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Becoming a Musician Through Band Music-Making Practices: Learning and Musical Identity Development

a Narrative Literature Review with Thematic Synthesis

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Background

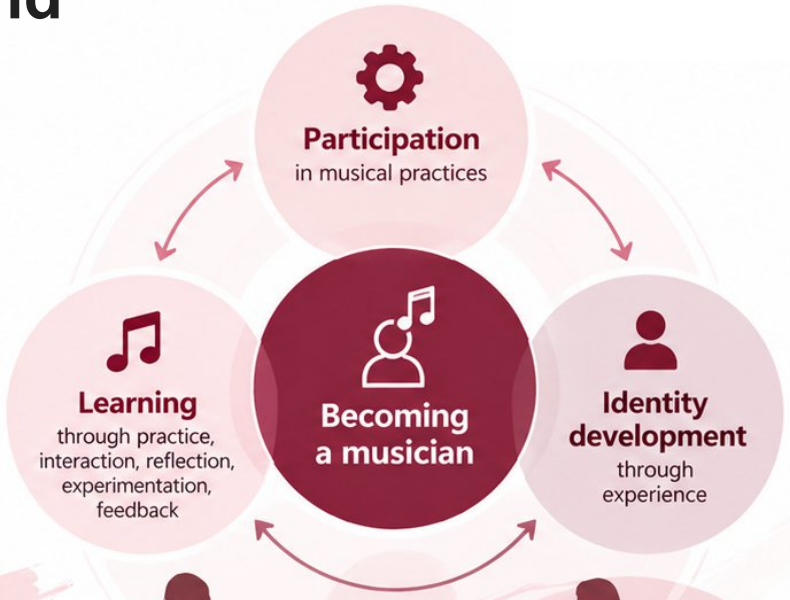
Becoming a musician is more than acquiring technical skills.

Musical development occurs through **participation in musical practices.**

Musicians learn through: practice, interaction, reflection, experimentation, feedback.

Musical experiences also contribute to how individuals understand themselves as musicians.

Musical learning and musical identity develop through experience.



Research Problem & Gap

Research Problem

What does previous research tell us?

These dimensions are often examined through different research focuses and contexts.

- Musical learning
- Collective music-making
- Musical identity
- Musician development

Gap

What remains less synthesized is how these dimensions can be understood together as part of the ongoing process of becoming a musician through collective band practice.



Research Question & Objective



RESEARCH QUESTION

How do previous studies explain the process of **becoming a musician** through band music-making practices?

OBJECTIVE

To **analyze and synthesize** previous research concerning the process of becoming a musician through band music-making practices, particularly the relationship among learning, collective practice, and musical identity development.

Research Method & Literature Curation

narrative literature review with thematic synthesis



Selection Criteria

Relevance to the research question
Related to music learning, collective music-making, musical identity, or musician development

Research-based evidence
Empirical studies and theoretical insights

Recent literature
Primarily published between 2016–2026

Full-text accessibility
Available and readable for in-depth analysis

Contribution to conceptual dimensions
Provides substantive insights to one or more of the four research dimensions

Selected Sources

15
sources in total

13
Substantive studies
Empirical studies that provide evidence related to the research question

+

2
Methodological sources
Guide the review and thematic synthesis process

13 Substantive Studies by Conceptual Dimension

Studies may contribute to multiple dimensions.

Music Learning (4 studies)
- Choong (2023, 2024)
- Dublin (2023)
- Woods (2022)
- Schmidt et al. (2025)

Collective Music-Making (4 studies)
- Schmidt et al. (2025)
- Choong (2023)
- Woods (2022)
- Mapaya (2024)

Musical Identity (3 studies)
- Malm & Lundin (2024)
- Hietanen & Ruismäki (2021)
- Forbes et al. (2025)

Becoming a Musician / Development (5 studies)
- Mapaya (2024)
- López-Íñiguez & Bennett (2021, 2022)
- Mitt & Ballantyne (2026)
- Everts et al. (2025)
- Forbes et al. (2025)

2 Methodological Sources
- Snyder (2019) – Literature review as a research methodology
- Thomas & Harden (2008) – Thematic synthesis

Findings & Discussion

a synthesis of four interconnected themes

Overall Finding

Becoming a musician is not simply the acquisition of musical competence, but an ongoing process in which learning, collective participation, and musical identity development are interconnected.

1 Learning through Musical Practice

Musicians learn through active participation in musical practices.

Recurring findings from the literature:

- Practice and repetition
- Observation and imitation
- Experimentation
- Feedback from others
- Reflection on experience



Learning happens in and through making music."

2 The Band as a Collective Learning Space

Band practice provides a social environment for learning, interaction, and shared development.

Recurring findings from the literature:

- Peer interaction and collaboration
- Shared goals and decision-making
- Collective rehearsal and performance
- Exchange of feedback
- Negotiation and coordination



"The band functions as a space to learn together."



3 Musical Identity as an Ongoing Process

Musical experiences contribute to the development and negotiation of musical identity.

Recurring findings from the literature:

- Self-understanding as a musician
- Identity construction and negotiation
- Influence of relationships and context
- Changing or multiple musical identities
- Recognition from others



"Musical identity is dynamic and continually shaped through experience."

4 Becoming a Musician as an Ongoing Developmental Process

Becoming a musician involves continuous learning, experience, and growing understanding of oneself as a musician.

Recurring findings from the literature:

- Development of musical competence
- Growing professional awareness
- Learning across formal and informal contexts
- Changing musical roles and career pathways
- Long-term and ongoing development



Becoming a musician is a long-term, non-linear process."

From recurring findings across 13 studies

Practice	Experimentation	Peer interaction
Feedback	Reflection	Identity development
Collaboration	Shared goals	Career development

Four analytical themes

- Learning through musical practice
- The band as a collective learning space
- Musical identity as an ongoing process
- Becoming a musician as an ongoing developmental process

Integrative understanding

The four themes are interconnected and collectively explain how musicians develop through practice, participation, and identity negotiation.

Conclusion

Becoming a musician can be understood as an ongoing developmental process shaped by interconnected experiences of **musical practice, collective participation, learning, and identity development.**

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Thank You