how a performer in one of the bands had embodied a character of a Russian brooding writer and performed the songs as this character. According to Elias, the performer felt that he was able to convey better the true meaning of a song when embodying a character. Elias as a performer expresses his self quite differently and feels it is hard for him personally to separate his stage persona from his private self.

Joel explains how he has wanted to be provocative as an artist by combining feminine elements in his performances. He has been able to embody a character by dressing up for gigs. Joel sees the development of an on stage character to have been a way of producing a safer environment to perform in. It seems that a cisgendered man may be able to explore different sides of themselves as performers more easily when embodying a character. Joel performs in very physical ways and explains how his performances in bands have involved a lot of interdisciplinary art. Modern dance and elements of ballet have influenced a lot of the physicality he has portrayed on

stage as a performer. His bands have had choreographies on stage which have impacted the overall outcome. Joel has used a mixture of performative arts, modern dance, speech, and music during live performances. According to Joel, by combining different art forms the bands were able to create something new and unexpected on stage. This portrayal of a male musician does not seem to be a stereotypical but an alternate one. It should be noted that underground and alternative environments are places where alternate ways of expressing oneself are more easily received and accepted which may be a reason for why alternate displays of masculinity can be found in Finnish underground music scenes. Elias has detected displays of masculinity that can be viewed as alternate.

Anssi feels he performs at his best when he is able to achieve a connection with other musicians and with his audience. He tries to be as authentic and as natural as possible on stage. Anssi repeats certain gestures on stage but believes that they come out naturally and are not previously rehearsed. He does not seem to notice any specificities in fellow male performers but sees them as individuals. As mentioned earlier, some of the bands he has performed in have sometimes used very over the top clothing and face masks on stage. He sees these acts as certain kind of rituals that are carried out during a musical performance. Even though he has performed using special costumes and make-up during performances, he has felt he has been true to himself and has not thought of it as putting on an un-authentic role, but rather as a natural act. According to Anssi, people have taken more notice of him when costumes have been involved but also has found it to be an internal feeling when presenting oneself differently. He describes this type of performance as liberating. Anssi thinks it has a lot to do with the band when deciding on a performance style. He did not want to use the word androgenous to describe his performance style but felt there was something normatively deviant in the way he sometimes performed.

Oliver explains how he is not very fond of performing live and always prefers working in studios or making-music at practice spaces. Oliver explains how he has always found there to have been freedom to put on roles if need be when playing music within the music scenes he has spent time in. He has not engaged in playing with roles when performing or tried to display anything else except engage in music. He feels that performing is reinforcing oneself so that one is able to perform in front of other people. Oliver goes on stage and plays his instrument and does not try to perform anything special. He wants a music ensemble to play together in the best way possible and tries to concentrate on these aspects. Oliver only wants to achieve a well-executed musical performance.

Expressing oneself during a musical performance through feminine and masculine characteristics are considered appropriate by Finnish underground male musicians. It seems to be safer to portray one's gender as part of a musical act than in

non-musical contexts as part of one's non artistic persona. It could be seen safer because they present themselves as cisgendered white males in their personal lives and thus have a hegemonic position in music. Wessels (2003) mentions how men can explore their gender more easily through their hegemonic position. This is a factor that should be taken into consideration. Overall it may be safer to explore one's gender and play with gender norms while performing on stage. The embodiment of feminine characteristics and gestures are only performed when on stage. The experimentation with gender norms is done on stage and so is part of the act. Some of the participants were able to identify the music scene's impact on their performance of gender and how they did not fit into the stereotypes of hegemonically masculine male musicians. It seemed that the male role models of their personal lives differed a lot from the role models the study participants had in popular music. The artists that inspired the participants seemed to present themselves in more alternate ways than what would be stereotypically expected from a male performer in popular music. Most of the participants enjoyed expressing themselves in deviant and alternate ways in comparison to what was expected from a male performer, but there was also a need for safety during performances. Pressures regarding what a male performer should look, or act like on stage was indicated by Elias. They all had male role models in popular music who had presented their gender in similarly alternate ways. The hegemonic image of a male musician seemed to cause pressures for Elias. Joel and Anssi felt comfortable in embodying roles while Oliver wanted to achieve a safe space by being his true self on stage. Oliver did not consider himself a performer who tries to portray anything specific on stage. According to Judith Butler's (1993) theory on gender performativity, gender can be seen as a cultural construction. In these cases, the performers' way of constructing one's gender is influenced by previous musicians in popular music and through the music environment they have taken part in, more specifically Finnish underground music scenes.

4.3 Masculine Vulnerability and Being True to One's Self

In this category, I am concentrating on the more vulnerable and sensitive side of male masculinity of Finnish underground male musicians. I am also examining how the participants highlighted men being able to present themselves in a way that feels most authentic to them. Male sensitivity and vulnerability are something that came up repeatedly during the interviews. Vulnerability is seen as a hard and difficult side to express because of the pressures our culture and society puts on us. Throughout Frith and McRobbie's (1990) article, they refer to 'teenybop' performers and artists who display qualities of male vulnerability. These portrayals of vulnerability and

sensitivity are often left aside, and categorised as alternate ways of portraying masculinity (Hawkins, 2009; Wessels, 2003.) Vulnerability, sensitivity, and insecurities in relation to male musicians are discussed very little in academic literature in the field of popular musicology.

All study participants had started performing on stage late in their teens. They did not have experience performing as children; especially Anssi described his first experiences on stage as quite baffling. He felt very insecure when performing for the first time late in his teens. One could propose that this is not an uncommon feeling when performing on stage for the first time. All the participants started performing on the verge of adulthood, for they were all approximately 17 to 19-year-olds. When studying music at an institution, at a conservatory for example, performing for an audience starts at an early age. Western popular musicians may be musically trained formally or informally. In Finland children have the possibility to learn music during their elementary and secondary education by participating in music lessons. People in the Western world are exposed to music everywhere (Green, 2002, pp. 1–20). The participants had barely had any formal education in music except for music as a compulsory subject offered by schools. This may have increased the level of insecurities felt by the study participants. They all identified themselves as semi-professional musicians and learned to play their instruments mostly by doing, playing in bands; this is not an uncommon phenomenon for popular musicians (see e.g. Green, 2002, pp. 1–20). Anssi, Oliver, and Elias did not have instrument lessons and had mainly practiced by themselves. In his teens Joel had a relative who played instruments, and thought him the basics of playing drums. Joel also had a very creative uncle, whom was a professional artist which may have impacted his creative upbringing and self-confidence as an artist. Also, the fact Joel had a degree in Arts may have given him more self-confidence and tools to explore different fields of art.

