Australian Self-taught Contemporary Professional Musicians: 
Biographies, Learning Sources and Experiences

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

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I dedicate this thesis to my father Walter Watson who passed away in the last year of my candidature. Dad enjoyed hearing how I was progressing, and when I felt unsure he could say just the right sentiments to carry me back to seeing things clearly again. He would have found this thesis an interesting read.
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Abstract

This study examines the sources of learning identified in the music learning biographies of ten self-taught musicians who are currently working in contemporary music genres, as full-time professional musicians. The participant musicians were invited to share what they could recall of their music related life events and learning experiences. Sources of learning were then identified from the interview data revealing layers of intimately integrated life learning experiences. Aspects of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971, 1977, 1986, 2001; Salomon & Perkins, 1998) and Biographical Learning (Alheit, 2009; Tedder, 2007) were drawn on to construct the research design, and frame analysis and discussion. The first sources of learning were within the participants’ family, where in all instances one or more family members were interested in, and actively engaged with music. From the age of about eight years old the participant’s sources of learning shifted to ones connected to their self-initiated activity. From this time the sources were predominantly linked on an older sibling, peers with an interest in music and the peers’ older siblings. The participants described adolescent years playing in their first and second bands as being when they learnt significant foundational aspects of musicianship. By late adolescence into early twenties all participants had begun to work as a full-time musician in various bands, and had established their song writing alone, with another musician or with a band. The sources of learning in adult career stages were a more mature continuance of previous sources, with the addition of learning from older established musicians, directly learning from band management, music industry personnel and from being in a successful band.

The significance of this study lies in its presentation of insights into the sources of learning within a music learning biography of self-taught professional contemporary musicians with established long-term careers. These insights contribute to understandings of how music can be learnt outside formal education where independent, collaborative and career progress experiences are of equal significance. In addition, the insights gathered regarding not only what and who the musicians learnt from, but also the patterns of gradual learning, will be of interest to contemporary music educators, and arts-educators, in general. This study also highlights the value of support being given to those who seek to learn music outside formal education.

**Keywords:** self-taught, informal learning, contemporary musician, sources of learning, professional musician, collaborative learning, music learning experiences, garage band.
Preface

The very first time I became aware of a stark difference between the general public perception of musicians and support crew, and the actual reality was in 1991 at a live performance in Melbourne. I worked with a sound and lighting engineer. My job was to help set up the stage and do the lighting for the show. One night a member of the audience came over during a set break to ask how much it would cost to hire his set-up for an event. When he heard how much it would cost the response was “but you only work a few hours, that’s criminal!” Over the years many such misperceptions showed in comments from audience members and general public, with one still standing out “Oh, but it’s not that hard, these guys don’t spend years training in a conservatoire like my brother”. The comment reminded me of a Dire Straits song ‘Money for nothing’ (Knopfler & Sumner, 1985, Track 2), so at the time I did not feel I had an adequate response. Since then I came to know, and become friends with, a few musicians in Melbourne and have been able to see firsthand how much work and time is involved in being a full-time musician.

I had not been part of the musicians’ lives while they were still learning, and over time my curiosity drew me into long conversations in which many learning experiences were recalled, I refer to these conversations as the tour road trip stories. While for the musicians living those stories it was both enjoyable and difficult in equal measure, their sense of humour seemed to carry them through to decide it was all part of the job, conveying a very pragmatic sentiment. These conversations contributed to my understanding of how each experience added to their ongoing learning. I also noted their ability to allow new understandings and insights to create and re-create their musicianship and creativity. Drawing on these years of conversations, working and social relationships, as well as my own observations I have used them as a form of conceptual framing, a back story, when formulating and designing this study. During the analysis phase I continually questioned my findings to ensure I was working within the participants’ interview data only, and not imbuing into them content from my own experiences, rather they helped me to understanding the data.

I am aware of the potential bias my associations with musicians may present, which would mean translating the data without objectivity. While my understanding of musicians’ working lives is a contributing factor in how I recognised the commonalities and themes, they were scrutinised to ensure clear evidence existed in the data. The use of a significant number of direct quotes from the participants was intended as a means of conveying the theme or
The degree to which each participant said that a source of learning was significant varied; something I noted from their description phrasing and way of expressing the recollections. Keeping this in mind I have focused on the main sources of learning identified, sources most or all participants mentioned.

This study is concerned with the music learning biographies of participants who were able to establish long term careers as musicians in Melbourne, Australia. Therefore, the findings and discussion may contain circumstances of a more localised characteristic or only reflect the music activity possibilities of a previous time period. Having said this it is anticipated that on a more general level the findings and discussion will contain learning sources and experiences that are relatable to other professional self-taught musicians. Whether self-taught musicians in other areas of Australia, or in other countries, can similarly identify with the findings is yet to be seen with further research.

I would like to state that this study is not a comparison of, or judgement on, learning music through formal education. References to formal music education are, essentially, a point of reference for discussion purposes only. To the participants in this study it did not matter how a musician had learnt music, the important point was whether they could play the songs and find a musical ‘fit’ with the band. Reflected in their interviews was the notion of being part of one community in which a love of performing music brought them together.
Chapter 1: Introduction

There was an urge for me to want to go down that path without knowing it, I was attracted to it, it was a series of different things ... and all of a sudden I was right in the middle of that [music] world. (Jerry)

This study seeks to explore the learning biographies of self-taught professional musicians who have established careers in music, with the intent of uncovering the sources of learning they were exposed to, sought out or experienced. Starting with their earliest memories of music the recollections navigate their childhood, adolescence and into adult career stages capturing within their stories the influences, events and activities that collectively contributed to their music learning. While learner, amateur and early career musicians have been given research attention within both formal and informal music learning, the professional self-taught musician with an established career is largely absent. Yet, since the emergence of Rock and Roll in the 1950s a high proportion, if not the majority, of contemporary musicians did not learn music formally, it was through informal self-taught means. With such a significant contributing presence within the music industry it is important to capture their learning histories, and understand more about the processes of self-taught music learning.

The participant musicians were invited to share what they could recall of their music related life events and learning experiences, it is from within these details the sources of learning were identified. Three general areas of sources of learning were anticipated. First, from the external environment in which a participant lived: such as other people, a material resource, an activity or situation, or the social and cultural contexts. The second area is concerned with sources that are internal to a person: such as relationship with learning music, attitudinal development, emotional responses and coping skills. A third area is learning from experience, which is taken in this study to be responses to combined external and internal sources of learning: for example, early experiences of performing to a live audience. In the findings, I present the sources of learning as found within commonalities and themes located throughout their learning biographies including the evidenced learning content and contexts. Following a general age-based timeline the detail rich findings start with their earliest memories of music and self-initiated activities prior to learning an instrument through to learning within their adult career. The discussion introduces general characteristics found within and across the sources of learning, followed by an exploratory and descriptive treatment of the participants' recollected activities and comments as drawn from the interview data.
This chapter includes a brief background to the research topic as an introduction to the research question, followed by the aims and limitations, and terms used are listed to define and explain their use in this study.

While the idea for this study slowly developed over many years, the catalyst for deciding to focus on learning sources came from reviewing a previous study I conducted (Watson, 2008). In that study seven professional contemporary musicians were interviewed to investigate how the choice to pursue and sustain a career in music impacted on them personally. They had established and maintained music careers spanning from 30 to over 50 years, were creatively and financially successful, and had been able to purchase homes and raise families on their income. Within their interview responses were references to how they had learnt to play instruments, perform, compose and progress in their careers which were very similar to each other. Considering six were self-taught this raised the question of their learning biographies. What does a self-taught professional musician’s learning biography contain? What are their sources of learning if taken over a life learning perspective, from childhood to their current career stage?

While research related to learning music has predominantly focused on formal music education, there has been a relatively recent growing body of work on non-formal, informal and self-taught music learning approaches. The vernacular musician, those who learn outside formal education systems, has been studied with the general view to bringing some of their learning processes into formal music education. In these studies, such as Green (2001), Jaffurs (2004), and Woody (2007) the participants studied were mainly either adolescents still learning and developing towards becoming professional musicians, or they were amateurs playing at a community level. These studies have contributed substantially, particularly the work of Green (2001, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), to bringing changes in the way music is taught in schools. With an orientation towards linking informal learning with forms of formal music education the intention of creating sustained lifelong interest, and possibly a future career in music, is a clearly worthwhile pursuit. What did become apparent in reviewing the literature was an absence of similar studies solely on musicians who learnt through self-taught, or informal, means who were full-time musicians, with at least some years of professional experience.

The learning biography of professional self-taught musicians, particularly those with long-term careers, where the focus is on their sources of learning could contain insights into possibly sustainable, successful, ways of not only learning music but the additional aspects
that contribute to professional musicianship. It was considered reasonable to expect research in the realm of contemporary music learning, or education, to contain studies where this group was given attention to elicit their learning experience. This expectation was based on considering that Rock and Popular music genres are seen as traditionally learnt through self-taught means, therefore many, if not a majority, of musicians from these genres would have been self-taught. While Rock and Popular musicians, and their music, have been given attention within the areas of media and cultural studies, ethnographic and musicology as well as psychology, sociology and behavioural studies to date there are no studies found addressing self-taught professional musicians’ sources of learning. Aspects of learning are found in research related to education, although they are concerned with formally taught musicians. It is acknowledged that studies may exist in languages other than English, and while attempts were made to source translated copies of any such research, to date none have been found.

I conducted a review of well-known contemporary musicians from the late 1950s to present period with attention paid to Rock/Pop genres to see if there were musicians who had learnt music outside formal music education. There are many who were self-taught, in a non-structured teacher led manner, and attained success both financially and creatively such as: Jimi Hendrix, David Bowie, Bob Dylan, Rick Springfield, Frank Zappa, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Ringo Star, Dave Grohl (Nirvana, Foo Fighters), Keith Moon (The Who), and Noel Gallagher (Oasis) (Burton, 2014; Buszard, 2014; Pollard, 2015). If similarly considering Australian Rock/Pop genre musicians there is AC/DC (all members), Daddy Cool and Mondo Rock (all members), Noiseworks (all members), INXS (all members), Midnight Oil (all members), Cold Chisel (all members), Crowded House (all members), Men at Work (all members), The Angels (all members) and more recently John Butler (John Butler Trio). It is acknowledged that popular music was traditionally learnt through self-taught means (Coulson, 2010) therefore the presence of self-taught musicians in the music industry is not unexpected. If viewing these musicians with the perspective that attainment of success as a musician required a formal, or at least teacher led, learning their achievements would appear surprising. Based on the complexity and volume of musical knowledge often required of a professional musician it could seem unusual even remarkable that a self-taught musician would succeed as a full-time career musician.

This concept of success as a musician requiring prior formal music education is one that has arisen from the field of classical music where years of training are required before a
musician is ‘qualified’ to be a professional. There was either an assumption that contemporary musicians would have learnt through some level of formal instruction, or their learning was not given research attention (Clement, 2008). To then acknowledge musicians who have also spent years learning, but outside formal music education, who can play and compose across genres could, understandably, present as exceptional or even questionable. The majority of studies on popular musicians, where their self-taught learning and career is the focus, has arisen since the late 1990s into early 2000s, and were typically adolescent or amateur musicians. There is, then, an absence of insight from older (professional) self-taught musicians who learnt at a time when that was the traditional or original way (Clement, 2008) to learn music. This study, in seeking to investigate self-taught professional musician’s sources of learning across a learning biography, is an attempt to bring into focus these original learning approaches. Through discussion of their learning biographies, attending to their learning sources, the insights gained are intended as an initial means of bringing recognition, validity, and research consideration to this group of professional musicians.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to an as yet under-researched field of music learning biography in relation to full-time self-taught musicians. The purpose of attending to their learning biography is to contribute a more detailed understanding of popular music learning known as ‘traditional’, from a biographical learning viewpoint. As the participants have sustained long term successful careers, their experiences, influences and sources of learning contain insights that can be useful to individuals seeking to pursue similar approaches to their potential music careers or contemporary music educators.

**Research Questions**

This study is an investigation into sources of learning as identified in the music learning biographies of ten self-taught professional contemporary musicians. The primary research question is what are the sources of learning self-taught contemporary musicians encounter or seek out, and utilise, in their learning biography? The secondary questions, based on the premise that sources of learning are both internal and external to a person, ask: what are the learning experiences, learning content and contexts in which this knowledge and skills acquisition occurs?

Use of the term self-taught can infer commonly associated concepts such as amateur, hobbyist, untrained and even unprofessional. In respect to this, the term as used in this study refers to self-taught learning where the knowledge and skills gained becomes a person’s
career, a music career in this instance. Instead of focusing on musicians who are yet to enter, and sustain a music career, this study concentrates on those who have already achieved both career longevity and made contributions to music through creative outputs.

**Research Aims**

The research aims are:

1. To identify, and analyse, the learning sources that self-taught professional contemporary musicians encounter, seek out and make use of, in their learning biography from childhood to current times. This aim is concerned with external sources in terms of identifying the actual location; whether from a material resource (audio recording, music magazine); intentional interaction with a person; casual or opportunistic encounter; or situations such as observing other musicians.

2. To explore music learning experiences as subjectively understood by the participants with the intent of identifying and analysing ‘experience’ as a source of learning. This aim focuses on internal sources of learning. For example, learning as evidenced in; the development of coping mechanisms; learning how they learn music; resourcefulness in the use of what they have learnt; sense of self efficacy, identity and attitudes towards engaging with music and musicianship.

3. To consider the contexts of their learning in terms of retrospective social/cultural context, perceived emotional climate or location such as their home, school or a local venue. The participants may not have spent their childhood and adolescence in the same general area, therefore their learning may reflect localised social influences from the era in which they were experienced, family and musician groups may exert distinct cultural influences.

**Scope of this study**

It is relevant to clarify the intended scope of this study, and is outlined as follows:

1. Within the aim of identifying sources of learning the scope extends to identification, description and, where possible, discerning connections and relationships between sources. It is not the intention to draw inferences about the sources, such as why a source was chosen, analysis in this regard remains solely within data gathered.

2. The content of what was learnt is drawn from interview data and is discussed within the participants’ recollections only; therefore it is contained to within the scope of their experiences.
3. Substantiating the identification, content and contexts of the sources of learning is from within the scope of the data; using direct participant quotes. This is aligned with the participant centred approach and use of grounded analysis, and while reference to theories are used the discussion aims to present the findings independently.

4. The theoretical scope of this study is situated within biographical learning and social learning theory, as they allow for conceptualising of internal and external sources of learning. It is recognised that other theoretical perspectives could be applied, including forms of learning orientations. Restricting the scope to the two theories, and a limited link to select forms of learning, contains the discussion to within the aims; the weight of attention is on the sources of learning rather than the processes of learning.

5. The gender, age range and location of the participants are not an issue addressed; the scope of this study is focused on a treatment of the sources of learning in themselves. It is acknowledged that they may present as determining factors in what sources of learning were accessible, and are worthy of future research attention.

**Limitations**

During the development and implementation of this study limitations were noted and are acknowledged in the following list.

1. Time constraints resulted in restricting participant numbers to ten, which can limit the ability to form generalisations from the findings regarding the wider self-taught professional musician population group in Australia.

2. Use of in-depth interviews as a data collection method is limited in respect to the capacity a participant is able to recall subjective and factual details across their learning biography, spanning decades, and as such there will be some particulars not recalled. In response to this, use of two interviews allowed time for the participants to reflect and offer additional details.

3. The participants all reside in Australia where, while in childhood and adolescence they did not all live in the same area or country, they have spent the majority of their adult working life in Melbourne or Sydney which localises the findings.

4. The age range of participants, from 48 to 68 years, places their childhood and adolescence from within the 1950s to early 1980s. The material resources accessible, social and cultural structures of the era and activity locations are limited to these periods.
Researchers Connection

In my childhood, I studied classical piano, classical ballet and theatre with private teachers. Although this was not continued into adult life, it did provide me with an appreciation for these arts. In my early adult career, I worked in support roles for original and cover bands, learning stage and lighting as well as arts business management. Building on this experience, I later worked as office manager for an Artist Management company, also writing grant applications and organising basic book keeping and taxation for some musicians. These work history experiences and social relationships, built up over time, have allowed me to gain insights into the working lives of some Australian contemporary musicians. My own experiences were drawn on to enable a degree of understanding, as could be gleaned by a non-musician, when developing the interview questions, framing second interview questions and during analysis of data.

Terms used

The following discussion presents and explains key terms as used in this study.

Self-taught. The use of ‘self-taught’ as a defining term was initially considered to adequately express the musicians’ lack of formal music education. This was drawn from the dictionary definition where self-taught means; “1. Having knowledge or skills acquired by one’s own efforts without formal instruction. [Example] Self-taught musician and 2. learned by oneself. [Example] self-taught knowledge” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2016). There are other words that can be used such as non-formal, informal, vernacular, collaborative learning, autodidact, and lifelong learning to denote forms of learning outside formal education systems. Within research literature the term has collectively been taken to mean learning not pre-constructed through an education system or another person (Green, 2001). The main concept being the absence of an applied existing set structure to learning, wherein an individual uses their own learning schema, something that reflects the relationship they have with learning music. In this study, the term self-taught is defined as the active agency through which the learner forms their own understanding of music knowledge and method of skill attainment rather than that of another person.

I did consider changing from ‘self-taught’ to one of the other terms because self-taught can be contentious as it can be taken literally to refer to solely learning on one’s own without any other person or material resource as a teaching source. While informal learning does express the main tenants of how the participants learnt, I retained the term ‘self-taught’
because it carries within it a focus on ‘the self’ as primary whereas ‘informal’ infers the learning as being ‘not formal’. Retaining the term ‘self-taught’ is intended as a reflection of the participants’ central role in their learning. While the sources of learning included activities with others, and use of material resources, learning was initiated, driven and guided by their motivation, persistence and dedication to music. The participants took responsibility for their music learning at an early age and as that learning was through means outside structured or formal music education it meant maintaining self-determined agency.

**Contemporary music.** The term ‘Contemporary Music’ is defined as Adult Contemporary music developed from the late 1950s Rock and Roll era to current times, excluding Classical genres, and is also known as Popular Music (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2010). There were various sources from which this definition could have been taken; although this Australian Government report on the status and policies of assistance regarding the Australian Music scene was chosen. The definition wording reflects the specific meaning as taken in this study, in particular as starting from the emergence of Rock and Roll and excluding Classical music.

**Musician.** “One who composes, conducts or performs music, especially instrumental music” and “one who makes music a profession, especially as a performer on an instrument”. (Delbridge & Bernard, 1988, p. 639)

**Sources of learning.** The use of the term ‘sources of learning’ is a key concept in this study, and its applied meaning has multiple levels. Investigating learning that is outside formal music education situations encompasses a broader context within which the learning sources could be expected to come from, with various forms and locations. In a broad context, ‘sources of learning’ is taken to mean the literal understanding that it is from where something is learnt, the point of origin. Taken in this way, sources of learning could apply to almost anything encountered during a lifetime, which can be problematic in terms of sheer volume and complexity. While the application of meaning in this study does consider potential sources of leaning to come from a wide variety of sources it requires further amelioration. The theoretical perspectives of Biographical Learning and Social Learning Theory provide this further refinement.