Elias: I have always spent time with introverted people. Of course, you are conscious of the movements and gestures because you have played rock music. It comes from the tradition of rock music that you can detect certain kinds of gestures. But performance [performance art] is not present but performativity is something I have had to think about just because of getting dressed [for a performance] and thoughts of what I should convey [to the audience] with gestures and movements.

In the previous interview extract Elias talks about what he should convey as a male performer during a musical performance. It seems as though the music scenes and environments he has taken part in have accepted a more introverted version of a male performer who has also performed rock music. The study participants all had varying perceptions of fellow male musicians and stereotypes. Some of the participants' portrayals of gender seemed to be impacted by the underground music scene. Elias mentions the tradition that is connected to rock music and what should be conveyed during one's performance as an underground male musician.

Vulnerability and sensitivity seem to be characteristics that are either avoided or are over accentuated by rock performers. These characteristics could be connected to a form of masculine vulnerability. When examining hard and heavy rock performers of the 70s and 80s, feminine features can be seen as being intertwined with hypermasculine features (Frith & McRobbie, 1990). However, it seems as though Elias feels a need to adapt to the conformities of rock music and its male performers, even if he would initially like to perform his gender in an alternate way.

Elias: [describes his performing self] When I was younger, everyone wanted to hide behind their instruments. Always when one has to perform in front of others, one is very self-conscious, which has been hard to work out, or it has been quite hard to work out how to be on stage [laughs].

Elias mentions during the interview how he has felt a lot of pressures as a male performer. He has performed a lot more as an instrumentalist in the past but started to perform as a lead singer a little over ten years ago. He describes it as being very different compared to performing as an instrumentalist. Elias describes the shift from moving from behind the instrument to the front of the stage as odd. He describes himself as someone who feels very self-conscious when performing in front of others. Elias reflects on past performances and how it has been sometimes hard to know how to perform in front of others while being 'gazed at'. It seems that Elias feels he is closely observed by audience members when listening to his description of himself as a performer.

Joel: -- Also, we must understand, that some [men] naturally want to do boxing or wrestle or do rougher sports, and not just take care of kids, and sometimes even write a tender poem. -- The freedom must be given [to do so] in our society and world.

In this interview extract it seems that Joel wants to emphasise the fact men should be allowed to act in masculine ways if they feel it is natural to them, in the same way that feminine men should be allowed to portray their gender in ways that seem natural to them. Joel finds feminine and masculine features part of what being a man is, and how the freedom to portray one's gender in the most truthful and natural way should be allowed to be done in our society.

Houston (2012) found in his study that indie rock men perform their masculinity in a way that combines both feminine and masculine features, which seems to be the case for Joel, Elias, and Anssi as well. Oliver and Elias also seem to connect with shyness and introversion. Oliver mentions how he has struggled with his vulnerable and sensitive side in underground music environments. He underlines the fact he is very much an emphatic person who possesses qualities of vulnerability. Oliver sees vulnerability and sensitivity as qualities that are hard to work with in underground music scenes and hard for other males to understand. He finds practice spaces and studios safer places compared to live underground environments. He has experienced

unsafe happenings on stage in the past, which may have impacted his feelings on performing live at underground venues. Live environments, and especially rock environments, can be crowded and noisy. Studios and practice spaces are usually less noisy than venues with big crowds. Some musicians may be more comfortable when people are not concentrating on their own performance specifically, but rather on the music that is played. Oliver describes how he is his most authentic and true self when he engages privately in music-making and improvisation.

Anssi: -- many may remember me as the guy [from that band in question] who always had face makeup on, and a harsh expression, and that sort of thing. But it's interesting, maybe in that situation my appearance differed from the private me, and maybe that helped me in being myself more. Even then I don't think I tried to portray a character at any point, rather it seemed natural in relation to the performance where you kind of freed yourself while performing.

Anssi mentions liberating elements that have influenced his want and need to perform on stage. He underlines the fact that he is his most authentic and true self when performing and engaging in musical activities. Anssi's need to be himself on stage may be connected to a need to portray himself in a more truthful way, than what is possible in his personal life. A male performer may be allowed to present themselves and their gender more alternately on stage if it differs from the social construct of how a hegemonic male musician should act stereotypically; masculine, vital, strong, and aggressive (see e.g. Jokinen, 2003). Anssi feels that he experiences some sort of liberation during live performances which can be seen as quite the opposite of Oliver's experiences. Performing rock music has been described as liberating, especially when referring to young people and their desire to free themselves from adult suppression. Rock as an experience is also described as liberating (Frith & McRobbie 1990, pp. 316.) Anssi feels he can become his most authentic and true self on stage while performing, and feels he "becomes one" with the audience. This may be something that performers may seek for when performing live on stage, a certain type of liberation.

Elias: Of course, one always performs something, but you're never very conscious of what you're performing. One is probably looking for a safe space where to perform their songs, be present and have good self-confidence.

It seems that Elias acknowledges some aspects of performing one's gender on a conscious level. He explains how one is never very conscious of what one performs and conveys to others as a performing artist on stage. Elias brings up a need for safeness as a performer which seems to impact one's performance in a positive manner. Self-confidence is a quality that Elias attaches to a good performer and a well-executed performance. He finds it difficult to be his authentic and true self because he

sees himself as someone who owns qualities that may not be generally accepted. He seems to dislike profit driven, self-assured, and strong-willed men.