Research utilising Biographical Learning concepts aim to understand and reveal experiences of learning (Tedder, 2007). In this sense, then, it refers to an individual’s
subjectively understood experiences within encountered familial and societal conditions and how it is processed into learning as taken in by that individual (Alheit, 2009). Here the meaning of sources of learning is focused on internal processing of experiences in response to external sources. Social Learning Theory sees learning as an active engagement, that while focus is on the individual and their agency, it takes as the source of learning the “collective participatory process of active knowledge construction emphasising context, interaction and situatedness” (Salomon & Perkins, 1998, p. 2). This theory provides a framework for approaching external sources of learning as seen in acts of music learning agency; the engagement itself in terms of what is being engaged with, how and why; and the situations in which individuals encounter active or passive interaction as being a source of learning. Both internal and external sources of learning in this study are limited to those evidenced to have produced knowledge, skill or understanding.

**Thesis organisation and chapter outline**

In this study I examine the sources of learning as identified in the recollected music learning biographies of ten self-taught musicians who are currently working in contemporary music genres, as full-time professional musicians.

The organisation and chapter outline of this thesis is as follows:

**Introduction.** Starting with an overview of the study, the initial inspiration for this study is then explained and how the topic was developed further which leads into presenting the research question, aims and limitations. My connection to the music industry is given, which positions prior work experience and social connections as having contributed to my understanding of working musicians’ lives. The terms used are placed at the end of this chapter to clearly state how they will be used in this study.

**Literature Review.** This chapter is divided into three sections, the first covers Rock and Popular music in western cultures, from non-academic literature to the early emergence of ethnographic studies on popular musicians through to more recent studies concerning informal music learning and lifelong learning in biographical studies. In the second section learning environments, influences and issues are covered, ranging from early exposure to music and parental influences to professional career learning and non-music aspects of Rock/Popular musicians’ learning. A third section addresses learning definitions and perspectives including natural learning, learning aurally and through observations.
Methodology. In this chapter the two theoretical perspectives are presented; biographical learning and social learning theory. They reflect the position taken that the sources of learning are derived both internally and externally within experiences of everyday life. The design of this study is based on a qualitative approach, the methods section details recruitment and interview process, and data analysis approach. Participant profiles are then included giving a brief overview of their early lives, including family and early music activities. The decision to include these profiles was made with the intention of providing an early sense of the music imbued lives of the participants.

Findings. The findings are based on themes and commonalities, and while they were not all experienced in the same sequence, for the purpose of presentation they are organised as a general learning biography timeline. Structured into three phases, the first covers early childhood where parents and older siblings are influential, followed by the emergence of independent interest in music which, through their activity, led to broadening the scope of sources of learning to include friends, peer and older peer musicians. The second phase begins with participant receiving their first instrument and starting to learn to play. This is followed by activities after joining a band through to late adolescence. The last phase is marked by the period when they first began to enter into work as full-time as musicians. Adult career stage topics include learning experiences of entering a higher calibre of professional musicianship, being in a successful band and learning in new work situations.

Discussion. This chapter begins with a discussion of the noted characteristics found in the sources of learning, and is divided into three sections to align with the findings. In the first section are topics found in relation to parents and older siblings as a way of conveying the participants’ early foundational sources of learning. The next topic areas discussed present the phase of their learning biography where independent choice to pursue music drew them into areas of learning where they began to engage with others. The second section addresses learning during adolescence where the scope of what the participants’ learnt covered more than learning to play an instrument, and the sources were predominantly accessed through active engagement. In the third section adult career stages are discussed where use of prior sources of learning to inform and build on is presented, essentially explaining how they had learnt how to learn, developed attitudes and work practices that aided in progressing their careers.
Conclusion. In this chapter is a summary of the findings and discussion, followed by recommendations drawn from the participants’ comments during the interviews regarding what they found to have been effective in their music learning. Finally, recommendations for future research are given.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

I was learning something, about music, about composition, because it doesn’t matter what genre of music, there is a structure to a song that makes it a good song and I think I was also learning about the ins and outs of the music business and how easy it is to get shafted. (Frank)

Self-taught professional musicians’ learning biographies, in respect to their sources of learning, is an under-researched area within the accessible English language literature. It is a point recognised in the work of Haroutounian (2000) and Smilde (2004) who call for a focus on professional self-taught musicians; in particular the development of musicianship and how their ways of learning can contribute to professional development for formally taught musicians. A study of self-taught professional musicians’ learning sources across their biography, has the potential to offer valuable insights that could be of assistance to music educators, arts management and those wanting to follow a self-taught learning approach.

This review is presented as an overview of literature relevant to an investigation into a learning biography in which music was learnt through means other than formal education. In determining the criteria, attention has been given to areas that would assist in building a structure in which to frame and inform this study. The first section builds an historical background, and reflects how interest in popular musicians developed from mainstream publication content in the 1950s into areas of academic research attention. Extending this, is a summary treatment of the various forms of publications in which the lives of Rock/Popular musicians could be located. These are presented to drawn attention to how, and in what form, the self-taught professional musician has been discussed; their biographies are more prominent within general public print media, whereas similar academic interest in music learning biography is relatively limited.

In the second section literature addressing learning environments, influences and issues is presented. Beginning with early exposure to music and parental influences followed by reasons for learning music and then musical habitus this grouping reflects areas relative to early childhood precursor sources of learning. Literature focusing on environments learner musicians enter when beginning to play an instrument and the means by which knowledge and skills are acquired is then presented. Starting with adolescent garage band groups, learner directed and then informal learning environments draws attention to the dynamic relationship between internal and external sources of learning. These areas also highlight the multiple ways in which learning environments contain influences that support or disengage a learner.
musician’s interest. A focus on issues relative to professional career advancement, and non-music aspects of musician’s learning is then presented. These discussions highlight how self-taught musicians’ learning biographies are considered valuable for the insights they can offer to formally taught musicians in respect to professional development.

The third section addresses learning definitions and perspectives, and is intended as a framing of how learning is understood as a common term and within academic literature. Four types of learning which convey a characteristic or trait of self-taught music learning noted in the literature are then presented; natural, aural and observational learning. A fourth, learning as currency, is a trait reflecting how the content of what is learnt becomes a means by which an individual enters, is positioned and progresses within a group. While this study is not orientated towards a treatment using forms of learning, these four are considered as relevant to framing aspects of sources of learning.

1. Rock and Popular music learning in Western Cultures

Scholarly attention was slow to begin. When Rock and Roll music began to emerge in the 1950s it made an impact on youth audiences, and initially the response from general print media was critically derisive. Scholarly attention is noted as having been slow to take up an interest, with sociologists the first to raise this point as Denisoff and Bridges (1981) cite in their review of music research. Their review refers to few paying serious academic attention to popular music and musicians, although due to the political nature of Folk music during the late 1950s into the 1960s their songs and subsequent cultural influence were addressed. The impact of the Beatles in 1964 did inspire attention from social scientists on the affect they had on youth, group or mob behaviour whereas the music and musicians of that era were still absent from scholarly literature. It was not until the late 1960s, as Denisoff and Bridges (1981) further explain that scholarly attention grew because these new music genres showed an urbane growth towards a more significant cultural presence. In the late 1960s books and articles began to emerge reflecting academic interest, which tended to use music as a means of discussing an issue, such as deviance, or about song lyrics in a cultural expression perspective. The work of Frith (1978, 1981) made a significant contribution because of his detailed sociological treatment of specifically Rock music and musicians; covering not only music related cultures, norms and the music industry but also the changing biographical profile of Rock musicians since the Rock and Roll era. While sociological and cultural studies continued to attend to contemporary music, generally from late 1960s to late 1970s
the majority of music discussion came from non-academic sources such as journalists and in industry related publications.

**Music Newspapers and Magazines.** There was an increasingly widespread emergence of music related magazines towards the end of the 1960s. In archival research I conducted at the British Library (July, 2016) of English music newspapers *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express* (NME), from 1958 to 1979, there were many articles addressing learning through self-taught means. Descriptions of the current and new artists included articles discussing their self-taught learning such as in the “Life Line section” of *NME* and “Stars of Beat” in *Melody Maker* both during the 1960s, and in feature articles. These sections and articles were based on artists providing the details in response to a journalist’s questionnaire, and in essence the musicians wrote much of the article content. In doing this they conveyed their opinions and gave insights about their music and learning that spoke directly to their audiences. In later editions of *Melody Maker* and *NME*, from mid 1970s onwards, the archival research revealed a progression away from content giving instruction on learning music and how artists progressed to a more sensationalised treatment. While the term self-taught is mentioned, it was placed within a short description as opposed to previous articles giving detailed accounts of their early learning. The market for music related magazines produced many like *Creem, Rolling Stone, Go-Set, RAM*, and *Juke Magazine* where content became less about the artist and their songs and more about the lifestyle and related celebrity culture.

In relation to sources of learning, and content, these print media publications were themselves a means by which learner musicians sought guidance. Highlighting how detailed these sources were is a study by Teachout (2006) who was able to conduct an analysis based on archived copies to construct a music learning profile of the Beatles using a significant amount of direct quotes contained in the articles from these musicians. During the period between the late 1950s to mid-1970s a degree of connection between the learner musician and those featured in publications was present; such access, while limited and mediated by the publication, did allow for self-taught music sensibilities to be conveyed. Reflecting a shift from self-taught learning of music being a commonly accepted pursuit to it being presented as only validated through formal education is Teachout’s (2006) slant towards viewing self-taught learning as remarkable, considering the quality and originality of the Beatles songs. This reflects the tendency to orientate genuine music talent, and the gauge by which it is measured, to be weighted towards formal music education.
Biographies - Books. Biographies of popular musicians where their life accounts reflected the musician’s working and personal lives began to emerge from the mid-1960s. Marked as a significant influence is Spellman’s (1966, 2004) biographical account of four Bebop musicians detailing their early learning difficulties, mistreatment by other musicians and within society. Spellman’s direct use of the featured musicians’ personal accounts, which brought to attention the wider social issues inferred, set a new standard and approach to biographies. As Pekacz’s (2004) critique of musician biographies highlights, Spellman’s approach was not a formulated, socially acceptable, account but one far more sympathetic and insightful of the musicians’ viewpoint. Pekacz’s analysis of biographies also raised the point that while offering an otherwise inaccessible insight into a musician's life, through musicologists tending to question the biographical facts it inferred fictionalisation within these works. There have been, and continue to be, a proliferation of biographical accounts of prominent Rock/Pop musicians and bands. Many biographies appear to present facts, yet also add to the sensationalised celebrity such as Motley Crue’s *The Dirt: Confessions of the World’s most notorious band* (2001). There are biographies focusing on the musician, or band, from a learning and experiential perspective, offering insightful details of their progression into music careers, achievements and activities such as *The Beatles Anthology* (The Beatles, 2000), *Love, Janis* (Joplin & Haska, 1992), and *Room full of mirrors: A biography of Jimi Hendrix* (Cross, 2005). As Pekacz (2004) drew attention to, it is not a question of whether the information is fact or fiction that creates the issues; it is from whose perspective the biography is written and the intended purpose.

How contemporary musicians have been understood through these published biographies relies on the voice, and intent, of the author who is conveying their own or that of another’s experience. To the general reader they offer interesting insights, ones a learner musician may draw on. Although, in the vein of Pekacz’s (2004) critique, such source for use in academic studies becomes questioned through, it is suggested, there being limited research attention on professional self-taught musicians learning biographies.

Ethnographic origins. The idea that music is, and always has been, a component of human society is not new. What has become increasingly better understood is how music is intimately integrated into cultures as representative of, and means by which, knowledge is conveyed. Ethnographic studies of non-western cultures such as Merriam (1964) brought to modern western academic attention the breadth and depth of intricate and complex systems of cultural transmission through music existing within these cultures. One factor these studies
have either directly, or indirectly, raised is the ways in which music is learnt, which in all cultures revolves around family and community groups. It is then, as Cohen (1991) argues, important to recognise and learn from how individuals within one’s own and other cultures learn an instrument, develop their sense of the music and themselves as musicians.

In the early 1970s in Nordic countries, as Folkestad (2006) mentions, specific scholarly attention was paid to the learning methods of Rock and Popular musicians. The absence of this work in British and American academic journals at that time meant until English translations were available there appeared to be little scholarly attention on popular musicians’ learning until the late 1980s. Two longitudinal studies, published in English as Garageland (Fornas, Lindberg & Sernhede, 1995) and Sunwheels (Berkaak & Rudd, 1994), exemplify research focusing on informal music learning. These studies spanned a decade from when each band, Garageland and Sunwheels, formed to their respective attainment of ongoing success. The two studies highlighted how the band members’ learning was not only about the music, it was inclusive of ancillary task learning such as band management, self-regulated practise and second language learning (English). In respect to informal learning of music, Folkestad (2006) reviewed predominantly Nordic research highlighting two main points. First, that popular music teaching has only entered into formal education as subject material, because learning truly takes place predominantly within informal contexts such as band rehearsals, jamming sessions and live performance. Second, that informal learning of music is a transmission of prior cultural knowledge, passed on through music socialisation within family, peers, musician peers and society regardless of the music genre. This positions self-taught informal learning of music within both a study of learning and a sociological treatment of local music culture.

There were ethnographic studies such as the early work of Coffman (1972), Bennett (1980) and Gay (1991). They discussed Popular/Rock musicians’ from the perspective of their lived experiences in a practical daily learning sense linking them with relational dynamics between the musicians. Highlighting learning through daily music activities, realities, band members and individual growth within musician communities as significantly engagement experience based. Focusing on the aspiring, and early career musician these studies represent a phase of learning within a learning biography; one that precludes family influences and positions learning as predominantly sourced from within groups.

The work of Finnegan (1989) brought sociological attention to popular musicians’ community-based cultures, highlighting the presence of family and community orientated music learning cultures. Cohen (1991) used an ethnographic approach to investigate
musicians, creativity and the music industry which drew attention to issues and tensions in the working life experiences of popular musicians. Drawing on these ethnographic origins, interest began to develop towards the ways in which informal learning constructs were used by young learner musicians in the late 1990s with the work of Green (2001) marking a distinct shift. Since the early 2000s there has been an increasingly more detailed orientation towards investigating, and implementing, informal learning methods in music education although the studies have not used professional self-taught musicians with established careers.

These ethnographic studies have contributed to insights into aspects of contemporary musicians’ lives in respects to music activities situated within groups; family, bands or community music groups. Collectively they direct attention to music learning as a co-created endeavour; while relevant it does not attend to the individual music learner. The participants in these studies were participating as amateurs, community group enthusiasts or still establishing their early career which may present differences to those who became full-time professional musicians with long term careers. The point raised is that while previous ethnographic studies offer significant understandings, and they do include self-taught music learning, they could be unintentionally omitting biographical factors contained within the lives of those who have long term professional careers as musicians.

**Biographical studies.** McCarthy’s (2013) investigation into the biographical aspects of informally taught musicians working under the Motown label is an example of academic attention focusing on a group of informally taught musicians in a specific music culture. Taking childhood, adolescent and young adult stages he identified how they learnt music and professional skills through direct influences from cultural and social networks. Emphasised are the connections between family values, musical activities and school music programs which often used Motown artists. This reflects the values of learning music through community already prevalent within the Motown shared learning ethos. Green (2001) conducted a study to explore the ways in which contemporary learner musicians engage with self-taught learning, cited as informal learning, a select phase of their biography was discussed. While reference is made to having interviewed two professional musicians whose recollections conferred with that of the learners’ experiences, the primary focus is on adolescent musicians advancing their knowledge and skills through peer group interactions. It is viewed as a significant contribution to understanding how to introduce new learning methods into music classrooms. In respect to biography, Green (2001) focuses on the
question of how they learn and within what contexts which in her study was primarily in the adolescent years. There is a consistent link with formal education in such biographical studies; either as a point of reference to substantiate the view that self-taught music learning success is remarkable given a lack of formal music education, or the discussion pursues the point that self-taught, or informal, learning methods can be brought into music curriculums.

Of note is the significant contribution made by Smilde (2009), who similar to Green (2001) published her doctoral thesis as a book, with she added a companion book containing the 32 participant learning biographies. Addressing classically trained musicians from a variety of backgrounds and countries her aim was to reveal the ways in which they learnt, and what contributed to them being able to sustain a professional career. Her work revealed the most significant learning was through music activities outside formal education, where informal learning situations were prevalent. Smilde’s prevailing point is that informal learning, in its multitude of situations and expressions, is crucial. In particular, for the classically trained musician the ability to learn from such experiences and transform their work creatively to meet changing work environments requires the inclusion of informal learning sensibilities.

2. Learning environments, influences and issues

Early exposure to music. Music is played in many family homes where it can be enjoyed as daily entertainment, is a cultural expression or a more involved interest in music. Rice (2003) describes informal learning of music in early childhood from an ethnographic perspective, when he says

Informal music learning among children in the absence of conscious efforts at instruction is probably the most common mode of music learning around the world. It occurs where music is an important aspect of children's socializing and also where children are encouraged to attend adult social gatherings. (p. 74)

Taken from this is the notion that if a child has music present in their early formative years they will naturally be drawn to it, and that interest tends to be shaped through inclusion in adult instigated music activates. The choice of music is found to be commonly instigated and chosen by a parent, as ter Bogt, Mulder, Raaijmakers and Gabhainn (2011) draw attention to, where the parents’ music values and how they perceive music in a cultural sense is the child’s introduction to music, and as such is a formative influence.

The extent and intent of exposure to music is cited as significant, as Finnegan (1989), Gay (1991), Gordon (2003), O’Flynn (2006), McPherson (2009), and Forrester and
Borthwick-Hunter (2015) indicate. In respect to extent of music played in the home, it is the regularity of music played and the variety of genres and styles of music children are exposed to through parents, peers and within a community. O’Flynn’s (2006) study highlights a connection between music genres and styles heard during the early formative years of a professional musician and the music they work with as adults. His study prompts the question of why this would be, as he suggests, a fairly common occurrence. Jànke (2012) offers a potential answer by explaining that if music is played during the time language is learnt in infancy, if it is prominent in their environment, then music becomes part of their formative memories. Those memories are then, as Jànke (2012) suggests, what a person connects to, what they draw on in framing their sense of themselves.

Literature related to the intent, the reason why music is played in the home carries two general implications. First, studies such as Davidson and Borthwick (2002) and Illari (2005) refer to parents who played certain music at home with the intention of introducing their child, or children, to learning an instrument. The parents were either invested actively in music as performers, music educators, or non-musicians who believed learning an instrument would bring culture to their child’s education. This carries an implication of choice; to what extent does learning music from one’s own volition differ from learning because it is someone else’s choice?

A second implication stems from addressing a different reason why music is played, that being because it is part of a family, or social culture. In Boer and Abubaker’s (2014) work on music-based rituals within family groups attention is drawn to family activities where music is present such as home entertaining, shared music listening, or as they emphasise the playing of music together as a family. The point made is that playing music, listening to it, and acquiring an appreciation for it can be something generated through what they termed ‘ritual’, where activities are instigated from tradition or culture. Similarly, Tunnell and Groce (1998) investigated family music ritual from the perspective of it being part of a larger community group. Music learning was informal, characterised by aurally transmitted skill and knowledge, early observation and participation. Access to experienced professional musicians who encouraged and mentored the younger learners enabled a continual creative development within the communities of musicians. While musical engagement was a strong family value, some interviewed family members expressed feeling an obligation to become involved in music rather than it being their own free choice. These studies reflect the presence of family and close community music sensibilities as enacted.
through tradition or culture as a source of learning. Yet it also draws attention to the degree of individual choice to participate within such music orientated families, or groups.

**Parental influences.** Two recurring themes were found in literature concerned with parents of music students (Manturzewska, 1990; Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Romer, 1993; Davidson et al., 1996; Chadwick, 2000; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; McPherson, 2009; Pitts, 2009; Creech, 2010; Creech & Hallam, 2011). One was the degree of both positive and negative influence a parent can exert, whether intentional or unintentional, and the consequential impacts. A second was the importance of a positive emotional connection to music created by a parent while children are listening to, or learning to play, music at a young age. Parental impact, for example as Pitts’ (2009) study indicates, “show[ed] considerable influence of the home [life] …with parental listening, playing and supportive attitudes” (p. 247) rating highest as a participant indicated formative influence outside of structured and formal learning contexts. The parent’s beliefs regarding musical ability in a child, as Davidson and Borthwick (2002), Creech (2010) and Creech and Hallam (2011) discuss, can have a considerably affirming or negative effect on the development of musical ability. Inferred also is the forming of musical identity, in terms of self-belief in musical ability, derived from how a parent responds to their child’s natural or developing talent. Profiling the family context Chadwick’s (2000) study details the parents of musicians who enter formal, or classical, music education as being predominantly middle to high income earners, are typically interested in or play music themselves and believe learning music will enhance their child’s overall learning skills. Yet notably, studies on contemporary musicians who learn informally either do not emphasise parental influence (Green, 2001) in the same manner, or detailed reference is limited.

**Reasons for learning music.** Addressing reasons why a child/adolescent starts to learn music Davidson (1999) and Lamont (2011) highlight an intrinsic value for music as being of significance, particularly for continuance into adulthood. While the intrinsic value can come from early childhood family values for music, it is seen as tied to emotional responses as Schàfer, Sedlmeir, Stàdtler and Huron (2013) suggest. From their growing emotional connection to music which becomes matured through continued exposure to, and understanding of, music the child takes a more active interest which affords learning opportunities. Music activity through one’s own volition is viewed by Bèzenec and Swindells (2009) as motivation derived from a value for music which in turn strengthens their desire to participate, to learn an instrument. These studies draw attention to the implications of learners
pursuing music because they felt a connection emotionally, and how that connection may have developed. They also highlight differences between learner musicians investing effort into their music learning because it is someone else’s value compared to music being their own independent choice. Indicating that musicians who learnt because it was someone else’s choice tended to either not continue that interest into adulthood, or if they did become professional they pursued music playing into an adult career without enjoying it.

**Musical Habitus.** The notion of habitus as framed by Bourdieu (1973,1977) is the set of created and co-created attitudes, meanings and behavioural sensibilities an individual acquires and uses in their life within current, and historical, social and culturally formed conditions. If viewed from the perspective of learning sources, it essentially conveys how a person can learn, passively absorb, and acquire attitudes, beliefs and a sense of their own agency through exposure to others in their environment. It has been applied in studies seeking to investigate influences, often difficult to frame, within groups or situations. Lane (2005) used the notion of habitus to conceptualise his study of professional jazz musicians learning dynamics, citing transmission of existing traditions in how to learn, play and progress as hierarchically based on experience and talent. This resulted in new musicians learning through such mediation, and having to accept the prevailing traditions if they wanted to participate and progress. Such studies bring into focus how the inclusion of habitus concepts contributes to understanding informal music learning as being inclusive of the cultural and social music knowledge transmitted from older experienced musicians.

Rimmer (2006) took the concept of habitus into an exploration of youth music choices and community music participation, referring to it as ‘musical habitus’ which highlights the interrelated dynamic of music reflecting a group’s cultural and socio-economic characteristic. Highlighting how embedded concepts of music as experienced, or exposed to, may contribute to the framing of attitudes which inform and effect participation levels. The work of Wasileweski (2017) carries the notion of music student’s parents as an influence through exploring parent created habitus, which aligns with conveyed cultural values for music as discussed by ter Bogt et al. (2011). The inclusion of parent’s music activities, attitudes and knowledge forms Wasileweski’s (2017) concept of habitus which, as is argued, children accumulate. It is within this habitus that a child forms an opinion of their own musical aptitude, and relationship with music. Wasileweski highlights the impact of such a habitus through explaining how a parent praising one child while disregarding the other, yet both children are still learning to play music, supports in one and can extinguish in the another
their desire to continue. This is based on evidence in the study that the parent’s music values are taken as authoritative by the children at this stage of their music learning.

**Garage band as learning environment.** There is a growing body of research focused on the ‘garage band’ phenomenon where the self-taught musician’s methods of learning and collaborating offer insights that have contributed to ways of teaching contemporary music (Barker, 2014; Jaffurs, 2004, 2006; Westerlund, 2006). These studies discuss the music learning relationship dynamics within groups of adolescents who meet in the garage of one band member’s house. Not all band members come to the group without any prior formal learning, but in the garage context each contributes to group learning through sharing knowledge. What is being questioned is whether this environment of peer group learning offers a positive reinforcement for learning, does this encourage motivation and enable them to pursue a career in music. This area of research highlighted the forms, and content, of learning self-taught engagement creates through closed group and select collaborative activities.

**Learning environment as learner directed.** Self-directed learning is a term used predominantly in the field of adult education and has been developing as a distinct area of enquiry for nearly forty years (Hiemstra, 2005). Similar to the issue with using the word ‘self-taught’ there have been various descriptions of what it refers to, although Knowles (1975) provides a clear summation:

>a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (p. 18)

This term, then, refers to active engagement with learning sources the individual either seeks out or is exposed to from which they consciously acquire knowledge or skills. Research in this area has been focused on, as Garrison (1997) argues, predominantly the external relationship one has with management of learning tasks but that it is better understood from an expanded view inclusive of cognitive and motivational dimensions. Knowles (1980) identifies a further distinction in stating that self-directed learning takes the adult away from a dependence on an ‘instructor’ toward a mature independent approach. Bell and Kozlowski (2008) show progression with this argument in their linking of self-directed learning to Active Learning where development of thinking skills is fundamental.
Research in the field of self-directed learning, which encompasses self-regulated learning, covers a broad range of topic areas, from workplace learning to sciences, medicine as well as the humanities and the arts. Where music learning is studied a predominant area is students’ music practice regulation and management in both classical and contemporary music students (St George & Holbrook, 2012; Graabraek-Neilson, 2008; Leon-Guerrero, 2008; Zimmerman, 2002; Renwick & McPherson, 2001; Nielsen, 2001). Within these studies are two areas of interest, one is the application of a pre-constructed strategy for the students to use when learning how to manage their instrument and how it improved their overall progress. The second were investigations into how students figure out and determine their own ways of self-determined goal setting, time management and how it aids their progress. Positive results were found in both groups, and in either case the self-management skills were noted to be transferable into other areas of their lives. One question this raised is whether the students who followed a self-determined format of structuring their practice sessions have, in that process, acquired a degree of self-awareness. Meaning that in order to determine a functional practice structure that enabled goals to be met, they would need to know what motivated them, and sustained their interest. Drawing from this is the question of whether such experiences become a source of internal learning and reinforcement. Through experience of its application, where use of self-knowledge develops self-efficacy or in having taken knowledge from a source its positive experience instils trust for future learning?

In relation to this study, more generally, the perceptions of intent to learn, thinking skills and ability to discern learning needs are taken from literature on Self-directed Learning as pertinent to defining and analysing learning sources. They are seen as linked to Biographical Learning and the internal processing of experiences with learning sources. Lebler (2007) calls for acknowledgement of self-directed learning as a necessary skill in the development of a professional music career, with respect to those who attained their training through formal education. The reason is argued to be because a professional musician will need to continually learn new material, adapt to changes in technology and ways of working with music, and accommodate new musical genres if they are to sustain their careers. Lebler, Perkins and Carey (2009) in a comparative study of classical and contemporary music student’s prior learning note the popular music students had multiple sources of learning and were more adept in self-directed learning.

The informal learner, learning from life. Informal learning is defined as learning that does not have an externally imposed lesson structure; the individual follows a self-
determined course of knowledge and skill acquisition (Mak, 2006). It is not considered to always require specific prior intent to learn something, can occur across many varied life situations and can be unintentional (Watson, 2003). A discussion of workplace informal learning by Carliner (2013) focuses attention on the notion that learning from the school of life has been historically how many professions developed.

Research into informal ways self-taught contemporary musicians learn, such as O’Shea (2012), Karlsen (2010), Green (2004, 2006, 2008), Lilliestram (1996), Cohen (1991), Finnegan (1989), and Bennett (1980) are positioned within music learning life structures yet they tend to focus only on methods employed to learn instrumental techniques, performance and collaborative work. Broader aspects of the self-determined factors, influence of exposure to music and what contributes to their continued learning are not addressed. Highlighted is the notion of how informal learning is situated within the learning biography of a professional self-taught musician with an established career.

Viewing the informal learner as situated within a group, linking informal learning with social context Cope (2002) identifies cultural/community influences and how music knowledge and traditions are transmitted. In this he refers to engaging with music performance as a form of social relationship often related to a cultural tradition or social interest group (in either a public or private location). Extending on this notion is Louth’s (2006) research on Jazz musicians, where informal music learning was a family and cultural life construct akin to an apprenticeship. Learning is within a relatively structured ‘tradition’ based body of knowledge, and close family or social group communal learning. Meaning that while it did not take place in a formal education setting, it did contain a strong structured transmission of traditional jazz music knowledge and skill acquisition. While it is considered to be informal learning, the application in music learning situations does draw attention to the concept of sources of learning coming from traditions within a family or social/cultural group.

**When self-taught musicians enter formal music education.** Of interest to researchers has been the comparison between formally taught and self-taught musicians; focus has been on how the two groups progress in the same learning environment. Burland and Pitts (2007) investigated college music students whose prior music learning was self-taught compared to those who had always learnt formally. In this study they found those who were previously self-taught were able to maintain high levels of motivation were adaptable and had creative thinking in problem solving. Jones (2009) in a similar study found students
who were self-taught prior to entering formal education rated higher for continued music learning and participation into adulthood, compared to those who had always learnt formally. In research relating to sources of learning self-taught musicians more recently turn to, Kardos (2012) recounts how his university course accommodated self-taught musicians in a music technology unit, where previously it was offered to only those studying a music degree. In discussing this occurrence Kardos reflects that the students who were self-taught musicians showed an equal level of understanding about music to those already in the degree course. Taken from this is the question of music knowledge, and how self-taught musicians express their understanding of music, that it may be equivalent to those formally taught but expressed in different ways. These studies present the self-taught music learner as having different capabilities and characteristics to formally taught musicians, while this study does not seek to compare the two groups there is an emerging question of why such differences occurred.

**Professional career learning:** The topics of concern in literature on adult professional musicians cover areas such as the ability to progress through continued employment, or self-created work opportunities (such as Mak, 2006; Juuti & Littleton, 2010, 2012). Suggested by Lyons and Bandura (2018) is the question of how prior learning content has been successful in preparing, in their case formally taught musicians, for a music career. It is a concern for many formally taught musicians, as the work of Dobson (2010) also investigates, where understanding the cultures within musician networks, and attempts to form new music based work relationships causes high levels of stress. The reason, as both Dobson (2010) and Lyons and Bandura (2018) discuss, is because their music education activities were knowledge and skills outcome focused, citing that if set within ‘real world’ music performance opportunities there would be more relevant workplace learning.

The work of Smilde (2005, 2009, 2010, 2012) on professional development for musicians within a lifelong learning framework calls for active solutions to musician’s career longevity difficulties through attention to their learning biography. This work cites societal changes in music consumption, increased use of technology, as well as shifting cultural values for music altering previous career pathways. Smilde (2005) notes in particular that musicians from formal education backgrounds, whether still studying or during their professional careers, also exhibit informal and non-formal learning tendencies. Noting this as being where research attention could be focused, Smilde (2009, 2010, 2012) recognises non-formal learning situations to be where a self-taught professional musician learns, adapts and creates as a response to workplace and music industry changes. The aim being to bring an
understanding of their learning biography into informing development of assistance programs for formally taught professional musicians. The work of Smilde (2008) and Wirtanen and Littleton (2004) highlight the link between early music learning experiences and how it impacts on progression of professional careers raises the question of whether self-taught musicians have similar experiences. In particular, the issue of links between early music learning experiences and an individual’s future relationship with continued learning; leading to adaptability and an openness to progressive music learning experiences.

Skills that contribute to advancing as a performing professional musician are recognised by Haroutounian (2000) as being present in self-taught musicians yet this is an area largely absent from academic attention. Focusing on the issue of how a musician, both formally and self-taught, learns the coping techniques of stage fright and stress related to live performance he acknowledges the formally taught often do not have such specific training. Haroutounian notes that self-taught musicians appear to develop this skill and calls for more research into this area.

With the intent of establishing how musicians across genres continue to learn in their adult professional careers a substantial study was conducted in the United Kingdom, 2006 to 2008. The project was titled Investigating Musical Performance (IMP): Comparative Studies in Advanced Musical Learning, instigated by the Economic and Social Research government body (Welch, Duffy, Whyton, & Potter, 2008). Focusing on aspiring and professional musicians, aged between 18 and 62, using a questionnaire they surveyed 244 musicians. An orientation towards assuming these musicians were predominantly formally taught, and their ongoing learning would be again in a formal setting reflects prevailing assumptions about professional musicians. The findings highlight live performance as their main source of post education learning. Although it did reveal comparative detail between the classical and popular musician's early learning biographies, which showed western classical musicians as starting their instrument learning on average by age 9, whereas the popular musicians began on average by age 12. The classical musicians were more musically influenced by parents, teachers and formal groups such as ensembles, while the popular musicians were typically influenced by the work of a well-known musician and their peer musician group interests. Noted also was the finding that those who identified as Popular musicians, regardless of how they had learnt music, did not regard sight reading as important, valued learning by ear, improvisation and spending significant time in jamming sessions with others, or listening to and playing music alone.
Non-music aspects of Rock and Popular musicians learning. Literature on aspects of musicians’ learning and adult music practices, while on specific topics of their informal approach, also revealed non-music areas of learning. Such as Lilliestam (1996) who investigated how musicians learn aurally, which in addition to the actual learning process included reference to their attitudes towards formal learning. Their culture of learning music is portrayed as opportunistic with a casual approach, formal learning is resisted and counter to the ideals of Rock and Popular music ethos. The inclusion of anti-formal music education attitudes combined with descriptive terms such as ‘opportunistic’ and ‘casual’ can imply the self-taught musician has less intent or seriousness than that of a formally taught musician. Studies on how music is learnt within specific traditions, such as adult Irish music groups by Jaffur (2004) and learning in a Celtic music community by Waldron (2009) and Waldren and Veblen (2009), reveal commonalities with informal learning by Rock and Popular musicians. Learning is situated within communities, with family values for music often present. The prevailing attitudes and concepts about the music learnt are essentially transmitted through others while engaging in music activities. There is an awareness of music being more than the songs played, carried within their learning is the formation of musical self-identity which is mediated by the types of interactions experienced.

3. Learning: definitions and perspectives

General definitions. Within everyday use, the terms learn or learning are commonly expressed and generally understood words, although a more precise meaning can reveal specific components of what learning actually is as a human action and capacity. The definition for learning as found in Macquarie Concise Dictionary (1988) offers a general coverage of its applications, as the following indicates:

Learn. 1. to acquire knowledge of or skill in by study, instruction or experience. 2. to memorise. 3. to become informed of or acquainted, ascertain. 4. to acquire (a habit or the like). 5. to acquire knowledge or skill.

Learning. 1. knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or fields of scholarship. 2. Psychol, the modification of behaviour through interaction with the environment. (p. 549)

These definition listings present a generally accepted understanding that learning is an active engagement, shown through use of the word 'acquire'; it involves obtaining something one did not have before in the form of knowledge and, or, skill; and that learning can be a change, such as habit forming in a behavioural change. What is also taken from these definitions is
the relationship between internal and extrinsic sources. While the actual learning itself is something intrinsic to an individual in the form of increased capacities from memory of knowledge and experience, the majority of sources of learning, meaning their point of origin, are seen as located within the individual’s environment (Gray & Bjorklund, 2014).

**Definition within academic research.** In contemporary academic literature learning is posited as having many aspects and ways of defining it. Acknowledged also is that learning cannot be adequately explained in one overarching statement without discounting an aspect of one theory or another (Harasim, 2012; Staats, 2012; Carey, 2009; Illeris, 2009; Jarvis, 2005; Tennant, 2006). While not offered as an overarching statement, Illeris (2009) determines the core components of learning to be “loosely defined as any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing” (p. 3). Schunk (2012) offers three basic components of learning; it involves change, endures over time and occurs through experience. Succinctly indicating three common aspects of what learning is taken to be comprised of in a general academic sense. The ‘change’ referred to is seen as a person being able to do something they could not do before, although it is not always noticed as “it is not uncommon for people to learn skills, knowledge, beliefs, or behaviours without demonstrating them at the time learning occurs” (p. 4). The notion that learning endures over time is to remove temporary changes, such as being affected by alcohol or a temporary extreme emotion. In determining learning as occurring through experience, Schunk (2012) is seeking to separate developmental change such as a baby learning to walk, from change that occurs for example when a child observes how others hold a cup to drink.

**Natural Learning.** Taking a different approach to learning are studies describing what Kohut (1985) framed as natural learning, comprised of five steps: observation, forming a mental image, imitation, trial and error, and practice (pp. 4-5). It is conveyed as a reflection of the basic steps a person takes when attempting to learn on one’s own. In terms of learning music, Forrester and Borthwick-Hunter (2015), Criss (2008), and Green (2001, 2005) discuss it as a consistently innate tendency. Children’s music play activities exhibit this tendency when they are left to freely engage (Forrester & Borthwick-Hunter, 2015), self-taught musicians learning characteristics display these basic steps (Haroutounian, 2000; Green, 2001, 2005; Woody & Lehman, 2010) and recommendations within music education studies (Criss, 2008; Green, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008) support incorporating them into their lesson structure. In formal music education, as Esslin-Peard (2017) concludes, university music
students exhibited natural learning behaviour in their extra-curriculum activities and group class projects. In that study the students formed their own bands and had jamming sessions with musicians outside their class groups, they reported using ‘natural’ learning skills from these interactions. The point being made was that in the absence of a set, or formal, structure the student musicians utilised other learning means, which they also stated was initially frustrating. Students cited having difficulty in applying their formal learning to these informal settings.

Natural learning is also discussed by Solomon (2003) in her study on autodidactic learners who are by nature, or circumstance, more attuned to being self-taught. These learners develop more than just knowledge or skill; through learning in their own way what inspires their interest, they develop self-efficacy in learning. While both choice and circumstantial autodidacts are discussed as having different learning life histories, both progress into adulthood with high motivation for learning, openness to trying new things, and high levels of problem solving and creativity.

In literature on autodidactic learning generally two topic areas arise. The first area contains studies on specific people who are exhibit autodidactic traits, such as Morrissey's (2001) discussion of the life, career and giftedness of Jimi Hendrix’s music creativity. The account details how Hendrix's autodidactic learning was initially by circumstance then by choice, and that he acquired his knowledge and skills through ‘life’ experience sources. Those sources were family, peer musician groups and societal influences; all contributed to and were a source of learning throughout his career.