Oliver: Sensitivity has been something that causes exasperation for many, people attack it straight away [sensitive qualities]. -- society has finally started to understand how much damage has been done [by not taking these qualities into account]. -- for me things have gone forward by finding safe people to work with. But well sensitivity still is, it is easy to get a hold of, especially in a man -- Yes, it is easy to abuse power, if the other one is a sensitive person, well then, some people are willing to manipulate sensitivity for their own benefits --.

Oliver discusses similar issues as Elias during his interview. Oliver states how his sensitive and vulnerable side as a man have not been accepted in the environments he has engaged in. He feels sensitive men have been previously and still are in an inferior position. Oliver believes sensitivity is an easy characteristic to point out and use to discriminate men. He refers to sensitivity as a quality that is used to manipulate kind and sincere people. Oliver also mentions during the interview how he has never wanted to 'arrogantly get his own way'¹¹ in life, and it is not a characteristic or a way of being he would feel comfortable with. During the interview Oliver contemplates if sensitivity and vulnerability are concepts that are understood better when they are apparent in women. Sensitivity and vulnerability are often associated with femininity which may be a reason why they are seen as qualities that are more suitable for women (see e.g. Connell, 1987; Connell, 1995; Jokinen, 2003). Oliver hopes that the attitudes towards sensitive men in our society have changed for the better, and hopes people would notice how prejudice towards sensitive men may impact all men on a personal level. Oliver describes how in a lot of situations related to music-making it is hard to be a sensitive man. He feels as sensitivity and vulnerability regarding men is not accepted and because of this he sometimes feels it is hard to act in a suitable way or be present in the moment. In the underground music scenes he has engaged in, Oliver might open up about something related to music-making or point out an issue that needs tending. This issue might not be received well and so he feels others think of him as difficult. Oliver believes men grow up in environments that also encourage competition between peers. In the next extract Oliver talks about how progress has been achieved regarding understanding male sensitivity.

Oliver: In my case things have improved a long time ago, when I've been able to find safe people who I've been able to work with. But sensitivity still seems to be hard for many because it is easy something that is easy to point out --.

Oliver still finds qualities related to vulnerability and sensitivity easy to pay too much negative attention to, and feels he has mostly happened to meet people in his

¹¹ The Finnish word *kyynärpäätaktiikka* means "getting one's way by using their elbows" to make way for themselves. An idiom for overmotivated and self-assured gestures.

music circle who have been safe and acceptive of him for who he is. Oliver mentions during the interview how a lot of his male bandmates have turned to music when life has got hard. He sees that a lot of his male friends who are musicians look for safety when they engage in music. This paints a picture of underground music scenes being places where sensitive and vulnerable men can turn to for safety and acceptance. DeNora (2000) mentions how music has an ability to be a person's primary way to express themselves and self-regulate their emotions. They continue by saying it is also a way of forming social alliances. There seems to be contradictory elements to how sensitivity is received in these environments according to Oliver. There seems to be a lack of understanding towards sensitive and vulnerable qualities when they are portrayed by men. However, at the same time these music scenes are viewed as safe, where male musicians can feel a sense of belonging and open up about issues that are happening in their personal lives.

Anssi: [Change] It has happened during my lifetime for sure. It has happened little by little; a man can express themselves significantly more freely and differently.

Anssi reflects on how nowadays men are able to express "themselves significantly more freely" and how this transition has happened little by little. It seems that he believes there has been recent changes in male representation, and how this has changed during his lifetime. Later on in the interview he mentions how he hopes our social world does not expect 'men to be men' or 'women to be women' anymore. During this part of the interview he had discussed gendered abuse and problematic outcomes related to it. He wishes that repressive or abusive behaviour related to gender would not be accepted from men anymore.

The participants mentioned pressures and strict gender roles in the context of Finnish underground music scenes. There seemed to be a need to for some to hide signs of sensitivity and vulnerability while working in music spaces. Simultaneously, underground music scenes seem to be environments where acceptance is possible for men who have had hard experiences and have had a need for support. It seems that sensitivity and vulnerability are allowed when there is a need for safety and support, although Oliver's needs for support from peers seemed to lack an understanding of sensitivity. None of the participants implied to have a need to accentuate any stereotypically masculine features. They all have a certain privileged position as heterosexual men, which is something Oliver pointed out during the interview. There seems to be contradictory elements in relation to vulnerability and sensitivity. Elias and Oliver both view themselves as somewhat shy and introverted. Oliver wants these qualities to be accepted and does not have a need to present himself in any other way. On the other hand, Elias would like to be more confident on stage and admires certain types of behaviour that can be connected to masculinity, while also despises

profit driven, self-assured men. That being said, vulnerability and confidence are qualities that can appear concurrently.

Elias seems to have struggled with his sensitive side as has Oliver. Anssi nor Joel describe themselves as sensitive or vulnerable during the interviews, however, this may have been an issue that just did not come up. Joel describes himself as a performer who accentuates feminine gestures, sometimes embodies roles, and puts on sometimes flamboyant costumes. Portraying his gender this way as a performer comes very naturally to him. Anssi has also embodied roles on stage and says how he feels his most true self when able to express himself on stage. Both Joel and Anssi seem to be very acceptive and confident in the way they perform their own gender. Joel also reflects on how others should be allowed to portray their gender in the most natural way. There seems to be a shared understanding between the participants on how underground musicians should be allowed to portray their gender in ways that come naturally to them. Different displays of male sensitivity and vulnerability seem to be qualities that Oliver would like to be more present regarding men's portrayal of their own gender. Also pressures related to gender portrayals in rock music were brought forth by Elias. Issues related to self-confidence and insecurities as musicians were mentioned by both Elias and Anssi. Insecurities related to male musicians seemed quite novel since these themes were not mentioned a lot in academic literature regarding male musicians in underground environments.

4.4 Experiences of Gendering and Gendered Discrimination

This category deals with gendering, gendered representation, and discriminatory behaviour on a more general level but also regarding Finnish underground music scenes. The study participants talk about issues related to gendering and gender discrimination, but also about discriminatory behaviour that sensitive and vulnerable underground male musicians face, which was looked at more closely in category 4.3. Experiences regarding gender and gendering in music were compared to other fields of art.