The second area is the notion that through autodidactic learning a person acquires a degree of self-sufficiency and self-efficacy. Much of this research is in the area of education where as stated by Buttry (1980) it is an important element in education and learning, whether from a formal or self-taught stance. This point is inferred also by Coulson (2010), Solomon (2003), Clement (2008), Morrissey (2001), and Antikainen (1996) in their discussions of musicians. They note that those who have learnt how to learn, and know how they personally learn best, will continue to expand their skills and knowledge through approaching problems and change creatively. This essentially implies that the autodidact will develop self-sufficiency and self-efficacy because they have taken a more self-determined approach to learning. A key difference being that the autodidact will seek out learning experiences and is open to learning from many sources based on their own volition driven by a personal, often singular, curiosity. Drawing from this analysis and discussion is the notion of whether autodidactic learning imparts more than content, are the sources of their learning
and conditions under which they learnt influential on future learning which translates into music career success.

**Learning as ‘currency’**. To actively pursue an interest in music is not in itself uncommon, at any age, although what is less understood, as Coulson (2010) and Woody and Lehmann (2010) discuss, is how acquiring knowledge prior to, and through, learning an instrument affords a type of currency. When used appropriately the prior knowledge, such as knowing the work of certain bands or genres, is seen as a significant contribution to their progress within groups and into a music career. This is because they are already aware of, and can utilise, relevant music knowledge which means they can communicate verbally and musically with a key group of musicians therefore gaining access. This notion draws back to Bourdieu’s (1973, 1977, 1984) cultural and educational capital giving a person more agency, and affording access. Coulson (2010) explains this as the music and music culture knowledge acquired through the learner’s prior activity that can only be furthered through ingress to a group, which in turn enables music activity (agency) leading to further advancement within one or more music groups.

**Learning aurally**. In literature concerning self-taught, informal or vernacular musician’s learning processes a key component is learning by ear, or aurally. Franz (2017) conducted an historical investigation into aural music learning revealing it to have been the prevailing method, across all cultures, until in Europe complex notation systems in the 1800s shifted attention away from this learning form. Citing the change as being why many classical musicians cannot play without notation and are not able to compose or improvise, Franz calls for a stronger presence of aural skills in music education. Previous studies into aural learning of music, such as Woody (2007, 2012) and Woody and Lehmann (2010), refer to it developing “the inner ear”, which means the musician plays “what the music should sound like” (p. 83). A further skill Woody and Lehmann (2010) cite is listening, where song patterns and forms of composition are recognised. These studies consistently reference learning by ear providing certain advantages such as extensive musical memory, improvisational, song adaption and compositional skills. In studies on popular musicians’ learning approaches such as the work of Green (2001), Jaffurs (2006), Barker (2014) and Westerlund (2006), aural learning is a core component cited; essentially distinguishing how most non-classical music is learnt outside formal educational settings.
**Learning through observation.** Haddon (2014) investigated student's ability to constructively approach observational learning in a music master class. It was found that while the students did observe and take in a variety of information, there was a lack of awareness about what they were to specifically observe, and therefore no systematic approach. This highlights that in observational learning it is not only simply seeing something, but the discernment and awareness of what to focus on that enhances this aspect of learning. Viewing a child's early formative years Gordon (2003) outlines the importance of exposure to and observation of, music in the first five years that is “rich and varied” (p. 7). Here Gordon emphasises, and draws attention to, how early home environmental sources of learning in the form of music played, watched and engaged with that the child can observe, listen to and later imitate all form an early foundation for later aptitude in music. Taking this concept into the classroom Nihland (2009) shows how young children benefit from freely playing musical instruments, where they learn from each other in an observational exploratory sense as opposed to a teacher led instruction. Conveyed in these studies is the notion that when music is learnt through observational methods, using free play, it contains the additional skill of then being able to learn through observation. The learner is acquiring an awareness of what to observe to incorporate into their understanding.

**Summary**

This review presented literature in three sections, with the aim of building a conceptual structure within which to place the sources of learning discussion. The first section presented an historical background regarding literature on Popular/Rock musicians, how it emerged and developed into current research attention areas. Conveyed from this historical placement is that attention on self-taught informal musicians, specifically their learning biographies, has existed within general print media publications since the emergence of Rock and Roll in the 1950s. The content does convey aspects of their learning as determined by the intent of that publication; music magazines sought to publicise the musicians through featured articles, biographies presented their private and working lives to promote. When academic attention emerged it aimed to uncover an aspect of their music lives to understand something; through their music to understand social issues, through their music making activities to uncover socially structured learning dynamics. This attention more recently has turned to the self-taught musician to understand music making from within specific groups; the adolescent learner musician and the community music group, in doing so bring such informal sensibilities into more formalised music learning.
The second section under the title of learning environments, influences and issues presented literature that exemplified general areas of academic attention within the field of music learning relevant to this study. Grouped in the first four sub-headings are discussions related to early childhood and early environmental influences, and introduced the notion of habitus. This area draws attention to the presence of certain environmental conditions in which music is an influence; created by significant others in the learner’s life. Such external sources of learning inspired internal learning, from which the catalysing interest in music emerges. The next four sub-headings introduced literature where learning is constructed within something; the peer group learning of a garage band, informal and self-directed learning as co-created within music activities and self-taught musicians entering into a formal education course. From this literature the notion of self-taught music learners as acquiring knowledge and skills through unstructured, opportunistic and group directed means created inferences. Without equally attending to the professional self-taught musician, this literature sets the learner, amateur and interest group sensibilities as representative of all self-taught musician. The intent has been to indicate how the self-taught musician has been represented, and to position this study as expanding on their understandings to include such learning when it progresses to a successful professional music career.

A third section discussed learning definitions and perspectives to introduce how learning is understood generally and within academic literature; which conveys the commonly understood definition and then a more nuanced sense of what learning can contain. The inclusion of four forms or specific understandings of music learning was presented to draw attention to particular ways of learning. Natural, aural and observational learning are taken as being reflected in self-taught music learning; offering insights into the ways in which such learning can be translated. They highlighted potential areas of attention in which sources of learning could be located, and through which less obvious aspects could be seen. Including learning as currency brought attention to how the content of what is learnt can be used in addition to the acquisition of knowledge and skills; where it affords entrance to certain groups or progress within a group, akin to the enabling sensibility of cultural capital in the work of Bourdieu (1973, 1977).
Chapter 3: Methodology

*I think teaching yourself and having your own unique way of doing it is probably a good way of forwarding yourself much quicker ... because if you just follow the rules you just become another number playing music. But if you break the rules and it’s interesting, exciting, people will listen ... they’ll like it or not.* (Luke)

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study to explore sources of learning as can be determined by the recalled learning biographies of ten self-taught professional musicians. A general outline of the methodological approach is presented; first an introduction, followed by the two theoretical perspectives, with an explanation of why they are appropriate. Second, the methods section details my research design starting with ethics approval and considerations, followed by participant selection criteria and recruitment, the interview process and data analysis. A general background profile is included for each participant, intended as a means of introducing them and indicates the range of ages and locations in which they lived throughout their childhood to current time.

This study seeks to capture the learning biography experiences of professional self-taught musicians, where their learning experiences are central to ascertaining sources of learning. Therefore, the methodology used was designed to accommodate a participant led qualitative investigation. Components of biographical learning and social learning theory were used for their alignment with study aims; they conceptually define the sources of learning as a notion and were drawn on to frame analysis questions. Ten participants were recruited through snowball sampling, with each participant interviewed twice. Of the two interviews, the first was structured around eight question areas initially drawn from a previous study I conducted (Watson, 2008), a review of literature and biographical insights gained through my own personal experiences in the music industry. Conducting a second interview enabled me to ask clarification and follow-up questions, as well as an opportunity for participant to share or add further details. In addition, as Morse (2000) discusses, when in-depth interviews are used for gathering data with a small number of participants, second interviews increase the amount of overall usable data. Regarding the interviews generally, my intent was to foster a “comfortable and conversation like” (Ruane, 2005, p. 147) experience. This required flexibility where questions were not always asked in a scheduled sequence; rather they followed within the more in-depth conversational style that arose. From data
analysis the emergent themes and commonalities were constructed into an age based timeline that generally reflects their activities and learning.

**Conceptual framework**

The choice to work within a qualitative approach is guided by the main research aim of investigating sources of learning; the study is exploratory and investigative. Qualitative enquiry is suited to the exploration of lived experience, its principle aim is to illustrate and clarify “the life-world as it is lived … and accomplished by human beings” (Schwandt, 2001, p.84). This paradigm is aligned with the studies' aims in respect to qualitative approaches being interpretive, where “researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them” (Denizin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Also, there is an orientation towards participants' views being central, their experiences and understandings of them are an integral research component (Punch, 2005). Qualitative research approaches, as Lichtman (2012) states, have become increasingly substantiated by its use, particularly within the Humanities and specifically in Education research, since the early 1990s. The reason given, according to Lichtman, is because research attention turned to phenomena and aspects of society previously deemed unworthy: minority groups for example. In doing so, the understanding sought could not be found in numerical data or settings foreign to participants but through researchers placing themselves conceptually into the participant’s environments; essentially taking the participant's perspective. Crucial is a difference in the questions asked and how they are approached conceptually. The difference is that a qualitative approach explores questions that may involve not only factual but also subjectively understood data that is analysed according to theoretical frameworks aligned with various philosophies (Sumner, 2006). The point being that a qualitative approach enables exploratory investigation of phenomena as experienced within a person's life that does not have a numerical language but an experiential one. This aspect supports a study of sources of learning because data is gathered from participant experiences.

**Theoretical perspectives**

The use of Biographical Learning and Social Learning theory as the two theoretical perspectives is first intended as a means of referencing, or framing, what in this study the term ‘sources of learning’ means. They are employed as complementary to each other, where elements of biographical learning aide in viewing learning sources as internalised life experience processing and social learning theory links the individual with their external
Methodology: 

learning sources. Second, application of these two theories aided in framing the interview questions and gave direction to what was focused on during the interviews. This meant attending to gathering data on not only external events, but where possible their emotional, attitudinal and cognitive recollections as well. Third, during analysis the two theories were drawn on to formulate questions and further interrogate the emerging findings relevant to sources of learning; further enabling identification, connections and characteristics.

Biographical Learning. Biographical Learning as a theoretical approach has been developed over the last three decades in Lifelong Learning and Adult Learning research to understand and reveal ‘experiences’ of learning, to hear the stories of those previously absent in non-participant centred research (Tedder, 2007). It is defined as being “about how people’s life courses develop through interaction between the individual subjectivity and the societal conditions” and as learning is part of that relationship “learning can only be understood concretely in relation to the biography of the learner” (Alheit, 2009, p. 116). In the work of Tedder and Biesta (2007) it is conveyed as the connection between a person’s life history and their learning processes, the influence of one on the other as well as biography itself as being a source of learning. To say that a person learns from life could mean the events themselves are the source, or catalyst of learning; this would not attend to the learner as being also a source, or catalyst within that learning. Biographical learning takes the view that these events are not simply an encounter one can later recall; they are experiences the person has related to in some way. When that person ‘relates’ to an experience they have become aware of something; an emotion, new knowledge, modification of prior understanding or skill. In this way, then, biographical learning conceptually frames learning from life as a relationship between an encounter (event) and a person’s capacity to ‘relate to’ and process that event (their experience). It is not taken as being singular with one event and one period of processing, but rather cumulative layers of life events experienced and processed at different times. The unique experiences an individual encounters within their social and cultural contexts will influence, or dictate, how they relate to learning in and from life. In addition, these life experiences impact on an individual as they process what it means to them and may cause a change in attitude or choice (West, Alheit, Anderson, & Merrill. 2007). In this study the work of Tedder and Biesta has been primarily drawn on to frame and place the notion of biographical learning as a conceptual orientation which views the participants’ life history, in relation to learning music, as the formative location from which their self-taught experiences
were mediated. Providing the schemata through which the learning sources and experiences can be explored to elicit an understanding of internal learning sources.

Music education research utilising concepts of biographical learning to explore the lived experiences of musicians has covered a variety of issues and perspectives. Woody (2001) looks at how some musicians have excelled in their careers, taking a learning biography approach from childhood to their current age. This study offers a guide in its use of an extended learning history, although it only investigated musicians who were formally taught. Moore, Burland and Davidson (2003) using a biographical mixed methods approach consider the social-environmental conditions in childhood that later may have affected continuance into a music career. In considering the social impact of quality and quantity of learning experiences their study contributed conceptually to this study’s view that learning sources could be found within limited access to education which inspires resourcefulness. While Creech et al. (2008) explore how musicians across multiple genres develop their performance skills and Pitts (2009) investigates the learning life histories of amateur or semi-professional musicians to highlight maintenance of interest and motivation in music, they again focus on those who were formally taught.

Green’s (2001) biographical work on exploring how amateur contemporary musicians learnt music informally addresses adolescent learning experiences. It highlights potential areas of sources of learning, such as peer group and collaborative learning. In Gembris’s (2006) edition of studies into musical development across the lifespan of a professional musician, he notes the lack of exploration into musicians learning experiences, where research looks into detailed accounts of learning experiences. Although Gembris focuses on formally taught musicians, the study directs attention to situations and issues a professional self-taught musician may encounter in which learning has taken place. In another use of biographical learning, Morgan and Wood (2013) investigate the lived experiences of young formally taught musicians as evidencing the disparity between how creative music careers are presented in educational and media dialogues and the reality of a career in music. Disparity between what the students were encouraged to expect, and the way media present a music career, did not adequately represent the actual reality. This notion of disparity informed one of the interview questions which asked if participants had experienced any such differences between expected and actual realities in their music careers.
Social Learning Theory. Originally developed by Bandura (1971) is described by Salomon and Perkins (1998) as “the individual learner, emphasising the acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills as transferable commodities” and “the socio-cultural conception of learning as a collective participatory process of active knowledge construction emphasising context, interaction and situatedness” (p. 2). The main tenant focuses on learning derived from interaction with one’s external environment, encompassing the many different contexts encountered throughout a lifetime. It is viewed as co-created learning because individuals are seen as active agents who learn from, and in turn contribute their learning to, the different circumstantial environments in their life. Therefore, in this study not only are external activities considered in determining sources of learning but also whether their own agency contributed to, or was itself a source in, their learning.

Social Learning Theory has been used to understand interpersonal dynamics inherent in musicians’ learning biographies. For example, Lane (2005) explores jazz musicians ‘habitus’ where childhood inclusion in music orientated families progressed to informal apprenticeship style transmission of jazz music learning in communities of experienced musicians. Drawing on Lane’s work the notion that self-taught musicians in popular music genres may learn in similar contexts and manner is considered as a potential learning source in this study.

Learning within groups, such as a university band (Pulman, 2014), and adolescent garage bands (Baker, 2012; Westerlund, 2006; Jaffurs, 2006; Lebler, 2007) draws attention to learning from, and within, group dynamics. The cited studies are detailed explorations into how adolescent bands function as a music learning group and address factors which either support or extinguish continuance. These studies highlight the potential for sources of learning to be located within references to music related groups, such as jamming sessions and bands, in both an external and internal learning sense. Groups were also discussed by Veblin and Olson (2002) and Koopman (2007) in respect to the value of learning within a community group, where music is an intrinsic component of their dynamic. The work of Davidson and Borthwick (2002) raise the question of whether a family invested in music interests exerts the sense that musical ability is a determinant of self-value, resulting in either a positive or negative sense of musical self in the child. Taken from this is the question of there being any indication that the participants felt they had to follow the family’s interest in music, or that of a social group they were involved in? A sense of obligation could affect motivation, and alter the development of self-efficacy through autonomous agency.
Biographical Learning and Social Learning Theory: differences and similarities.

**Biographical Learning**
- Centred on relationship between life history and learning processes
- Learning is a response to experiences, a reflective process
- The past intertwines with the present and future, intimately integrating and informing learning relationships and use
- Intentional and unintentional – through both self-instigated activity and impact of the actions and choices of others

**Social Learning Theory**
- Both are cumulative, building on prior learning that is modified, reinforced or extinguished
- Both draw on the individual's attitudinal perspectives and cognitive capacity in the processing of what is learnt
- Both acknowledge that learning is not always immediately discernable; it can take time to process and be acted on.
- Both involve social and cultural influences; as context or location in which learning takes place

Learning through interacting with others, by observation, imitation and emulation
- Learning from the actions of others; influenced by the consequential success or failure as perceived
- Reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental conditions
- Intent – typically requires some level of motivation. Can be something observed, recalled and then utilised without it having been intended as a learning observation
Method
The following section explains how this study was conducted, and offers a brief rationale behind each choice. Ethics approval details are provided, followed by the selection criteria for participants with an explanation of the reasoning and limitations. How the participants were recruited is explained, the rationale draws on research to provide support and further explanation. The data gathering method of conducting interviews, interview setting and approach to interview recording and transcription are then explained.

Ethics Approval.  In conducting this study I have adhered to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and sought to be aware of the implications my study could have for the participant musicians involved. This study is categorised as a low risk research design, ethics approval was sought and granted (see Appendix 1) by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). In accordance with this approval the following requirements were undertaken.

All participants were provided with a statement informing them of the purpose of this study, what the selection criteria were, their participation requirements, how the interview data would be secured and used as well as what measures were taken to maintain their anonymity (see Appendix 2). In addition, they were given contact information if any concerns arose, or sought to confirm any details with my supervisor. Written consent forms were sent to all participants, in signing they agreed to the terms of the agreement to participate (see Appendix 3). Security of the interview data, as both audio recordings and transcriptions, was maintained through the following means. The recorded interviews were kept in secure locations; original recordings were transferred from recorder to two password protected external hard drives; the transcribed interviews were kept as hard copy in a locked filing cabinet, the digital files were kept on two password protected external hard drives. In respect to the ethical considerations, I ensured all participants were aware of what I was doing with their interview data, how it would be used in the study and any future use of their data. The privacy of the participants was a concern, as details given in the study could lead to them being identified, therefore their names were changed and identifiable references were removed from quotes included. During the interview process the participants were again given the opportunity to raise any concerns about the study.
Selection criteria. Participants in this study were required to fit the following criteria for inclusion.

1. They have not entered into, whether full or partial completion of, a degree or diploma level qualification in music. This is to enable research into musicians who learnt through means outside formal music education systems, to capture the learning sources in a solely self-taught environment. It is also in recognition that some musicians are formally taught although they learnt contemporary music genres through self-taught means.

2. They are currently working as a full-time musician primarily in contemporary music genres. Their income is derived from solely music career activities; such as live performance, composing, recording sessions, music project collaborations, and as a freelance musician. It excludes teaching music as the primary income.

3. They have been working continuously as a full-time musician for at least 10 years. This is to allow for enough career progression to enable a participant’s learning biography to be shown as successful. It is drawn from participant comments in my previous study (Watson, 2008) where the musicians themselves mentioned that it took 10 years of ongoing professional performance to acquire matured skills. Hall and Las Heras (2010), in discussing career theory, mention musicians who are active across multiple areas of music, and are creatively resourceful, still take a decade of career engagement to establish themselves. This links in also with the aim to differentiate between musicians who are still establishing, those who identify as a musician but have not worked solely in that capacity, and those who have maintained established professional careers.

Participant recruitment. The following details outline the method used to source and recruit suitable participants, with an explanation of why it was decided to reduce the number to ten.

Snowball sampling. The method of snowball sampling was chosen as the means by which suitable participants were recruited. One or more participants are contacted directly and invited to participate; they are asked to recommend others as potential candidates until the desired number is attained (Waters, 2014). In this study an initial group of three musicians I already knew were invited to participate, they in turn recommended other suitable participants, until there were 10 in total. The first three musicians contacted the potential participants to introduce the invitation; if they were interested I was sent their contact details to enable initial contact.

In respect to the practical aspects of using snowball sampling this method was chosen for its ability to mediate my professional and personal connection to a network of musicians.
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In Melbourne, Australia. This was informed by the critique of McLean and Campbell (2003) who emphasise the need to consider the consequences of using a particular method of data access. Initially a direct access method was considered, because it was possible to contact at least 10 musicians I knew to be suitable participants. Guided by the work of Waters (2014) this option was not pursued because it was seen as problematic in terms of bias, and potentially restricting the possible scope of participant musicians. The bias is in respect to influence a researcher would have when deciding who to invite based on the known association, and in doing so unduly influence the participant group. If potential candidates were contacted directly, using my existing list of musician contacts, I saw this as potentially causing invitee to feel obliged to participate rather than having a free choice.

As a consequence of choosing this method the participant cohort contained nine male and one female, and while gender is not an issue being addressed in this study this result requires attention. The use of snowball sampling, in relying on the three known musicians to recommend other suitable participants, required them to utilise their musician network connections. It was not assumed these connections would only be male, and I did ask whether there were any females who would fit the selection criteria. Owing to the criteria requiring at least ten years of consecutive full-time employment as a performing musician, excluding teaching as the main source of income, the recommending participants drew on current or previous band members. Reflecting the predominance of males in contemporary music, the available and suitable potential participants were then almost all males.

It is also a consideration that in using snowball sampling the participants may be a homogeneous group in respect to certain characteristics. Considering they were born across three decades, spent their childhood and adolescence in six different locations, and were from different socio-economic backgrounds there is difference. Although, what has emerged is that these self-taught professional musicians did have learning biographies containing such similar commonalities that in this characteristic they are a homogeneous group. This is seen as a reflection of how music was learnt in a period when formal education in contemporary music was not prevalent, and these genres of music were learnt through self-taught means.

**Contacting potential participants.** The first two participants were contacted in person, the third through email and telephone calls. In these conversations, as well as with later participants, detailed explanations were given regarding study aims, interview question content, the type of information being sought, time commitment and their rights as participants. In addition, they were told what the research would be used for and given the opportunity to ask questions. Copies of the invitation, explanatory statement and consent
form were emailed to the initial three with details of the agreed time and date of the first interview (see Appendix 2 & 3). After their first interview they were asked to recommend further musicians, with each recommendation the potential participant was called, it was explained what the study was about, and contact details were obtained to enable sending of invitation, explanatory statement and consent form.

Application of this procedural aspect was informed by Potter and Edwards (2012) who highlight the need to provide transparent detail of the exact way the participants were contacted, because it formed an integral component. They argue that previous research in the social sciences has been written up without all the details of how the study was conducted. In their argument, this omits the possibility of analysing connections between how data was gathered and the resultant data. While their argument focuses on emphasising the inclusion of these details in the writing up of research, it drew attention to the need for ensuring all communications with participants was given prior scrutiny regarding the impact it may have on participant experience and response.

**Number of participants.** The initial plan was to have 15 participants, it was considered to be suitably large enough to capture a range of learning experiences from within a potentially wide age range. The work of Baker and Edwards (2012) further informed this choice through their discussion of interview numbers where saturation point is reached after an average of twenty interviews. Although, through further scrutiny of my available time, and the need to schedule and conduct two interviews per participant, the transcription and analysis process, resulted in reducing the number to 10 participants.

**Interview Process.** How the interviews were conducted is detailed in the following section, including the locations where interviews were conducted, the recording and transcription process. The interview questions are then presented with an explanation of how they were posed to participant, and the manner in which the interviews were conducted, followed by the analysis process.

**Interviews.** The interviews were conducted in person with each participant being interviewed twice, and at least four weeks between each interview. This approach was informed by Denzin (1989) and Thompson (2000, 1978) and was used in a two tier approach. The first interview contained eight question areas in which a set of open ended questions were asked, to promote sharing of participant’s learning experiences. As Thompson (2000) discusses in his detailing of how to conduct a personal life history interview, less structured questions tend to equate to more useful information. His reasoning raised the point that it is
the purpose of such an interview to gather interviewee's personal knowledge, and that “promising lines of inquiry are too easily choked off” by “people being forced into the predetermined framework of the interviewers” (p. 169). This first stage level of interview questions aimed to enquire into the sources of learning, content and context in which it took place. The second interview contained questions formed as a response to the initial interview, through semi-structured questions participant’s recollections were probed further to clarify meanings and give detail to basic factual responses. It is in this second stage level of interviews that questions eliciting ‘why’ certain choices were made, or actions/participation entered into were explored. This facilitates acquiring detail rich data, which as Denzin (1989) explains, means going beyond basic factual accounts and eliciting greater detail including personal experiences, and reflexive understandings from a retrospective standpoint.

The gap of four weeks between interviews was considered a reasonable time because this study required the participants to recollect events across a lifetime, potentially across several decades. Having time to reflect and recall further details in the second interview was considered important to gathering as much accurate data as possible.

**Interview setting.** The participants were offered the choice to have the interview conducted at their home, in an office made available to me or at my home office. Two participants chose to be interviewed at my home office for both interviews. One chose to be interviewed in the office of his manager for both interviews and another was interviewed in a hotel room while on tour. The remaining six were interviewed in their homes for both interviews, except for one who asked that the second interview be conducted in a local café.

The choice to offer the participants three options of where to conduct the interview was guided by the work of Briggs (1986) who discusses the “nature of the interview” (p. 2) with a view to highlighting the weakness inherent in not considering the impact of interview settings. The point made, and from which this choice was drawn, is that an interview is “a communication event” (p. 2) and as such where it is conducted requires consideration regarding potential impact. Here Briggs refers to not only the actual interview itself, but also what the setting communicates to the participant. In this it is meant that a participant may not feel comfortable talking about their personal life experiences in a location that was too public, or too unfamiliar to them. Therefore, offering a choice was not only practical, but to enable a setting where participant would be comfortable and familiar.

**Interview recording and transcriptions.** I recorded and transcribed each interview, the participant was sent a copy of transcription to verify responses and ensure the answers were as they intended. Also, the participants were able to make editing changes, add to or
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omitted from their recorded responses. Two recording devices were used: one as a back-up and to ensure all that was said was captured clearly. The interviews went from 60 to 120 minutes each. The basis of this procedure was informed by Webster and Mertova (2007), who discuss validity and reliability within narrative enquiry research methods that highlights the trustworthiness of data in terms of how it is collected. Drawn from this is their reference to Polkinghorne (1988) who “maintains that reliability is not stability of measurement but rather trustworthiness of the notes or transcripts (p. 17). The intention behind sending the transcribed interviews to participants was to ensure the data collected was 'trustworthy'. Notes taken after each interview reflect the setting, the conversations before and after the interview as well as reflections and impressions arising from the interviews.

**Interview questions.** The questions (See Appendix 4) were grouped into eight topic areas, and while each participant was asked the same questions they were not always asked as a prescribed sequence. Instead, they were posed in line with participant responses in a more conversational style, resulting in needing to return to an earlier question area to complete the interview. It was noted that on return to a previous question area the participants recalled more detail because they were thinking about “things [they] hadn’t thought of in a long while, but now it’s coming back” (Luke). During the first interview I used minimal prompting to elicit further details, only using it if the answer was too general or unclear. This was for two reasons, first the questions required participants to recall memories starting from early childhood, and this can take time and may initially be recollected only partially or as a sense rather than a clear detail (Thompson, 2000). Second, it was informed by Rubin and Rubin (2011) who advocate allowing the participants to answer in the way they choose which encourages recall of more detail. The advantage of using this approach was that it produced more intimate, considered and detail rich responses even though some details given were not directly part of the question asked, or referred to a previous question.

**Data Analysis**
The data analysis process was designed to facilitate the aim of identifying the participants' sources of learning and determine the content and contexts of that learning. It was not the intention to test a hypothesis or argue against a previously held notion; rather the aim was to work from within the interview data to discern if sources of learning could be discerned, and ideally if there were commonalities and themes. The data, rather than being simply rich in detail, was found to be more complex than anticipated, reflecting intimately integrated life learning experiences. Participants conveyed not only factual details but also how they had felt, what they thought of those times and details of other’s activities. In essence, the
recollections contained not only their actual music learning activities, but also insight into related family life, friendships, musician groups and their immediate social cultures. As will be explained in the following analysis stages, the emerging complexity required a partial restructuring of how I conceptually and practically approached the data analysis. This meant that instead of working within the original design a step back was taken to view the participant recollections as a whole. From this new approach the analysis revealed characteristics, patterns and relationships in and between the sources of learning, highlighting a deeper perspective.

The original data analysis design was structured around responses to the eight interview question areas which, in themselves, followed a general learning biography built from data collected in a previous study. As such it was intended as a means of framing comparative and thematic lines of enquiry. The findings were then to be viewed through the lenses of social learning theory and biographical learning, where each theory would provide perspectives from which the data could be seen, and questions asked. Also, during this initial phase, consideration was given to using identified forms of learning noted in the recollections of activities, situations and events. The reasoning for this was based on the view that the forms of learning would provide a means by which the findings could be further explored and discussed within the two overarching theories. While this could have been done, it drew the focus away from the actual sources of learning to the discussion being a detailed treatment of the different kinds of learning found. This approach is acknowledged as a potential future re-investigation of the findings. While not omitting attention to experiential learning, self-regulation learning and emotional learning, attention was redirected back to focusing on the sources of learning in terms of identification, content and context as well as relational characteristics.

The change to how the data was analysed arose because the emerging sources of learning findings were not solely contained within each of the eight set question areas. There were interrelated aspects between the sources of learning found in, and between, the eight areas forming a complex dynamic. This complexity was created by the detail rich data enabling insights into when, where, how and with whom the sources of learning were encountered and utilised; which were characteristically cumulative and cyclic. To allow for a return to the participant centred approach intended in the design of this study a process using components of grounded analysis were used. This is explained by Davidson (2004) as being where
The procedure involves examining transcripts and other forms of data for themes. The researcher does this pragmatically, making summaries of interviews, lists of associations and potential connections between them. Main themes and subthemes are created and discussed, the aim being to produce a “grounded analysis” - that is, an analysis based in and emerging from the data. (p. 65)

Using this approach enabled not only a clearer identification of the sources of learning but also the interconnected web of relationships; grounded in the participants’ recollections. While the findings as presented were developed from insights inclusive of the previous stages, the grounded analysis findings are a coherent response to the research aims and questions. The following is an overview of the data analysis process; presented as three stages to reflect the changes. A diagram of how the sources of learning were mapped is included showing the sources and interconnections.

**Steps taken in the data analysis process**

**First stage**

1. Analysis began during the interviewing stage. I made notes on my immediate reflections and on any relevant conversations we had before or after the interview. These notes contained details such as where the interview took place, how comfortable the participant appeared while answering the questions, any topics emerging, and if they shared anything unexpected. Some of these notes were used to assess whether my interview questions were eliciting the types of responses required, and if the wording was being understood as I intended.

2. After conducting each interview I transcribed the recording, either later that day or the following day. Periodically during this process I highlighted words or phrases that indicated a potential source of learning, or commonality. This resulted in a longer period of time taken to transcribe, although it enabled me to form an early close relationship with the content of each participant’s learning biography.

3. The transcribed first interviews were then read through again along with the relevant notes for that participant. In this reading I noted anything that could be clarified, expanded on or required more detail, this informed my second interview questions. In keeping a record of why more detail or clarification was needed, and what drew my attention, I was able to later refer back to early thinking about the themes emerging.

4. For the second interviews I repeated the first two steps, and using my notes began to
add the additional clarifications and details elicited in the second interview with where they had arisen in the first; essentially merging them together. This became a complicated process because I found on close reading that details in the second interview were relevant to more than the identified areas, and often provided detail in addition to what had arisen in the first interview. It was at this stage that I began to compile a biography profile for each participant, comprised of all the details they had shared and placed in a general timeline.

Second stage

5. Compiled at this stage were the individual transcripts, the merged transcripts, and a biography profile for each participant as well as my additional notes. Taking each participants’ individual data material I then analysed them against the early codes, and reworked my coding and thematic categories. I structured this analysis using the framework provided by my research questions, the two theories and interview questions. It was at this point I realised that using the interview question areas to organise the data analysis was not producing adequate findings. The main reason being that while the sources of learning could be identified this framework was too confining; it did not reflect learning over time, connections between sources or how they were being used.

Third Stage

6. The interview transcripts, and merged transcripts, were reworked to remove my questions. Meaning that I needed to read the interviews without attending to the questions I asked, and view their responses more as narratives set within everyday life. Using the procedural and conceptual structure found within components of grounded analysis, and building on previous notes, I formed new categories and codes which included connections between the sources of learning.

7. While the question areas had been removed I did continue to base the analysis on the following determinants, a list of questions that reflected my research aims and elements of social learning theory and biographical learning.

From research questions

- Is there evidence of a source of learning? Stated or inferred
- Is there evidence that an experience was a source of learning? Was there any indication of participant having processed an experience and learnt from it?
What was the context of the influences and sources of learning? A location, presence or absence of others, emotional or experiential context or social context.

**From biographical learning**
- How was their learning progressing; set plan, intentional, indirect influences? Did it change?
- Is there any evidence to support development of internal learning processes through participants’ relationship with music and how they were learning?
- Did the sources of learning support, or undermine their learning? How did they respond to this, and how did they use that learning?

**From Social learning theory**
- Is there evidence of any co-created learning?
- Is there evidence of learning through, or in collaboration with, a group? Was this intentional, or consequential to their music activity?
- Has the recollection reflected learning through engagement with individuals; is what they learnt different to other learning evidenced?

These questions framed and guided my analysis which resulted in findings that dealt with a source of learning singularly, and in connection to its relationship with other sources of learning. The following diagram (Figure 2) represents the resultant categories, themes and concepts that emerged.
Figure 2. Analysis concept workings: Categories, themes and commonalities
Each source of learning (textbox) is from when the participants on average first encountered that source, the arrows point to activities, learning content and influence flows.

**Period up to eight years of age**
- Acquired a value for music
- Value for musical talent
- Music playing at home daily, house parties
- Observing others play music, singing

**Eight to twelve years old**
- Sharing music resources
- Older Siblings
- Music Listening, talking, observing
- Seeing bands locally
- Initiated own music activities
- Friends
- Listening to music alone, from family records, radio, TV Shows

**Twelve to seventeen years old**
- Learning by ear alone
- First instrument
- Basic lessons, average 6mths
- Music was fun to learn, on own and with others
- Repetition, dedication, accepting still learning

**First Band**
- Early musician network forming
- Band performs live, regularly
- Jamming, band rehearsal
- Arranging or composing, alone and with band
- Making own demo tapes with band or alone
- Watching other bands perform live

**Peer/Older musicians**
- Finding new music, shared music learning, seeing other bands
- Learning from playing with other musicians. Older experienced musicians an authority

** Older siblings**
- Music scene culture, musician group

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Participant profiles

The names of each participant have been changed to protect their privacy. The following information was collected during the interviews, some clarifying details were asked in the second interview that enabled background information to be gathered.

*Jerry.* Born in 1948, his family moved to Melbourne from Malta when he was two years old. His family enjoyed playing music at home, and his mother had a record collection which Jerry enjoyed sharing. The family sang together with their neighbourhood friends for social entertainment. His older brother learnt to play the harpsichord, and he played with Jerry and his primary school friends as a group exploring how to play popular songs. In his early adolescence Jerry began attending dances to watch the bands performing, local concerts, and experimented with a variety of instruments. After singing with a few bands he was invited to sing in a professional band and settled on learning to play the saxophone in mid-adolescence. Jerry left school early to start working, mainly to pay for musical
instruments and music records, by his late adolescence into early twenties Jerry had established a full-time career in an original band that toured nationally and internationally. While he has periodically performed with other bands, the majority of his music career has been in original bands, he is a lead singer, plays saxophone and composes the band’s songs.

**Liam.** Born in 1949, Northern Ireland, where he lived in close proximity to his extended family, Liam does not have any siblings. Both parents and his maternal grandparents were singers, mainly for family home entertainment and in the local church choir. His maternal grandmother also played the Organ. In early childhood Liam watched local weekly drumming competitions and attended local Saturday matinee shows where live bands played before a movie screening. At this time Liam also sang with his mother while she practised songs and harmonies, as well as singing together for entertainment. At the age of ten, Liam was given his first guitar, both teaching himself and taking some lessons where he learnt strumming techniques. During early high school Liam met other peers who shared his interest in music; he started jamming with them, and was invited to join a band that performed regularly. Liam was also attending local live band performances in venues, daytime concerts in the community park, and listening with friends to a pirate radio station called Radio Caroline, and listening to records, where he became influenced by American, British and European bands. Liam’s family moved to Australia when he was 18 years old, he began working with his father and finding work as a musician and song writer through newspaper advertisements. In his early twenties Liam returned to Northern Ireland, where he worked with local bands he knew for nearly two years then returned to Australia before he again began travelling overseas and finding work as a musician. Liam then toured with an international band for a number of years. His adult career has been varied, working with well-known bands, in touring artist’s bands, formed his own bands, and composed songs for film, television, documentaries as well as for his own bands. Liam currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.

**Marc.** Born in Melbourne, Australia in 1947, Marc has one older brother. His mother was a classically trained singer and pianist, who taught piano at home, although she did not teach him to play piano or about music theory. Marc’s father played the trumpet, was self-taught, and loved Jazz, he played at home for personal interest and family social entertaining. His maternal grandmother was a self-taught singer and piano player who liked to entertain friends and family at home. While in primary school Marc and his older brother sang in a local church choir with their mother, he was also in a small choir that performed for weddings and events where Marc often sang solo soprano. From the age of ten Marc and his
father began attending concerts, where he saw performers such as Jerry Lee Lewis and the Pacemakers, as well as Johnny O’Keefe. In high school Marc began attending local dances, where he sang a few songs with bands, eventually being invited to join a band as lead singer that performed weekly until Marc finished high school. In mid-adolescence Marc taught himself to play the harmonica, and later the guitar. At this time Marc began to record his band’s original or cover songs, play live on local radio and television shows, and their songs began to be played on local radio stations. After high school Marc began working full-time in a Government administration position, as well as performing in a dance band up to four times a week. He was able to work full-time as a musician within two years and began to form other bands where he toured both nationally and internationally. In his early twenties Marc was invited to join a band in London, he worked with them as a composer and performer, and then travelled to explore the music of different cultures. Returning to Australia he then formed a band that became successful, nationally and internationally. In his mid to late twenties Marc began to produce songs for other bands, and formed his own record label as well as a music publishing company. Since this time Marc has continued to form original bands and tours regularly. Marc currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.