Oliver: I just remember it being incredibly great and empowering in those days, seeing girls making music, because it had been a boys thing in this town for forever. That they started making [music] by themselves or started participating. Remembering the early days [in the local music scene], no one was gatekeeping, saying who should participate and who shouldn't. But nonetheless, there weren't any females participating [in local bands].

Oliver stated during the interview how he has been interested in underground scenes and the culture around it since he was young. He expresses how most of his favourite artists have been women, and how he has not been drawn to macho

aesthetics or ways of expression in music. In the previous extract he speaks about feeling empowered when women in his town have made music because he has found the music scenes to be very male-dominant. Oliver does not remember seeing gatekeepers but neither remembers seeing a large representation of female musicians in local bands. He acknowledges the fact that men have been able to have access to local underground bands, but how there has been a lack of female representation. Oliver does not see a problem in the way musicians usually react to female musicians, but rather sees it as a structural issue that is affected by gender representations in our society. He finds that musicians do not judge on gender when meeting new musicians but rather on their musical abilities. Oliver underlines the fact he has never made music to find a partner or have sex. He also does not think about gender when evaluating the capability of musicians.

Joel: I think compared to the modern world, I think way too little [about gender roles]. That you go on, according to learned patterns that you repeat, and think about things through good and bad. That you go on, for example my last book, my publisher said that the female characters are giggling way too much, let's take it down a notch. Then you start to think about it yourself, that I didn't mean that [while writing] let's make the female characters giggle while drinking sparkling wine. To me it didn't mean anything, but it did to her.- - and it probably means something to the world. When things drag on [change] doesn't happen consciously.

Joel has witnessed himself mirroring outdated and stereotypical views regarding gender differences outside of music. He has been happy when others have pointed out outdated views regarding gender stereotypes that he has reproduced in his art. Joel sees how it is very important to take into consideration and critically question one's views on gender differences. He says the world is often not ready for representation that challenges stereotypes. In the interview extract, Joel reflects on how he has not been aware of the stereotypes he has repeated in his art but is quite happy that his female publisher pointed the issue out. Joel sees how things may repeat similar patterns for centuries if issues are not discussed. He discusses later on in the interview how he believes in a liberal society where alternate displays of gender are possible and where one is able to present a version of themselves that seems natural to them and that they feel comfortable with. Joel also thinks society should allow differences to be present without restrictions. He finds that some regulations should be present in society so that one knows how to act within the boundaries.

Anssi: I don't think it makes a difference. - - if someone wants to join in or joins [a band], that person is chosen because [he, she, they] is a particular person, so that it doesn't make a difference what gender [he, she, they] represents. Of course, if a project needs a male or female voice in the studio, then it makes a difference.

Anssi's feelings regarding gender seem to be neutral. He does not feel he thinks about gender regarding choosing or asking members to join bands or projects. Anssi

explains how there has only been conversations on gender if a female singer or a male singer has been needed. During Anssi's interview he expresses that gender is not talked about or mentioned in the underground music scenes he has engaged in. It seems that Anssi does not have a need to think about gender unless it is specifically mentioned by someone. In the next extract Joel was asked if gender has been talked about in the bands he has played in.

Joel: At least I can't remember. -- should bands have women, so that there are women in bands or if it makes a difference if there are only men [in bands]. Intuitively I could say that it doesn't make a difference [which gender is chosen]. But then when you think about cinema and the film industry, gender comes up in a completely different way. That there definitely has to be female actors, or that this [character] has to be female or male, and they can't be mixed. It comes as a surprise because in music -- when you sing, you don't sing thinking "I'm a man" or think like that, you just sing. So I think it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. -- it's interesting how in cinema people pay attention to what each gender says to one another. But in music -- it's kind of more neutral and gender-free.

Joel feels as if gender is not present in music in the same way that it is in cinema. He sees music scenes as more gender neutral in comparison. Joel explains how in cinema people must work to find female or male actors, thus, in music gender is not thought about as much. This is how all the participants view gender; as something that should not matter in music-making. It seems that Joel sees that different art forms, for instance music and cinema, require different kinds of attitudes towards gender. Cinema is an art form that is visual and because of this, one recognises a lack of diverse gender representation more easily than in music. It seems that in popular music the occupations that lack diverse representation are producers, songwriters, lyricists, and composers. The music industry's management and business has been male run and still is (Frith & McRobbie, 1990, pp. 319; Cohen, 1997, pp. 18; Leonard, 2007, pp. 23–28; Teosto, 2023.) In a survey done by *Teosto*¹² (2023) women still feel underrepresented as lyricists and composers. Women and non-binary respondents see it as being related to gatekeeping which is still found in the music industry. Dr. Smith, Dr. Pieper and their team (2021) did a report on gender and race/ethnicity prevalence in popular music between 2012 and 2020. Regarding songwriting across nine years 12.6% were women. Producers in music across the six-year sample 2.6% were women. Gender issues still seem to be apparent even if they are not discussed in underground music scenes.

Oliver: I have seen that [underground music scenes] have been anything but safe places. -- especially being in bands with women, I have noticed how discriminative and unequal the treatment of others has been.

Oliver has witnessed discriminatory behaviour regarding women in Finnish underground music scenes. Oliver has experienced gendering and unsafeness in these

¹² Finland's non-profit performance rights organisation (Teosto, 2023).

environments and it has been hard for him as a vulnerable and sensitive person and musician to spend time in these environments. Pääkkölä, Käpylä, and Peltola (2021) discuss gendering in their article regarding discriminatory behaviour and inappropriateness in the field of popular music. They explain how especially female musicians have experienced discriminatory behaviour from audience members regarding their capability as musicians. Rock instruments are seen as masculine which may have affected why rock musicians are assumed to be more masculine than feminine. It has also been reported by men, women, and nonbinary people how there is a lot of inappropriate treatment regarding gender in the field of Finnish popular music (Pääkkölä, Käpylä & Peltola, 2021.) The other three participants in my study were also asked about discriminatory behaviour, however, they did not remember witnessing or being aware of it. It should be noted that most of the participants' bands have mainly consisted of male musicians. This could be a reason why the musicians have not had a need to handle this topic.