**Luke.** Born in Malta in 1958, his family moved to Australia when he was six years old. Luke has five siblings. His father loved music and encouraged Luke to play piano and the drums. From the age of six, Luke began playing the drums at home to songs on the radio and from his father’s records. In late primary school Luke played in a school marching band. At the age of 11 years old he starts to learn to play the piano and teaches his younger brother to play the drums. With a group of high school friends, and his younger brother, Luke starts to play together jamming, and soon forms a dance band. From the age of twelve he starts to perform regularly in this band, three of his sisters eventually join, performing up to five times a week throughout his adolescence. After leaving school Luke takes a full-time position in a record shop, while still performing with his band. In his early twenties he is invited to join a touring band, recording with them, he then is co-founder of a series of original bands. During his career Luke has formed and worked with numerous bands, toured nationally and internationally, been a freelance musician as well as composed music for his bands, and co-written songs. Luke currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.

**Martin.** In 1966 Martin was born in Melbourne, he does not have any siblings. His parents loved music, from classical to Jazz and contemporary genres, and frequently played it at home. Martin was interested in the drums, he learnt rudimentary drumming in primary school, and played on a friend’s drum kit until he was given his own at age 12. Martin spent
time with friends, in primary school and high school, listening to records and talking about the songs, and attending local live music events. Martin’s father arranged drumming lessons with a musician he knew, Martin attended regular jamming sessions with him. In early high school Martin is invited to play with older school students in a band, they perform regularly until he finishes high school. He begins composing original songs with that band, where he also starts to be invited as a session drummer for band album recordings. On leaving high school Martin entered University to study journalism; he took leave after one year to pursue a music career. After being invited to audition for a well-known artist’s band, in his early twenties, he is accepted and has continued with that band performing nationally and internationally. During his adult career Martin has also played with other bands, for television shows, with orchestras, and contributed to song compositions. Martin currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.

Dean. Born in 1961 in a town near Sydney, Australia, he is one of five children. His mother loved music and had a record collection and his father enjoyed the clarinet although he did not play. His older sister was a singer song writer, his older brother played guitar, sang and also wrote songs. Dean shared an interest in music with his neighbourhood friends throughout primary school, during which time his older sister and brother were already in a performing band. Dean was given a guitar when he was nine years old and started to teach himself and take lessons which lasted for about nine months. For the next three years Dean continued to teach himself to play guitar, using his older brother’s record collection. When in high school, Dean began to play music in jamming sessions with older students, for school concerts and joined his older brother and sister’s band when he was 14 years old. This band performed locally and in Sydney. Dean is then invited to join a well-known band and move to Sydney while still in high school. He moves, and begins to perform weekly, attending local venues to watch bands, and play with a variety of older musicians in jamming sessions. In late adolescence Dean forms a band with musicians he knows; they perform live on a national radio station, compose and record original songs. In his early twenties Dean co-founds a band that became nationally, and internationally, successful where as a band they compose original songs. In his later career Dean began working in other well-known established bands, in bands for television shows, films and musical theatre. Dean currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.

Wayne. Born in 1964, Sydney, Wayne has no siblings, his father had been a drummer prior to getting married, and his uncle played in a band for a family owned Reception Centre where his parents worked. From an early age Wayne showed an interest in music, playing
with toy drums and guitars, and watching his uncle’s band while his parents worked. From six years of age he began to help his uncle set up the band, playing percussion occasionally, and he often talked with the band members about their instruments and music. After being given his first acoustic guitar at the age of eight, Wayne did not like attending lessons and began to teach himself. His parents instigated him forming a band with his cousins, where they entered a band competition. In early high school Wayne began jamming sessions with older school students, he forms two bands and performs regularly until the end of high school. From the age of ten Wayne had begun to compose his own songs, and while in bands contributed original songs. At the age of 17 he is invited to join a well-known band, he begins touring nationally, and internationally. In his early twenties Wayne started to work with other bands, write songs with other musicians and formed an original band that became nationally, and internationally successful. From his thirties onward, Wayne has been working in a variety of original bands, has worked with established bands, touring artists, and continued to compose music which has been used for film, television and by other musicians. He currently resides in Sydney, Australia.

**Julie.** Born in 1964, in Melbourne, Australia, Julie has one older brother who played guitar, and a younger brother. Her father was a self-taught singer and piano player, although he did not perform professionally he did like to entertain for house parties his mother frequently arranged. Julie was interested in dance in pre-school years and attended lessons. In early primary school she became involved in local dance and theatre concerts, where her singing ability was noticed. While taking singing and dance classes, Julie became interested in playing the guitar, starting to teach herself from eight years of age using her older brother’s records. Throughout adolescence Julie performed as a singer with bands for school concerts and was entered into talent competitions. She continued to teach herself to play the guitar and started composing songs from the age of ten. While in high school Julie started to work professionally as a singer, which began her career in music. From late adolescence she worked as an actress, and television show host, and performed in show bands where she developed various concept and cabaret shows. Julie has continued to work in theatre, film and television as an actress, singer, song writer and musician (guitar), and formed a band which has been playing nationally for the last ten years. Julie currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.

**Tyrone.** Born in Brisbane, in 1964 Tyrone is the youngest of three brothers. His mother loved music and had a record collection of older genre and contemporary artists. From the age of about six, Tyrone and his brothers would mime to songs using homemade
toy guitars. From this introduction he started to become interested in Rock music bands, and when his oldest brother started to play in a band he watched him practice and occasionally play at a venue. Tyrone was given a classical guitar for his ninth birthday and later an acoustic guitar for his twelfth birthday, and after finding he did not work well with formal lessons began to teach himself to play the acoustic guitar. In early high school he began to watch local band competitions and started to be invited to jamming sessions with older students, eventually being invited to join a band. He continued with that band throughout high school. In late adolescence he joined a band his older brother played in, while also working full-time in an administration position in local government. As that band became successful, Tyrone was then able to work solely as a full-time musician because they began touring nationally. In his mid-twenties he moved to Melbourne where he began to develop his career through being employed to compose songs, he played in various cover bands until co-founding an original band in his late twenties that achieved national success. In Tyrone’s later career he has worked with well-known bands, touring artists, continued to compose and produce songs and has been with one band for over twenty years. Tyrone resides in Melbourne, Australia.

**Frank.** Born in New York, in 1959, he has one older brother and both parents worked in Off-Broadway productions, his father as a musician and his mother a singer and dancer. His family moved to Australia when he was three years old. All family members played musical instruments at home, and listened to music from their record collection, Frank was initially interested in playing the drums. From the age of six he played percussion instruments to accompany his older brother. In late primary school Frank and his older brother played in a local brass band and formed a band to enter a television talent contest. Moving to Melbourne at the age of ten, he began to teach himself to play guitar, and formed a band with friends in early high school. He played with this band at school concerts, and a few local dance venues. At the age of 15, Frank moved to America with his father, completing high school and also playing in a professional band for two years. Returning to Australia in his late adolescence he worked, through an agent, as a freelance musician and in a band with his brother. In his early twenties Frank returned to America where he worked in original and cover bands until in his mid-twenties he returned to Australia. Establishing himself again, Frank worked in cover and original bands, for touring theatre companies and music theatres until joining a band in his late twenties that became successful nationally. Since then Frank has continued to work in well-known bands, for touring artists, in original bands and with bands for television shows. He currently resides in Melbourne, Australia.
Reflections on the research process

The design of this study was developed to enable the most appropriate means of gathering data concerning a music learning biography, and to provide the participants with an opportunity to share recollections that would potentially contain their sources of learning. In the carrying out of this design I found the decision to conduct two interviews with each participant significantly useful, because the detail rich responses did require further clarification. The decision to use snow-ball sampling had an unanticipated implication. In asking the participants to recommend other suitable musicians I had not considered this would mean they were indicating their own involvement in this study. While the recommended musicians did participate, I would in future be aware of this implication. The approach to data analysis was initially intended to be structured around the eight question areas, following three age based categories of childhood, adolescence and adult career stages. I decided to change this because the sources of learning findings did not fit into this structure, rather the data reflected a non-linear cyclic pattern where the initial contact with a source of learning could have been, for example, in childhood but not utilised until adolescence. In response to this I then analysed the data using components of grounded analysis to form categories of commonalities, themes and similarities found in their responses as will be seen reflected in the following findings and discussion chapters.

While conducting the interviews I became aware of the participants’ ability to recollect in detail their earlier learning, conveyed in a narrative that enabled me to feel a connection to their memories. There was a sense of times being simple; as one participant said “you didn’t have much choice really, so you had to make your own fun” (Dean). Contained within the interviews were many more such insights and stories of learning than could be adequately incorporated into the findings and discussion. Some participants shared lengthy details which, when aggregated within a common theme, could not be fully included. To enable some degree of inclusion of these insightful narratives, and to substantiate the findings, I have used a considerable amount of interview quotes. In reading the findings these quotes offer an additional connection with the participants’ learning experiences.

The experience of conducting this study has shown me how to step back and assess my planned research approach against the emerging findings to determine if I am accessing the data as a whole. In this I mean noticing the smaller, less obvious, details as well as ones described at length. To illustrate, one participant described sitting with his mother and sharing their different music collections, discussing what each liked in the songs. His description was brief, but it conveyed a significant moment in which he felt his interest in
music was supported, and validated. Had I only used the research question areas this detail would not have been included, yet it led to uncovering how moments such as this were pivotal in determining the significance of inner sources of learning such as motivation and self-efficacy. Through closely reading the interview data I also found that my second analysis method enabled me to see the characteristics of, and relationships between, sources of learning. Until I used the second analysis method I was not aware that my initial approach contained within it an unintended assumption, that sources of learning would be separate and contained within set phases or circumstances of a learning biography. As will be seen in the Findings and Discussion chapters, the sources of learning are located in certain phases but their use and influence has a cyclic return characteristic.
Chapter 4: Findings

I learnt it on the way, on the fly, so I did guitar, I learnt very basic reading, but I don’t read, I write chords and bars, so I literally wrote as I was going along and I do my own short hand (notation)... so I can then translate the song, and I am known for making up chords. (Julie)

This chapter presents the findings organised around categories of commonalities and themes as determined from the participants’ recollected learning biographies. The first section is centred on their earliest sources of learning up to receiving their first instrument; focusing first on family, the early recollections were of the music activities of parents and siblings. Then the emerging relationship felt with music, situated within family and close friend contexts in mid primary school, is the instigating of their own more active engagement with music. In a timeline sense this overlaps with influences from older siblings and friends’ older siblings. The first section is concluded by presenting significant memories, a type of learning source connected to emotional memories. It frames, and introduces the notion that their self-taught learning was composed of distinct self-discovery moments; ones that increased motivation and a sense of personal achievement. The next section addresses findings in the phase when the participants received their first instrument, and started to perform in a band. The sources of learning commonalities and themes stem from music activities such as first playing with others, sourcing music resources and experiences of performing live in their adolescent bands. In the third section adult career sources of learning are presented, and highlight the cumulative layering of experiences in which professional development and music career establishment were enabled. The findings and are to be read in conjunction with the summary tables contained at the end of this chapter (Table 6).

1. The earliest sources of learning

Each participant described their family home as being a place where music was always playing; it was a foundational setting within which they first became aware of music and their sense of connection to it. Generally, the participants’ memories began from when they were three to five years of age, their memories were of hearing music played on the radio or records, a family member playing an instrument or singing and family social gatherings in which music was played or performed. The consistency of these recollections set their early sources of learning within a close and familiar context: one characterised by the music activities of parents, older siblings and for some their extended family.
Recalled across their childhood into early adolescence, they described how music excited, intrigued and motivated them to want to express it through music play, listening to music, absorbing information about music and eventually playing it themselves. Being able to recall in detail events related to music from their childhood years suggests their sources of learning were, even then, significant to them because they provided opportunities to engage with something they felt enthusiastic about and fascinated by. This inferred that even from the earliest memories their interest in music stemmed from a sense of internal connection to music which was gradually developed and shaped through exposure to the presence of external music related activities initially located within family contexts.

Attention was drawn to the significance of family members’ music activities when noting how detailed these recollections were, including not only the events but also how they had felt and thought about the music. In addition, and more significantly, there were direct references to these family members’ activities as having initially conveyed music’s intangible qualities: where even at a very young age there was a growing awareness of the value, joy and qualities found within music. This awareness was referred to as being firstly being felt through their sense of an innate connection to music, and secondly through seeing how their parents and older siblings related to music.

The finding that music was a continuous presence in the participants’ home life prior to receiving their first instrument is not in itself uncommon in the early life of a professional musician. What is yet to be explored in more detail, and which the following findings contribute to, is how these early family influences structured and shaped the music learning of a self-taught professional contemporary musician. The sources of learning from family members in this early phase were found in two areas. First, from the direct expose to a family members’ music activity, which as a consequence the content of that learning was structured around their choice of music and how that family member related to, and valued, music. Second, the participants’ referred to innate connection to music was developing and forming in the music imbued home life, inspiring curiosity and increasing their desire to engage with music themselves.

While this phase of the participants’ music learning biography was prior to them receiving their first instrument, in terms of learning content one unexpected finding emerged. It exemplifies and frames how the previous exposure-directed observational music influence informed the growth of self-initiated activity through the excitement of discovery. All participants mentioned that through hearing and later intentionally listening to music, across the years from early to late primary school, they became able to recognise the different
patterns of melody and rhythm in various genres of music. They stated that no one had specifically explained how the music was different; it was a discovery that arose out of their interest in music. It was described as a pivotal moment, one that felt exciting because they were able to “understand what the music was doing” as Marc explained. Meaning, that even before receiving their first instrument they had acquired knowledge about music that was self-taught, which appears to have catalysed a sense of learning through their own efforts, translating into a felt sense of music learning potential.

In the following sections the findings are presented outlining how and why parent’s and older sibling’s music activities were seen as a source of learning under the theme of music in the home, which includes music activities, and then older siblings. This is intended as a means by which the less obvious, nuanced, early sources of learning can be conveyed. A fourth section discusses the period when participants sought to initiate their own music activities prior to receiving their first instrument which includes activities with friends. Sources of learning in the ‘initiating own interest’ phase are defined by how the participant used what they were able to access, taking their previous family music influences into a self-directed learning pursuit.

**Family members**

A commonality found was that one or more family members were interested in, and actively engaged with, music which through their activities created a home life where music was a significant characteristic. Drawing from their own interest in music, family members sang, played an instrument or enjoyed listening to music frequently. All ten participants, during childhood into adolescence, had both parents living in the family home, seven had one or more siblings and three did not have siblings. Four mothers and five fathers sang, two mothers and four fathers played an instrument, two fathers had a keen interest in music and five had an older sibling who played an instrument, with a sixth being the older sibling who influenced his younger siblings. All participants said that music was either frequently or consistently played at home, commonly from radio music programs and records. In addition, six participants recalled their parents entertaining friends at home where music was central to their engagement in the sense that they sang or played to the music. In confirming whether any family member had a formal music education it was found that one had a mother who was referred to as “classically trained” (Marc), and one sibling “eventually went to study music” (Frank) and all others including siblings who played an instrument or sang were self-taught.

Findings: 60
Each of the following music related activities contained evidence they were experienced by the participants as a source of learning, either directly stated or inferred from their descriptions. This evidence is presented in each section under commonality headings, with more specific findings organised under the sub-headings.

**Parents.** The two tables below outline which participants mentioned their mother or father in relation to specific music interest and engagement. They show that nine participants mentioned their mother and/or father being involved in at least one music activity, with music in the home being the most common. Active engagement in music events such as home entertaining, and local choirs was the second most common parent music activity.

**Table 1.**
*Mother: Music related activities.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Marc</th>
<th>Jerry</th>
<th>Frank</th>
<th>Julie</th>
<th>Tyrone</th>
<th>Liam</th>
<th>Martin</th>
<th>Dean</th>
<th>Wayne</th>
<th>Luke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music in the home</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music events</td>
<td>House parties</td>
<td>Social events</td>
<td>School events</td>
<td>House parties</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>House Parties</td>
<td>House parties</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Trained Choir</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Prof Theatre</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played instrument</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>Violin</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Piano Percussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.**
*Father: Music related activities.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Marc</th>
<th>Jerry</th>
<th>Frank</th>
<th>Julie</th>
<th>Tyrone</th>
<th>Liam</th>
<th>Martin</th>
<th>Dean</th>
<th>Wayne</th>
<th>Luke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music in the home</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music events</td>
<td>House parties</td>
<td>Social events</td>
<td>Family events</td>
<td>House parties</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>House Parties</td>
<td>House parties</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played instrument</td>
<td>Trumpet</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Guitar Saxophone</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Interest Cello</td>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>Interest only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Music in the home**

*Mother was a music fan.* With nine participants a link was found between their mother and music being played in the home, within which influences that later became sources of learning were noted. Seven participants mentioned their mother in relation to playing records from her own music collection, and choice of radio station. Two mentioned their mother only playing records. Describing their experiences, they cited music playing on radio typically during the day in the time prior to attending school, after which it was in the morning while getting ready for school and in the afternoon after school into early evening. Records were mentioned as typically being played in the late afternoon and evening. The music ranged from Classical, to Country, Folk, Blues, Jazz and some adult contemporary
music current at that time. The mothers’, in creating this home environment, appear to have unintentionally framed a certain kind of music normalcy. Meaning, the participants stated they had in early childhood initially assumed “everyone played music at home all the time” as Frank recalled. That assumption had framed their sense of everyday life being one where music was an expressed common component and, as the participants described, meant it was something they had not questioned. It was only when they found their friends homes did not have music playing did they realise their family, and in particular their mother at this time, “was a music fan” (Martin). Jerry specifically recalled

> It wasn’t really until I was seven or something when it became apparent to me that my mother was a music fan … all the music we had been hearing was actually from her collection, even what we heard on the radio was her type of music.

Being influenced by the fact their mother did play music as well as her choice in music was noted in ways, for example, as Jerry describes where it was a positive influence saying he enjoyed listening to it and found the music influenced his own interest direction. Dean recalled his mother only played records, and they spent time listening to each other’s music which he said was “special because it made me feel I was interested in something worth doing…I really needed that”. Of the other seven only Tyrone mentioned not liking his mother’s music, saying “my mother loved music but she would play the Sound of Music soundtrack, Mary Poppins soundtrack, and Charley Pride, so not really much in the way of music”. For Tyrone his mother’s actual choice of music was not an influence in itself, but rather her obvious enjoyment of it.

This immersive music experience is linked with and reflected by a related commonality; one evidencing their expressed sense of a natural connection with music which was consequentially fostered initially by their mother. It began to emerge firstly from descriptions of pre-school years spent with their mother at home as having been characterised by “music was always playing” (Marc). For example, Martin recalled

> very early on I remember hearing great music really loud there was classical and jazz… like 39 Carnegie Hall Benny Goodman ... and I just remember it being, as a lot of kids are when you hear loud music, it was exciting, and I must have been tiny

Secondly, the participants recalled playing with toy musical instruments, that they “drummed on everything” (Martin), “walked around the house singing and pretending to play guitar” (Wayne), or “would sing around the house all the time” (Marc). Suggesting they were responding to the music through play which was said to have been self-initiated. This draws attention to the participants’ early sense of connection with music, and that it was something
they were aware of even at an early age. Additionally, all participants felt that the music only became a source of learning because it was “naturally in them” to start with, as Wayne commented.

In the mothers’ expressing their own music listening enjoyment, particularly during the preschool into early primary school years, they not only created conceptual schemata in which music was a norm, but the music itself was learnt through that exposure. This is taken from participants reflecting that they could play songs from music heard at this time, predominantly from their mothers’ choice, from memory without having specifically learnt it. Highlighted here is that the influence of the mothers’ music interest on the participant, as expressed by this musical memory, indicated a source of learning could be experienced in one time and only later be returned to or realised.

**Father’s choice of music.** Seven participants mentioned their father in connection to music being played in the family home. In four instances the father was described as having played records, with the other three the reference was inferred when saying their ‘parents’ listened to records or the radio. While there were across all interviews consistent general mention of listening to radio music programs that were at times also from their father's choice, a stronger influence became apparent in descriptions of father's playing records. This is clearest in Marc's recollection that “there was a lot of music around the house … so I guess the thing that influenced me was that my father … he loved Jazz music”, which he played in the evenings from his record collection. Marc described the relationship with his father as being one where they shared a lot of conversations about music, and time together listening to his records. Frank’s description of his father reflects this commonality in recalling the wide variety of music he played, and how his love of exploring music was enthusiastic. Over time Frank said this became an influence, one which contributed to inspiring him to seek his own music pursuit.

In this commonality there are three types of experience described; one where the father's interest in listening to records becomes an influence because it was heard in the house frequently, and there were conversations about music. Second, there was active engagement with both father and child playing instruments while listening to records. Third, the participant chose their father’s records to listen to when seeking to learn music, and also when initially learning to play their first instrument. Luke commented that he had found it easier to learn a song through listening to it, because he had spent years playing that way with his father's records and it seemed to come naturally to him. Julie also mentioned her father in
connection to playing records, taken from her comment that she “would play her father's records” because “there was good music” in the collection.  

Emerging from this influence of having one or both parents playing music at home consistently was a sense that the participants had taken the music played as framing what music was, and nine said they felt a connection to it. It is suggested that this created in those participants an early means by which they initially understood music through it being enjoyed by a trusted person. This is drawn from expressions such as ‘admired’ and ‘loved’ that their parent/s had been active ‘fans of music’ who knew not just the songs but also about the genres and musicians. In reflection most participants stated that even if they had not been able to make a career out of music it would have always been a significant part of their lives; having been exposed to and freely able to engage with music at a young age had formed a lifelong connection.

**House parties.** For six participants their parents expressed their love of music not only within the everyday home life, but also into social and community engagements such as house parties, school concerts and church choirs. The time period was from earliest memories up to completing high school. House parties were framed in terms of having formed a connection between music and forms of social activity, and how people engaged with music. Having held the notion that everyone had music playing in their home, initially these house parties would have presented as another form of that normalcy. While Jerry’s experience referred to a wider social engagement with neighbouring families, his comments reflect participant exposure to group recreational activities, where music was central, when he said “we would just sing along, you know sing along songs. Some people would play [an instrument]. I was just fascinated, the excitement of it”. Martin also recalled that his parents and their friends would “get carried away and the music would get really loud, and it was exciting”. These recollections call attention to context, exposure to music within a location they knew, and with people who were familiar to them which can be seen as experientially reinforcing their early forming of an interest in music.

In addition to the house parties being a source of learning in the sense of awareness of music as a social activity, and experiencing how people outside the family engaged with music, there is also learning from the music being played. In recollecting these memories the participants noted the music they had heard become part of their musical memory and formed an unintentional early foundation for their later learning of music. For example, Marc said I remember being really little and I must have been about seven or something, and there would be like groups of adults at the weekend and they would be playing Jazz,
and I was lying in my bedroom going 'oh, I wish they'd shut up', but at the same time I was absorbing it, and I realised later on I was able to identify … different players

Julie's recollection described her mother having “full on parties and she would bring home bands” saying “that was all around me as a child” and that she was “brought out of her bedroom to perform”. Julie's specific mention of performing at the house parties was for her not a positive experience, as the type of music played was not within her area of interest and she was not comfortable with the “showy” style of performance required of her. The other five participants whose parents entertained at home did not specifically mention performing at the parties, it was inferred they were, at times, joining in through group singing or listening. A significant aspect of this commonality is found in the parent's active interest in music for personal enjoyment bringing others into their home environment, which placed music into a broader social context. As children they were experiencing music not only as a family value, but also as something validated by extended family and friends.

Engagement in community or school performances was mentioned by three participants. Frank’s mother was invited to assist in arranging performances for school concerts, Marc’s mother was an active member of local church choirs and both of Liam’s parents sang in their church choir. These participants said they saw their mother, or parents, participation as “normal” and that “[they] must have been good enough to be doing it” (Frank). Frank participated in primary school musical productions, Marc joined the church choir his mother was a member of, and Liam said he occasionally sang with his parents in their church choir.

**Parents: Singing**

*My mother could sing.* For four participants their mother’s singing was a distinct source of learning, one they were aware of even at a young age, and imparted an admiration for her talent. Jerry’s mother would sing with friends at their house for entertainment, Marc and Liam’s mothers were members of their respective local church choirs and Frank’s mother had been a singer in music theatre. Frank's early memories of music included describing his mother as a “singer and dancer, on stage in New York in off Broadway Productions”. When asked about his home life at that time he said, “I certainly remember her singing (at home) ... the remarkable thing about my mother is her ability to remember a tune, she can hear it once and repeat it note for note”. For Frank this conveyed a sense of valuing musical ability, and introduced him to the notion of music as a natural ability, one that could be developed. When she was asked to help produce his primary school concerts he reflected that it seemed “normal” and that “she must have been good enough to be doing it”. It was inferred that his
mother’s singing talent drew his attention to valuing expressing music, as Frank said he would enjoy playing percussion instruments in the house as a small child.

Liam remembered his mother being the one who taught him, from about six years of age, to harmonise when she was practising for church choirs. His mother would “get [him] to play a note, so to get her in tune [he] was taught the ability to harmonise, learning the concepts of harmony in the family home”. With minimal instruction, he progressed to singing with her as well, then sharing in learning songs through listening and imitating. This appears to have been a foundational influence on his later adult music career which features harmony in either his singing, playing guitar or in song composition. To determine the possible influence of musical styles, whether the music his mother practiced with had any influence, Liam was asked if the songs were only church hymns to which he said

My mum did listen to Pop music, she was influential because she was into Country music, she liked Slim Whitman, and Jim Reeves she loved all of that, but she also liked the Everly Brothers and Elvis, so I was listening from an early age say 8 or 9 to Elvis Presley and the Everly Brothers … and we used to sing some of the Everly Brothers songs together.

In saying his mother was influential, Liam explained that he enjoyed learning about music with his mother, through sharing her interest in music with him he said he “found it to be a special time, and I would have learnt a lot, started my growing interest”.

Marc described his mother as being a “trained singer” who “could play the piano and read music really well”, she would sing at home frequently. He also referred to himself as “always singing around the house” to the music being played in the family home. There is a link inferred between his mother's singing and his own singing around the house in the years up to commencement of primary school. Marc was exposed to someone singing to songs, which when placed in an environment where music was consistently played, provided both a conceptual and experiential source of learning.

Through his mother's involvement in choirs, Marc retold how “she got my brother and me to join …they needed sopranos ... we were singing in the church choir [with our mother] every Sunday, morning and evenings”. In connecting his positive experience of being in the choir because he “knew he could sing”, and that his mother, who “had an impressive musical ability”, thought he was good enough to be in the choir his interest in singing and music was being expanded and reinforced. In terms of learning sources, Marc had noted that his mother liked to be challenged by learning more difficult songs and that his entrance into learning music was influenced by this attitude. The experience of singing in the choir with his mother
and older brother may have placed his interest in singing, and music in general, into a new and broader context. Marc had up to this time only experienced his mother’s singing at home, his own singing and from music played on the radio or records. Through being in a choir Marc was exposed to an early validation of his musical interest in the sense that it was not something limited to the confines of his family home, it could be experienced within a community group.

**My father’s singing.** Four participants mentioned their father sang, described in the context of family activities such as for personal enjoyment, home entertaining with family and friends, and for local choir participation. Liam recalled his “father was a singer, my grandfather was a singer … we'd sing hymns together at home” for entertainment. Describing this early childhood experience as one he “really enjoyed, it was kind of cool”, Liam said it became a precursor to his learning of harmonies with his mother. Julie said her father “wasn’t a formal singer or a trained singer, he would write poetry and sang songs, the Blues, and so all these kinds of limerick kind of songs about people, so that would sort of happen a lot”. When asked if this was an influence in her early experimenting with song composition, Julie agreed saying his ability to come up with unusual lyrics were something she admired “so it must have played a part”.

The “power of the human voice” was something Frank recalled about his father’s singing, saying his father “would get really loud and sing in Italian, French and sometimes Russian … an incredible thing, it's an amazing sound, but it's quite confronting because you know the whole neighbourhood can hear what is going on in our house”. In references to his father, Frank mentioned admiring his ability to enjoy life by expressing himself through music, which in his childhood years suggests his father’s singing, may have been an experiential exposure to an emotional value of music. The fourth participant to mention their father in relation to singing was Jerry who, in comments about his family regularly singing for entertainment, made general references. Jerry’s descriptions indicated a happy and inclusive family engagement with singing that having included his father was to him an affirming source of encouragement.

Descriptions of fathers singing contained references to admiration for their talent, they were all self-taught which inferred that it was not only the talent but the ability to develop their own singing that was influential. For these participants this source of observed untrained singing talent appears to have contributed to the framing of how they perceived the possibility of being able to learn music themselves; more so than from the music itself.
Parents: Playing an instrument

Mother: Unintentional learning. Marc and Frank mentioned their mothers played an instrument at home during their childhood and adolescence. Both played piano, Marc’s mother also played violin and Frank’s mother played percussion and wind instruments. Neither said they were taught to play these instruments directly by their mother, but as Frank and Marc noted they did “absorb” information because when they started to learn to play music they found basic rudiments had been absorbed. It is reasoned this was through hearing and observing their mother play, as Marc later commented “when I wanted to write a song I'd go to the piano, I already had the basics, it was just there, I'd picked them up”. Frank recalled in his pre-school years playing on drums, he was “always playing on something” which, while other family members also played instruments, his referential connection to his mother liking to explore playing instruments and the time he spent with her before attending school suggests an influence.

Mother: Admiration for what I could do. There is another aspect to the influence of their mother's having played instruments, found in descriptions like Marc's that while his mother was a very accomplished classical musician “she couldn’t improvise”, which was something he could do easily. Her “amazement” that he could easily improvise was, in Marc's opinion, high praise because she was a talented musician “who could play anything you put in front of her”. Frank's mother did not play instruments for performances, only for personal interest, and his ability to not only teach himself to play but understand the music rhythmically and compose songs she regarded well. Considering Frank’s mother could hear a song once and sing it again “note perfect”, but did not compose music was, as he reflected, “valuable because it came from someone who you respected musically”. These two instances reflect a source of learning from within the relationship to their mother's opinion, or attitude towards them which was affirming they had musical talent.

Father: interest in musical instruments. Of the ten participants, four referred to their father playing, or having previously played, an instrument. Julie and Frank said their fathers played the piano; Frank’s also played multiple instruments. Marc’s father played the trumpet, and Wayne’s father had played drums prior to getting married. In addition, Dean and Luke mentioned their fathers as having a strong interest in an instrument or music generally, but they did not play themselves. The fathers who did play an instrument were described as accomplished three were at an amateur to semi-professional level, with Frank’s father having been a professional musician when they lived in New York. Julie's comment reflects participant sentiments when she says “dad was self-taught on the piano, so he could play just
by ear, but he never taught me that ... he never sat down and taught me how to do it”. Marc's recollection offered a background context to his fathers’ playing saying he was an amateur trumpet player, he was fascinated with the trumpet ... when he was a teenager he was pre-second world war and there were dances, and big bands and he was very taken with all that, and he loved Louis Armstrong and the really early stuff ... so I got to hear that stuff all the time

Neither Marc nor Julie mentioned playing with their father, although Marc said he did try to teach himself to play the trumpet but that he “didn't have the discipline” to continue and it wasn't an instrument featured in contemporary bands he liked. Whereas Frank did, he described his father as “an excellent saxophonist and clarinettist, he taught himself when he was 14”, having also learnt guitar he explained they “would play and sing together, he taught me a bit through us playing together, I was learning a bit from my father”.

Wayne was asked if either parent played an instrument, to which he said “My dad did play a bit of drums before he got married, but he gave them up because that was the kind of European thing to do, get married have children, can’t play music”. While his father didn't play during Wayne's childhood, the family had a Reception Hall where he would watch his uncle play guitar in a band every week until he was in mid-primary school. In a different connection to instruments, Luke recalled his father as having a love of music but in his childhood he was not allowed to play an instrument which became the impetus for his father to instigate him learning piano and later drums, as well as his siblings being encouraged to also play music.

**Father: Influenced by his playing.** Collectively these descriptions frame fathers who played an instrument as having been inspirational owing to their enthusiastic enjoyment, perceived musical talent and appreciation for the creative expression possible with their instrument. Frank's father had been a professional musician, although having stopped he did continue for personal enjoyment, and both Julie and Marc's fathers played at their house parties. Therefore, they had been able to frequently observe, listen to and engage with their father's interest through talking or playing instruments together. Wayne recalled talking with his uncle, and other band members, about their instruments which encouraged his growing interest in music. In terms of this being a source of self-taught learning, exposure to their father’s music playing was not one of intentional direct learning, as with the mothers, it was the example that it set. That example conveyed accomplishment in being self-taught, and a value for dedication to an interest they felt a growing investment in.
**Siblings**

This profile of each participant is intended to frame their family context, it is relevant to the following discussion on siblings and how they were in themselves a source of learning, or enabled access to sources of learning. For the participants who do not have any siblings they did have an older peer, typically a friend’s older brother, who was similarly a source of learning.

*Table 3.*

**Siblings and their music activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>1x Older brother</td>
<td>Sang in a church choir together, did not pursue a music career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>9 x Siblings</td>
<td>One older brother shared his interest in music, learnt together in adolescence, he did not continue into adulthood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>1 x Older brother</td>
<td>The older brother showed an early talent for music, initially self-taught before attending high school conservatorium. They formed a band in primary school, periodically performed together in adolescence then joined the same band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>1 x Older and 1 x Younger brother</td>
<td>Older brother played guitar and inspired Julie to learn it herself. Did not play together, and he did not pursue a career in music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>2 x Older brothers</td>
<td>Both brothers were interested in music, showing an early talent, oldest played guitar and the other played drums. They would all mime to music using toy instruments, learning music together. In late adolescence Tyrone joined a band with eldest brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>1 x Older brother 3 x Sisters</td>
<td>Shared an interest in music older sister and brother; sister was a singer/song writer, older brother played guitar. Played in a band together during Dean’s adolescence, where they also began composing songs together. Neither older brother nor sister continued with music after being in bands during their twenties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>1 x Older, 3 Younger sisters 1 x Younger brother</td>
<td>Being one of six children Luke was the initial instigator forming a family band in first year of high school. Taught his younger brother to play the drums, and guided three of his four sisters when they joined the band as singers. Luke’s younger brother and youngest sister have continued with music, establishing their own full-time careers as musicians, song writers and singers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>No siblings</td>
<td>Spent time with a close friend and their older brother, listening to music and talking about new bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>No siblings</td>
<td>One friend’s older brother influential, they would listen to the new music he brought back from London and Liverpool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>No siblings</td>
<td>Older musicians in Uncle’s band shared music knowledge, would let him play percussion in a few songs, and help set up the stage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Siblings: One more influential.** As mentioned previously, home life during childhood into adolescence was one where music always played, and family members engaged with music actively. While the participants’ referred to being influenced by parents as well as siblings, it became apparent they felt one or more siblings were a stronger influence. Of the seven with siblings, one referred to an older sister and five to an older
brother as having been an inspirational example; because they displayed talent, knowledge of music, were self-taught and in a band that performed regularly. These participants sought to emulate their sibling, which included the methods they used to teach themselves. Some recollected being able to 'jam' with their sibling, which led to a more active involvement beyond their observing, emulating and talking about music. Frank, Jerry and Tyrone mention playing music with their older brother in a band while either in late primary school or high school. Dean played in a band with his older sister and brother during early adolescence. Recollections relating to an older sibling were primarily situated in the family home, included listening to the record collection of older sibling, talking about music with them and observing their practise and band rehearsals.

**Siblings: Choice of music.** The participants were drawn to the music choice of an older sibling, cited as beginning from mid to late primary school age. Heightening their interest in a specific genre, or style, of music it was exciting and connected them to their sibling. This shared interest and influence typically continued into late adolescence, although it did not present as having been a passive acceptance of their sibling’s choice. Meaning, that while the sibling and their peer group considered the music popular and “cool” the participant initially followed but later developed an independent music taste. This is exemplified in Frank’s comment that his brother, who was four years older, was into the records that were around that were Blood Sweat & Tears, Tower of Power, Deep Purple but at the top of the list was Jimi Hendrix … my brother was a huge fan, he was actually a fanatic about Jimi Hendrix.

From his brother’s ‘fanatical’ interest Frank “absorbed it all” but also “went looking for other music”. Tyrone’s recollection introduces how, as the other participants refer to, his older brother was more aware of new music which connection him to emerging and international bands and artists. Specifically describing his interest in contemporary music as starting when my brother was bringing home this stuff that was so cool, he was bringing home Joe Cocker and Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Free, Credence Clearwater Revival. Now I wasn’t really hearing those things on the radio I was hearing them from my brother ... So, I was absorbing all of this through that time.

The music older brothers and sisters played at home was often not what the participant was exposed to from local radio stations; consequentially creating a sense of being ahead of local music. Through older sibling being what Tyrone referred to as “a pioneer”, who sourced new styles of music from record shops or mail order catalogues, it brought a more international breadth of music exposure. Dean makes specific reference to this when he says
there used to be a thing called the record club, it was on the back of the TV week ... what you’d do is you paid eight dollars a month or something and you’d receive like ten albums … My brother got on to that, there’d be a choice … so he would always pick whatever he wanted like Stones or Beatles or whatever, but then they’d also chuck in a few albums you hadn’t chosen … it was through record labels.

This point highlights the initiative older siblings were seen as having which, in itself, presents a particular attitudinal influence. Suggesting, in addition to learning from the music itself, this resourcefulness presented as a source of learning. Recollections were phrased in reverential terms, indicating a deeply held value for resourcefully seeking out and acquiring what was needed to enable engagement with their chosen interest in music.

Engaging with the older sibling’s music because it was a means to connect with, and be included by, their admired older sibling occurred on average from 8 years of age. It is suggested that while the initial point of connection to these contemporary genres of music was through seeking to follow what an admired older sibling was interested in, these participants developed their own appreciation through including the music when learning how to play their instrument. For example, Julie said “I listened to my brother’s music and that’s how I got interested and taught myself [to play guitar]”, from eight years of age. In being able to access and learn from this music during the time when they were establishing their individual interest and becoming more involved, afforded opportunity to learn popular songs that would later assist them when ‘jamming’ and joining their first band.

**Sibling in a band.** Frank, Dean, Tyrone and Jerry mention their older brothers as having been in a band while still in High School and that it was one of the reasons their interest in music further developed. Dean and Tyrone in particular were inspired by seeing their brother practise, rehearse and play in a band. Frank and Jerry were in bands during primary school with an older brother, recalling this shared music interest as a time of significant learning. Collectively, learning from an older sibling in a band came from observing not only how an instrument was played, and music interpreted but also older peer musician group norms and expressions. This source of learning is seen as having contributed to their increasing desire to play an instrument, but also behavioural and attitudinal concepts. Their older sibling’s active engagement in a performing band gave validity to not only the style of music they played but also in being self-taught it validated that form of learning as well.