Anssi: Probably around ten years ago groping was overlooked in a lot of situations and by a lot of people, and that allowed even worse behaviour. [It's important] that these sort of things are talked about as much as possible and that these kind of people are getting caught, [people] who have abused their power. And underlining manliness has been connected to this behaviour. So I believe and hope, that a some kind of change has happened and is still happening, [and] that this kind of behaviour performed by the men isn't allowed in any circumstances, where men are men and women are women. I hope we are going towards a direction, where these sort of things are ruled out.

Here Anssi discusses the topic of gendering on a general level. He mentions positive outcomes being achieved as a result of the #MeToo movement, and how it has been good to call out men who have behaved inappropriately or even sexually assaulted women. He mentions how groping for example has not been understood as problematic in the past. Anssi touches on the topic vaguely but does not connect it to Finnish underground music scenes. Grönfors (1999, pp. 223–224) proposes that the dichotomy of men and women's sexuality is connected to how sexuality is seen as a source of power for men. This can lead to abuse of power which can play out in situations where women are seen as the weaker gender. In the previous quote Anssi seems to connect "underlining manliness" with people who abuse their power. This phenomenon can be associated with hegemonic masculinity (see e.g. Jokinen, 2003; Connell, 2005).

Oliver is someone who has witnessed abuse of power and discriminative behaviour in underground music environments. Foucault (1975) analyses different forms of power manifestation in his work *Discipline and Punish*. Structural power and its abuse can be found everywhere according to Foucault. So called "powerless" people can also be considered accountable regarding the maintenance of power relationships and struggles (Foucault, 1975.) Oliver spoke very strongly on problematic matters related to gendered behaviour in underground music scenes. He

describes performing live at rock shows as sometimes being dangerous but how it has probably been much easier for him as a cisgendered male. Oliver prefers spaces where people are nice and respectful towards one another. He says it is hard to work in an environment where people are disrespectful. Oliver continues on by saying how he is happy for generational changes regarding safety and individuality.

Anssi: In a way, I have gravitated towards [safe] that kind of people.

Anssi discusses uncomfortable experiences related to men but at the same time sees music as its own separate entity. He reflects on how he has gravitated towards safe people in music, which is why he may have not experienced gender discrimination in the environments he has engaged in. It is possible that Anssi has not acknowledged unsafe events related to gender in underground music spaces. According to Pääkkölä, Käpylä, and Peltola (2021, pp. 65) prejudice around gender stereotypes may affect the identification of sexual harassment. The unfortunate phenomenon may have happened around Anssi, but he has not been aware of it. Studying gender discourses in the field of music research happened very late compared to other fields of art and culture studies (Leppänen, Moisala & Sivuoja-Gunaratnam 2003, pp. 225). McClary (1991) thinks this is explained through the change in music researchers seeing music as a producer of semantics. Music and music environments are social worlds in which similar happenings happen outside of music. According to Olsson (2007, pp. 989), musical meaning is dependent on social context that is “socially and culturally constructed”. Social norms and discourses do not stop existing when one makes or plays music. So, one could suggest that underground music scenes are impacted by gender discourses just as any other social environment.

Anssi: And it is great in-a-way, how the #MeToo movement [has impacted the world] recently, and through that we are able to reduce unwanted male role models, for example very disgusting characteristics that are connected to male role models.

Anssi reflects on the #MeToo movement, and how phenomenon has made people recognise unwanted male role models. He finds qualities related to the abuse of power as disgusting. During the interview Anssi explains how has tried to avoid hypermasculine men in music environments, and feels he has found the right kind of people with whom he has been able to work with. He does not feel that masculinity is overly highlighted in the environments he has spent time in.

Elias: Let's say that maybe while getting older one thinks more about it [the significance of gender] and I have truly thought about what's connected to it. -- A large portion of our thinking is part of cultural automations, that we repeat through preconceptions. -- when I've become a father myself, I have started to think about what manhood is and how it can expand and how the definition has expanded. For example my child says that adults don't cry, and he really thinks they don't cry. There are these things that are absorbed from our society that aren't said out loud at home. -- because the family circle does not only bring

up a human. That's masculinity. But I have thought about that concept more and more during the last 10 years.

Elias sees how a lot of attributes related to gender come through by being raised in a certain culture. He talks about how his child has not been brought up only by his family but by the cultural environment. Elias explains how we have "cultural automations" that we repeat as humans unconsciously. Our society is normatively constructed in a certain way and these norms trickle-down into our upbringing. People have certain ideals and norms that impact the way they act in their personal lives and these norms are so well embedded in our society, that it is hard for a person to be consciously aware of them. It seems that gendering and gendered views are implicitly embedded in us (see e.g. Miller 2016, pp. 330–353). Elias's son does not believe adults cry which he does not see coming from gendered exposure at home but rather through the society we live in.

Joel sees Finland as a conservative place regarding art and music compared to other European countries. He criticizes popular music environments and their lack of versatility. This could also be seen as a comment on homogenous music environments and their lack of diversity. Joel has been called names during his performances but these acts have lessened by getting more known as a performer. The places where he has performed at may have become nicer or the audience members may have switched to people who are thoroughly interested in the band and not just spending time at a venue. As mentioned earlier in category 4.2., Joel has been called "gay Irwin" which can be seen as a reflection of the environments unsafeness or the audiences' implicit expectations regarding gender portrayals. Oliver sees the music environments he has been a part of as unsafe, especially for female performers. He has witnessed bottles been thrown at people's heads and near electric shocks happening because the stage they have performed on has not been grounded properly. Oliver also mentions how one had to be very careful for one's physical safety when on stage. Oliver reflects on people seeming nicer and more approachable nowadays at underground music spaces and venues.

During the interviews, Elias and Anssi both challenge the fact how gender is talked about these days. They do not feel a need to bring up gender in conversations because they feel it is talked about so much these days. Joel and Oliver both see gender as something that should be discussed more. Joel mentions during the interview how it is especially important to make people aware of gender issues and study them, "as you are doing right now". Oliver also seems to challenge some of the views that Elias and Anssi share. A lot of similar happenings and experiences are described very differently by Oliver. In general, he finds different layers to Finnish underground music environments compared to Anssi and Elias, even though they are all from similar underground scenes and are all close in age. Anssi does not want to

acknowledge prejudice or stereotypes regarding gender when asked about it. Oliver and Anssi mention how they do not want to acknowledge people's gender, and would rather concentrate on other aspects when meeting new people and not on their gender identity. Elias also finds gender to be mentioned too much these days. Oliver does describe himself a feminist during the interview, and seems quite interested in gender issues. These were interesting findings regarding gender experiences.

Wanting to work with safe people in safe environments was mentioned by some of the participants. All of the participants seemed to view the music scenes they currently took part in as safe. There were experiences of unsafety in the past regarding venues and live music events. Gendering in general was something that was acknowledged by all of the participants on a general level, and it was something that all of them were quite aware of. However, experiences related to gendering in underground music scenes were noticed only by Oliver. Joel had experienced outdated views regarding gender, but they were experienced elsewhere, in other art fields. Exposure to underground culture and alternate displays within may have shaped the way the participants viewed gender differences.

5 DISCUSSION

In this study, I gathered information on underground male musicians' views on gender expression and gendered experiences in Finnish underground music scenes. The study was able to answer what kind displays of male masculinity are found in Finnish underground music scenes according to Finnish male musicians, and what kind of experiences they have regarding gendered behaviour. The participants showed signs of vulnerability and sensitivity but also alternate forms of combining feminine, masculine, and androgenous features as performers. Both introverted and extroverted ways of portraying one's gender were present among the participants. The male musicians seemed to gravitate towards indie performers in popular music who displayed their gender in similar ways as the Finnish underground musicians, or in ways they would like to act as performers. The participants were somewhat conscious of gendering in music scenes but seemed to view gender in a neutral way. They also mentioned gendered stereotypes related to Finnish men.

In the first category 4.1, all participants mentioned men who had influenced them in their personal lives and in popular culture while growing up. Social pressures related to male masculinity was a theme that was discussed in this category, and role models that had shaped the gender portrayal of underground male musicians. A lot of cultural stereotypes related to Finnish men came up during the interviews. Oliver found characteristics and qualities in his male relatives that represent a stereotypical version of Finnish male masculinity, while Joel admitted to possessing some stereotypical qualities in himself. Elias and Oliver had shared thoughts on unrealistic expectations and pressures related to being a man. Anssi did not want to discuss gender differences but pointed out how men have been able to represent their gender more freely during the last century. A desire for gender neutrality was something that was shared by Anssi, Oliver, and Elias. All of the study participants were middle aged men which may have impacted their views. They have all been exposed to social stereotypes that may seem outdated to younger generations. Masculinity seemed to

involve excluding elements according to the participants. Also toxic masculinity and dominant power seemed to be concepts that the participants did not identify with and which they considered negative. A lot of negative traits that were associated with masculinity probably stemmed from qualities related to hegemonic masculinity.

In category 4.2, topics related to performing one's gender as underground male musicians and their male role models in music were discussed. Freedom regarding gender portrayal was found in these music environments. A sense of theatrical performativity and embodiment of roles were found in the way Joel and Anssi described their gender portrayal during musical performances, and how Elias described musicians who worked in Finland's music scenes. Flamboyant, feminine, and strong were how Joel described his performing self. Elias and Oliver represented their gender in more subtle ways and they did not seem to have a need to overaccentuate masculine features while performing. They felt more introverted as performers which may have impacted their choices on stage and how they displayed their gender. It seems that Elias nor Oliver had a need to portray or accentuate masculine features (vitality or dominance) as performers or musicians (see e.g. Jokinen, 2003, pp. 8). However, there seemed to be a lot of flexibility in terms of gender expression withing the study participants. Masculine attributes were not needed to highlight one's gender unless they were naturally apparent.

Category 4.3 contained the most novel findings of the study. The problematic attitudes related to vulnerability and sensitivity among male underground musicians were novel. A larger and more diverse male representation is required in underground music scenes according to the study subjects. Joel, Oliver, and Elias all brought forth beliefs on how men should be able to represent themselves in ways that feel natural to them. Softer sides of male masculinity were shown, for example by mentioning self-consciousness in relation to starting out as a musician. Oliver and Elias identified most with being sensitive and introverted. For a man to become gendered he needs to display "a kind of openness to vulnerability" and "an openness to hurt" (Biddle, 2007, pp. 125-129). Pressures related to the conformities of male masculinity were shared by the participants and a need to conform to these pressures. Especially the more introverted musicians had trouble with their more sensitive sides. Category 4.3. implicates that these issues and themes should be explored more in the future. Alternate ways of portraying gender are found in underground music scenes but also a need to conform to a social standard because then one is more respected as a man (Jokinen, 2003, 10). This seems to raise contradiction within men who would like to express their gender in more diverse ways.

In the last category 4.4., experiences related to gendering and gendered discrimination were discussed by the study participants. The underground musicians discussed gendering in underground music scenes but also on a general societal level.

They discussed gender discrimination and prejudice around gender. Joel mentioned gendered views he had had and how he had been happy to hear about them so that he was able to learn and educate himself on matters related to gender. Oliver had witnessed gendering towards women and said how these issues had been apparent in underground music environments. Anssi did not want to think about gender or discuss it actively during the interviews. There is a possibility that Anssi considered it to be better not to acknowledge or point out gender differences or discuss topics around gender during the interview because of topic related stigma. Structural changes, however, can be achieved only by acknowledging the restrictions regarding gender stereotypes. Elias also mentioned how gender is discussed a lot these days and how it may possibly strengthen gendering and the patriarchal culture. Elias and Anssi both wanted to overlook gender and saw people as genderless. Joel seemed to view gender quite differently in relation to music compared to other art forms. Joel found gender to be more apparent in cinema than in music. He did not regard gender an issue when playing music or something that affects musical abilities. Anssi also saw gender as something that is not talked about when choosing band members. Male musicians may not have a need to think about gender because in music you are part of the norm when you are a man. The representation of different genders in music is something that must be considered because musicians as players may not acknowledge gender discourses before they are pointed out or discussed more efficiently.

Oliver for example had thought a lot about gendering that happens in music, when others had experienced only slight glimpses of gender discrimination according to the interview content. Some of the participants were more aware of power struggles than others, however, there was a consensus on structural issues regarding gender. Most of the participants were quite familiar with the phenomenon of gender discrimination and gendering, and so were able to talk about it freely. Nevertheless, most of the participants did not seem to question the fact they were the only gender represented when looking at the Finnish underground music scenes they had been a part of. The question is, if gender is not mentioned nor talked about, are the problematic issues erased? Gender neutrality is problematic in a similar way as race neutrality is. In order to be able to solve structural issues one has to be aware of matters that affect minorities and acknowledge power struggles between people with higher power and lower power positions. Music has been previously viewed as its own entity and separate from the social world (see e.g. McClary, 1991) and because of this as genderless. The undoing of gender is up to people who are part of the gender binary (Garrison, 2018).

The analysis showed that there is diversity to be found in male underground musicians according to the four participants. The masculinity these men portray is

diverse and variable. They all showed different sides of underground male masculinity. Anssi and Joel showed a more extroverted portrayal of gender, while Oliver and Elias showed a more introverted one. They all seemed to be more open-minded in comparison to how Frith and McRobbie (1990) described male rock musicians. Male stereotypes were present, especially regarding role models but also regarding sensitivity and vulnerability. Combining masculine, feminine, and androgenous qualities in performances were apparent. People's gender portrayals seem to be placed somewhere in the middle and are not seen as fitting extreme ends of the spectrum. Men can even allow themselves to embrace pieces of femininity when they are able to see different versions of how men act in their everyday lives (Jokinen, 2003, pp. 7-9.) These music spaces have somewhat allowed displays of alternate masculinities.

When searching for literature around male sensitivity and vulnerability, there seemed to be a lack of academic literature and studies around the phenomenon. It is undeniable that there is more information on the hegemonic positioning of male masculinity in popular music. It is challenging to critically view power struggles, while acknowledging the fact that male musicians also have a lot of pressures regarding their gender identity. Alternate displays of gender give a more multidimensional representation of cisgendered men which we are currently lacking of. The fact that men should act homogeneously is questionable. When examining the interviews, it could be stated that the social world and environment one grows up in shapes a person's gender identity. The patriarchal culture has shaped our people and their gender representation for generations.

As I showed in the analysis, all study participants had variable understandings of gender issues. The study was able to offer a perspective on a more diverse and multidimensional representation of gender and male vulnerability in Finnish underground music scenes. Each participant brought out different sides of male masculinity in musical contexts and in their personal lives. By analysing the interviews, I was able to show how Finnish underground musicians viewed gender through self-reflection and also by reflecting on male performers and male role models of their personal lives. The study raised issues on different types of male masculinities and pressures regarding sensitivity and vulnerability as male underground musicians. These issues can be studied more efficiently in the future. Representation brings forth issues that have been absent (Jokinen, Soikkeli, and Kivimäki, 2019, pp. 24). A larger amount of multidimensional representation regarding gender may impact newer generations and their gender construction.

It should be acknowledged that the sample rate regarding the study subjects was small, because of this, the generalisability of this study is limited. If I had the possibility to interview a larger amount of people the analysis may have turned out

different. With an ethnographical study, I could have achieved a more comprehensive look on Finnish underground male musicians. If I had chosen to study subjects without using pseudonymisation, I could have asked for performance tapes or gone to live gigs and analysed their performance styles and portrayals of gender on stage. I could have also looked up for more information online and gone through local newspapers and music magazines for more information on similar issues. Nonetheless, the study was able to answer the questions that it was set out to do. It was able to offer a very detailed look on something unknown and with as much depth as possible (Williamon et al. 2021, pp. 31–32.) There is still a lot of ground that needs covering regarding academic knowledge around music and critical studies on men.

The different sides of male masculinity in underground environments still need more exploring in the context of Finland but also abroad. Does avoidance of vulnerability and insecurities create and produce macho culture, is a theme that could be studied and explored more in the future. How can hypermasculinity and macho culture be dismantled? What factors impact the masculine construction of a male musician? Something that did not come through in the interviews, but what can be seen as apparent, is the admiration that amateurism has in underground scenes. There is a sense of sticking to the true version of rock music and stance (Soikkeli, 2003, pp. 148.) Amateurism could be seen connected to a need for authenticity in music. These themes and questions would be interesting to explore in the future.

The participants of my study were from both working class and middle class backgrounds. With a larger group of people, it would have been possible to study how one's socio-economical background impacts gender construction. Intersectional discourses are very important to take into account when conducting studies on gender. Concentrating on the backgrounds and socio-economic status of the study participants or considering the ethnic backgrounds of the participants, while analysing the narratives constructed by underground male musicians could be a possibility.

Most of the participants had not thought about why there was a lack of representation regarding women and other genders in Finnish underground music scenes. Most of them viewed gender as a factor that they would not consider when choosing bandmembers. However, women, trans, or non-binary musicians were not mentioned a lot during our conversations. Most of the people mentioned during the interviews were presumably male, in which I asked for clarification. The male musicians I interviewed were all over forty-year-olds, so they had started out in the Finnish underground scene between the early nineties and early 2000's. When viewing Finnish underground scenes of that time, the female representation has been slight to non-existent. Why aren't female bands mentioned during the 90's and 00's in Finnish underground scenes? This is something that could be explored and further

investigated in the future. How does gatekeeping happen according to underground male musicians? There is a lot of information on gender discrimination regarding women, but this study would be conducted by asking underground male musicians about these issues.

Vulnerability and sensitivity are themes that are currently being explored more in media, contemporary culture, and popular culture. Tuomas Aitonurmi (2023) writes about how he handles trauma and male vulnerability in his book *Ruumiin ylittävä ääni* which is a collection of essays about gay culture and pressures related to male stereotypes. He writes about toxic masculinity from the perspective of a gay man. There seems to be a need for feminist male voices in popular culture. Writer and journalist Caitlin Moran (2023) published a book this year, called *What about men?*, which touches on similar subjects; how men lack diverse role models and are exposed to self-help books by, for example Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson's *12 rules for life* (2018), which is seen as a masculinist self-help book on how men should live and cope with issues in their personal lives. In Finnish academia, doctoral researcher Alma Rinta-Pollari and postdoctoral researcher Inka Rantakallio are currently studying gendering in relation to Finland's underground hip hop and rap communities. Alma Rinta-Pollari has recently written an article with Erica Åberg about the construction of masculinity in Finnish rap (see e.g. Åberg & Rinta-Pollari, 2023). Gender expression and masculine vulnerabilities in relation to popular musicology are themes that can be sufficiently explored. Further investigation regarding the more vulnerable and sensitive side of male masculinity may help in finding more diverse representations of men.

By analysing the narrative of four underground male musicians, I was able to learn more about specific underground cultures and be enlightened with its displays of alternate masculinities. Especially the themes around male vulnerability and sensitivity seemed to be novel and important as findings. It was important to bring forth themes around gender and gender portrayal, and for the participants to be able to comment on these themes from a male point of view. Multidimensional male representation is important in the deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity. Men in Finland's underground music scenes seem to have more diverse layers to them than what at first seem to be visible to the naked eye.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH NOTIFICATION

1. Pyyntö osallistua tutkimukseen *Miessukupuolen performointi suomalaisen vaihtoehtomusiikin kentällä*

Sinua pyydetään mukaan tutkimukseen, jossa tutkitaan miehen sosiaalisen sukupuolen ilmaisua vaihtoehtomusiikkiympäristössä ja sen turvallisuuteen liittyviä kokemuksia. Tarkoituksena on tarkastella miesmuusikon itseilmaisua esiintymistilanteessa.

Sinua pyydetään tutkimukseen, koska olet vaikuttanut suomalaisella vaihtoehtomusiikin kentällä esiintyjänä ja voit tarjota kokemuksellista näkökulmaa miesmuusikon itseilmaisuuksiin esiintyjänä.

Tämä tiedote kuvaa tutkimusta ja siihen osallistumista. Liitteessä on kerrottu henkilötietojesi käsittelystä.

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen edellyttää, että koet olevasi sosiaalisesti miessukupuolen edustaja.

Tutkimukseen osallistuu 4–5 tutkittavaa suomalaista miesmuusikkoa.

Tämä on yksittäinen tutkimus, eikä sinuun oteta myöhemmin uudestaan yhteyttä.

2. Vapaaehtoisuus

Tähän tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Voit kieltäytyä osallistumasta tutkimukseen, keskeyttää osallistumisesi tai peruuttaa jo antamasi suostumus syytä ilmoittamatta milloin tahansa tutkimuksen aikana. Tästä ei aiheudu sinulle kielteisiä seurauksia.

Keskeyttäessäsi tutkimukseen osallistumisesi tai peruuttaessasi antamasi suostumuksen, sinusta siihen mennessä kerättyjä henkilötietoja, näytteitä ja muita

tietoja käytetään osana tutkimusaineistoa, kun se on välttämätöntä tutkimustulosten varmistamiseksi.

3. Tutkimuksen kulku

Sinua haastatellaan yhden kerran Kulttuuritalo Anniksen palaveritilassa. Haastattelu tulee kestämään maksimissaan tunnin. Haastattelun aikana keskustellaan tutkittavasta aihepiiristä omien käsitystesi mukaisesti.

4. Tutkimuksesta mahdollisesti aiheutuvat hyödyt

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen ei hyödytä sinua henkilökohtaisesti, mutta osallistumisella lisää ymmärrystämme kyseisestä ilmiöstä. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus on kartoittaa sukupuolikysymyksiin liittyviä ennakkoluuloja sekä -käsityksiä. Tämän kautta on mahdollista saada enemmän tietoa kyseisestä ilmiöstä ja mahdollisista sukupuolittavista yhteiskuntarakenteista.

5. Tutkimuksesta mahdollisesti aiheutuvat riskit, haitat ja epämukavuudet sekä niihin varautuminen

Tutkimukseen osallistumisesta ei koidu sinulle haittoja. Sukupuolikysymykset voidaan aina mieltää henkilökohtaisiksi. Tätä asiaa kuitenkin lähestytään anonyymisti ja kysymysten ei ole tarkoitus olla epämukavia.

6. Tutkimuksen kustannukset ja korvaukset tutkittavalle sekä tutkimuksen rahoitus

Tutkimukseen osallistumisesta ei makseta palkkiota.

Tutkimus on pro gradu -opinnäytetyö, jota varten ei ole haettu erillistä rahoitusta.

7. Tutkimustuloksista tiedottaminen ja tutkimustulokset

Tutkimuksesta valmistuu pro gradu -opinnäytetyö. Tutkimusta esitellään musiikkitieteen seminaareissa. On mahdollista, että työstä tehdään jossakin kohtaa tieteellinen julkaisu.

Tutkittavia ei tulla tunnistamaan tutkimuksen tuloksista tai niitä koskevista julkaisuista.

8. Tutkittavien vakuutusturva

Jyväskylän yliopiston henkilökunta ja toiminta on vakuutettu.

9. Lisätietojen antajan yhteystiedot

Una Harnett

044 577 8758

una.sm.harnett@student.jyu.fi

tutkija / opinnäytetyön tekijä

Ohjaajan yhteystiedot:

FT Henna-Riikka Peltola

henna-riikka.peltola@jyu.fi