**Siblings sharing the interest.** The siblings seen as a guiding influence became part of a gradual development in the participant's music learning. This is taken from recollections
across six of the seven participants who mentioned an older sibling, that their influence was more significant. Descriptions of sharing a music interest with their sibling had four themes; shared resources, active listening and knowledge exchange, trust and admiration and accompanying.

**Shared resources.** References to the use of a sibling’s music resources ranged from specific descriptions to more general comments, and as such this access is seen as a source of learning in its enabling of engagement with music directly and content of material. Jerry, for example, specifically referred to “pooling resources” such as records, instruments, and tune-a-day song books. It was this self-initiated activity with his elder brother that contributed to the form and focus of Jerry’s intent to learn music. For Frank, Tyrone, and Dean their accounts of sharing were more general, although they did suggest it was how they initially accessed learning resources such as records, magazines and song books, and occasionally their instruments. Luke’s experience contains a different reason for sharing, or pooling resources, because his father told him to teach his younger brother to play drums, while he then learnt to play the piano. After having formed a band that included his younger brother, they were all sharing music and instruments to learn songs for their regular performances.

**Active listening and knowledge exchange.** An older sibling sharing knowledge about music was described in terms such as Dean’s experience where, as he explained

my brother would point me in the right direction because he would explain I like this song because of this, I like this song because of its attitude, I like this sound, or I like that lyric' whatever it was.

Understanding and appreciation of certain songs was being introduced through the self-taught learning of older siblings. The age participants said this sharing began was from late primary school age and continued into early high school years. Set within the context of conversations at home, listening to music the imparting of attitudes, insights into lyrics and ways in which the melody and rhythms were composed. While these experiences were explained as being infrequent, they were significant in terms of participant being able to share in a mutual music interest, as well as further process and develop their emerging self-taught direction. It is in this shared experience that an intersection became evident, between the participants’ self-discovered understanding of songs emerging at this time and the older sibling conveying their knowledge. As a source of learning this exemplifies the intersecting and cumulative nature of their music learning where self-discovered understandings meet with knowledge introduced through a trusted person.
**Trust and admiration.** As mentioned previously, the participants were first influenced by music instigated by a parents’ choice in the family home, although there was noted a shift towards music activities and choices of an older sibling by the time participants were in mid to late primary school. From this time, descriptions of activities began to include older siblings who were actively engaged with learning about music and to play an instrument. While the music of parents continued to be present, focus shifted towards the music choices of older siblings, and friends’ older siblings. A sentiment commonly expressed, as they had done with parents, was that they admired their older sibling and therefore trusted their knowledge and music choices. For example, Dean said his brother “kind of led the way with whatever records he thought were cool, and whatever he thought to listen to that was what [he] gravitated towards and listened to” and Tyrone’s comment that he was “just following … doing what my older brothers were doing … It was partly cool because he loved it, therefore I loved it”. Frank's references to his older brother frequently contained descriptions such as “he was an amazing musician” and “he was really quite revolutionary”. In Julie's reference to her older brother being “the rebel” and how he followed his own choices in life, she inferred admiration for him which influenced her choice to learn guitar, because he had taught himself. Through admiring their older sibling the participants were drawn to explore different music to that of a parent, and trust became a significant motivation through which they used the shared activities as a foundational source of learning. While initiated through following an older sibling these participants also framed their music learning as “I also wanted something of my own” (Frank).

**Accompanying.** In Frank, Tyrone, Dean, Luke and Jerry’s recollections they mentioned engaging in forms of accompanying a sibling while they practised, jamming with them or playing in a band. An early instance of this was seen in Tyrone’s reference to miming with his brothers, because one brother was actually playing drums, and he infers that these formed early sensibilities of how to play along with another instrument. In Frank's recollections he mentioned already being drawn to playing percussion instruments as a small child, and his family were “always playing something” but that it was his older brother who initiated a more direct learning experience. He explained that his brother would make me play with him so if he wanted to play something on piano and he wanted to be accompanied by bongos he would go ‘here play this’ and he would show me and say, 'just play that' and he would give me the guitar and go 'look just put your fingers there and do that' and that was when I was about maybe eight.
Noted in descriptions was the learning of how to play their part in a song with another performer which taught timing, rhythm and a means of accessing a deeper understanding of how songs could be performed. While the instances of accompanying were not described as frequent, or consistent, throughout their early learning years it was recalled as having been a contributing source of their skill development.

**Initiating their own interest: Late primary**

**Listening alone.** Early indications of participant becoming aware of and developing their own interest in music are taken from their references to having spent time listening to music alone. It was mentioned by all participants and started to occur prior to being given their first instrument and continued after they began to learn an instrument. The circumstances ranged from having the radio on at home, playing parent’s records, sibling’s records and later their own records. In some cases, the participant spent time at home alone, others referred to listening in their bedroom while family were at home. This was said to be their own choice of activity, and where they began to form their own connection to music and how they understood it.

Julie created her own space musically saying, “I would play in my bedroom, somewhere on my own, in my own way, do my own thing”. Martin expressed an enthusiastic interest when he noted,

I was fascinated by it and I was really into the heavy rock groups of the day, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, KISS and all those kinds of things were exciting to me as a young boy, so I was always collecting records.

Frank explained he started to “sort of teach myself how to play a couple of chords, and a couple of notes, and hearing things … listening on my own to records”. Tyrone described how he “was already at home playing ‘At the Rock House’ and listening to Deep Purple every day and trying to work out what [he] could, and [he] was listening, [there was] lots of listening in my room”. Jerry's experience of listening alone came after he had started to learn an instrument, saying

I wanted to be a rock player. I loved Jazz, but I wanted to be a Rock’n’Roll player. So, this is where ear came in. All of a sudden, I had to listen well I started listening intensely to records.

Luke recalled taking his father's idea of learning from listening to music, as he explains

I would listen to the radio by myself and play drums to the songs on a local station, so I could learn. That was from 6 up until I was 11 years old, and then I would do the same when I started to teach myself songs on the piano.
Liam, Marc, Wayne and Dean referred to listening to music on their own prior to getting their first instrument, and as a way of learning to play. Liam's experience included his mother's record collection as well as his own, and Dean recalled taking any chance to listen to his brother's records. Wayne and Marc described finding their own music to listen to, where Marc in particular said he would listen to regional radio stations at night in his room.

Highlighted in their references to listening alone is the commonality Jerry specifically mentioned where they listened “intensely” to, as Marc said, “what the music was doing”. When asked if they could explain what this meant, they said it was about noticing patterns of rhythm and melody, becoming aware of how a song was constructed and, as Dean said, “the intervals between the notes”. Listening alone was described as being both a precursor to, and what emphasised their desire for, an instrument as well as how they taught themselves and developed musical skills and understanding.

**Exploratory experience.** Descriptions of listening alone suggest an exploratory experience as Tyrone’s recollection exemplifies when he says

> I remember vividly sitting there as a 9-year-old listening to Led Zeppelin *Three* for the first time, and ‘Immigrant Song’ came on, my whole family were out, and I was home by myself, and I snuck into my brother’s room and put that album on with headphones, and I was terrified, I was waiting for Vikings to come bursting through the walls, I thought ‘what is this? How have they done this? I’m listening on headphones, in a quiet suburban house in Brisbane and these guys are scaring the crap out of me in a way that was so exciting. It wasn’t like the fear of a lion diving at you, I knew I was safe, but it was so ominous… my nerves were jangling. How have they done this?

These exploratory experiences of listening on their own began at an early age, from as young as five years old to more typically about eight years old. They were either a self-initiated activity, or it was in their environment from a family member, friend's family, or something in their environment such as a television show. Martin, for example, recollected the drumming in his parent's music records was “exhilarating” and inspired him to seek out music where the drumming was similarly exciting.

In another way the participants expressed a catalyst for listening alone that inspired their exploration of music, is found in Marc's comments that

> I was in primary school ... so there I was listening to Pop radio and then all of a sudden Pop radio changed from Perry Como and Guy Mitchel to Little Richard and Buddy
Holly and the Crickets, and one of the first 45s I ever bought was ‘That’ll be the day’ with Buddy Holly and the Crickets.

This exploration of music was not only through the resources of family or friends; the participants were starting to independently seek out music they felt was exciting and interesting. The building of their own record collections, specifically looking for music in record shops, or finding new songs from hearing it on the radio indicated an increase in more autonomous activity choice. The sentiment conveyed in their descriptions was one of “have a go and see what it was like” (Marc) and “there’d always be something ... even in some song from someone I didn’t know, but they’d be good, I was too young to know yet” (Dean). In these intentional music activities is a sense of how previous music influences from within their family started to be drawn on, taking what had come from a parent or sibling and through self-directed means piecing it together with their own learning experiences.

Friends

In the period just prior to receiving their first instrument, when initially learning to play music and while in bands during high school years nine participants referred to sharing their music interest with friends. Listening to music with friends who were their own age and older was described as a common social engagement where they would share albums and talk about the music and musicians. In clarifying these recollections the participants explained they were referring to friends with whom they had “made a connection with through music” as Tyrone said, as opposed to non-music friends from school or in their neighbourhood. Two participants who did not have siblings, mentioned the older brother of a close friend had a record collection which they listened to together. Noted also was evidence suggesting that being able to join in with an older group through a common interest provided a sense of peer group validation and reinforcement of their relationship with music. This was taken from comments by Martin and Liam that these older peer group experiences were guiding and leading the way to find out what was “cool”, “exciting” and “from overseas”. It is suggested these participants experienced learning from an admired older male in a way similar to those who had an older brother who they emulated. The ways in which friends were present and became an integral part of childhood and adolescent learning of music was evidenced in a variety of ways. Using reference to a participant's recollection the following are to be seen as exemplifying six commonalities.

Childhood neighbours. Frank's recollection of friends from an early age offers an example of localised, neighbourhood connections. He explained
when we were still in Sydney there were friends who lived across the road … [their father had a classical music radio show] … it was fantastic, there was this whole other world over there, and so I would go over there and, in the corner was sitting just like that (points to an instrument in the corner) was a guitar, a shitty guitar … and you could just sit on the couch and play the guitar, and they were not interested in the guitar.

This experience was from when he was seven to ten years of age, and he explained the allure was the chance to play the guitar. Frank reflected that it was because he felt a sense of freedom to explore learning in his own way, it was opportunistic and reflected his own developing interest in learning to play guitar. Having explained that how his other family members were all musically talented, the ability to “just play around, see what came of it” (Frank) was part of this attraction.

Jerry, Luke, Marc, Martin and Dean also recalled sharing an interest in music with neighbourhood friends when in primary school. These experiences were, for example, “we’d talk about music on the radio … they were impressed that I could tell them so much” (Marc) and “I liked drums, so did my friends, one had a drum kit that he let me play sometimes” (Martin). For Luke and Jerry their friends became part of their initial journey towards forming a band. Luke formed a drumming band that played for primary school assemblies, and Jerry’s group of friends would play together for their own entertainment. The simplicity expressed in these recollections conveyed the sense that the music experiences with friends in primary school were fun and uninhibited, as Jerry said “we didn’t know anything, but that was the beauty of it all, no limits”.

Older peer groups. Martin's recollection reflects instances where it was not only friend's older brother but an older peer group who were already sourcing out and listening to records as he explains

I had a friend who lived near me and he had older brothers, so they always had the new Led Zeppelin records or the new Deep Purple record and that was really exciting you know, in those days, when the record came out in the shops.

Offering more detail Martin explained that he and his friend would sit in the lounge room with friend’s older brother and his friends, after school. Saying they listened to discussions about the music, it was friendly, and he felt able to join in at times. This is similar to instances where an older brother would explain what they liked about a song, although Martin said no one in that group played an instrument.
**Early networks.** Tyrone’s reference to friends highlights another form of neighbourhood connection in his high school years, as well as how typically some musician friendships were initiated when he says

Well, I ended up, as seems to be the case with these things, they come out of the woodwork. You would find people who, in the midst of a conversation somebody might say “Oh, I’m interested in playing Bass or I’m interested in playing the drums, or I’ve got a drum kit at home” and then an instant bond happens that wipes out any other differences you might have as people because you have found this common ground, and so you would gravitate towards those people, you’d find each other and so that’s bound to happen.

The sentiment expressed here reflects the forming of friendships through peer group, neighbours and family friends, where connections are made that lead to active engagement. Tyrone explained further that he would “jam” with those who had expressed an interest, and some became band members, or people he later played with in bands. As with the other participants, this form of networking interaction from casual conversations to then playing together was a common occurrence suggesting early forming of future musician networks.

**Music was fun when shared.** In Jerry's comments another commonality was exemplified, presenting a greater level of inclusion with friends as he sought to learn more with them than alone, as seen in his recollection that

We just loved [music], you know, all the kids I was hanging around with. So, it was all about that [listening to music] … I thought I could just have a red hot go ‘cause my friends brought things and … some [had] knowledge of some chords and things ... and that’s when I kind of started to realise that the music was important, and they needed, everyone needed a vehicle, they need good players and bad players and friends and everyone just having a go, it doesn’t matter.

The notion of “having a go” and recognising that everyone had different levels of accomplishment, but with continued learning they could improve was an attitude noted in all participant recollections.

**The music was cool.** Liam described how he was drawn into listening to particular music genres and styles because it was thought to be 'cool'. It was different, and also valued by significant people in his life. His comments reflect a sentiment expressed across participant learning biographies when he recalled

I remember from around about the age of 12 or 13 one of my friends, his older brother was a kind of beatnik … he would go to London and he came back with all
these incredible records, blues and jazz ... so us being you know a few years younger we wanted to emulate, we wanted to be cool, we used to sneak into his room and play his records ... but of course when you listen to as pure an art form as roots music like we were listening to mostly country blues you know like Lightnin’ Hopkins and Big Bill Broonzy, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGee, Big Joe Williams, that’s pretty hard core .. Blues at the time, it was very much sort of part of the Beatnik beat generation of, Kerouac, it was coming up in the early days.

For Liam, as with other participants, friendships contained an active link with music that essentially expanded their collective resources, contact with and engagement in music activities. The draw card of “being cool” was seen by Liam as “a bit lame”, but the songs were taken in and absorbed into his learning through using, in part, this style of music to learn by ear to play guitar. Other participants, in describing being drawn to an interest in a particular style of music, reflected how it grounded, formed a foundation, on which they then learnt to play music. The reason was said to be because they were excited and inspired by that music, both as an individual and as a shared value with friends.

**Supportive friends.** As an older adolescent Martin's following recollection exemplified how more social engagements with friends could lead to significant experiences.

I saw Midnight Oil... I’d discovered them through an old friend who gave me this record and said, ‘check these guys out’ ... then when I saw them live I thought ‘my goodness!’ this is it, this is a whole other world, there is a whole other world out there.

Friends sharing music, and attending live performances with the participant can be taken as a common adolescent activity. Although it was not simply enjoyment of the music, these shared activities highlight how friends intentionally engaged because of the participant’s already active interest in learning music. This draws attention to a trait where through the participant’s music activities they were brought into contact with further sources of learning through a group, or network, that they might otherwise not have encountered.

**Significant memory**

Learning from moments of self-discovery, where something suddenly occurs to them, was a consistent feature of the participants’ self-taught music learning journey. Instances of such experiences were frequently recollected, and marked a particular construct of how the sources of learning were encountered. Essentially, the affirming emotional response felt when a new understanding, skill or knowledge was acquired became part of their motivational drive. In presenting this finding as a source of learning prior to receiving their first instrument it is intended as an indication of where, and how, this internalised experiential learning began.
A characteristic noted was the consistent reference to memories of significant learning, framed as being a continuous series of revelations about music and their relationship to it. From a simple moment alone while listening to music or learning a song, to sudden shifts in understanding that transformed their approach to learning. For example, Wayne referred to his experiences of learning music as “building on each other” with one specific memory “standing out”. At the age of about eight years old he recalled coming into a room and

I remember seeing a Beatles cartoon [on a television show] and you followed the bouncing dots that went with the lyrics, I remember that night and seeing that moment, it was the cartoon where all the girls are chasing them, the music was I think ‘Can’t buy me love’… it sticks in my memory. Wayne said it “stuck” because he suddenly saw music simplified into “those moving dots”. In another example Tyrone recalled his older brother taking the new acoustic guitar he had been given “and he strummed a few chords”. In that moment Tyrone recalled “as soon as I heard him strum the chord it was like ‘that, whatever you just did, I don’t know what, what was that?’ … it literally struck a chord in me”. His brother then showed him where to place his fingers for the three chords A, D and E. Tyrone heard “the essence of what it’s going to be”, and while “it sounded terrible” he could hear “Daddy Cool’s ‘At the Rock House’ in those three chords”. Tyrone reflected that he didn’t know at the time there were “about 30000 songs with those three chords”, he only heard a favourite song of his. On that night Tyrone said he was

Constructing those chords into At the Rock House, it would take 15 seconds to change from one chord to another, but in my head, it was a continuum. The rush of joy at creating that, of generating that sound, was just like an opiate to me. It was so powerful that it set something off, and then it was game on. What other chords are there? The acoustic guitar, he said, was not his first choice, but after seeing that he could use it to play music that he did like he became “hooked” and found ways of using the guitar to learn what he did want to play.

While each participant recalled significant memories that were unique to them, they emerged as thematically similar to the recollections of other participants. Presented in the following summary, and reflecting the types of learning experienced, these recollection commonalities were taken from after participant had begun to learn an instrument.
Table 4.
Significant memories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of memory</th>
<th>Commonality reflecting sources of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to a music community</td>
<td>− Gradual awareness of being part of a group that connected to a larger community of musicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Early sense of future possibilities in music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden inspiration</td>
<td>− Experiencing a moment of sudden awareness, where a connection is made that inspires them, experienced as a personal milestone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Realising they could do something, like play a chord, and it felt suddenly exciting as an achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-belief</td>
<td>− Experiencing playing with others where they found they could play adequately, or well, and this grounded their sense of belief that they could learn to play music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheer excitement watching a performance</td>
<td>− Inspired through feeling excited watching a performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Using the experience to set a level of musicianship standard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Taking what they saw and seeking to emulate it, because they valued that style of performing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative expression of their own choice</td>
<td>− Inspired by forming a band, their own ideas are explored in live performance work settings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Sense of freedom when creatively working with songs, making changes to suit their band</td>
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<td></td>
<td>− Freedom to explore through trial and error without judgment with peer musician group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing live performances</td>
<td>− Experienced as ‘jumping in at the deep end’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Learning what they still had to learn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. First instrument, first band to semi-professional

An instrument of my own

Eight of the ten participants were given their first instrument, or in Luke’s case a family owned instrument, when they were aged between 6 to 12 years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Acoustic Guitar – 10: Electric Guitar - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Drum Kit – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Acoustic Guitar – 9: Electric Guitar - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>Acoustic Guitar – 9: Electric Guitar - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Acoustic Guitar - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>Classical Guitar – 9: Acoustic Guitar - 12: Electric Guitar - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Acoustic Guitar – 11: Electric Guitar - 12/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two participants did not obtain their first instrument until they were about 15 years old, these two were initially lead singers in a band from the age of 14/15 years of age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>Saxophone – 14: Clarinet – 15: Guitar – early twenties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>Harmonica – 15: Guitar – late adolescence/early twenties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants were given their first instruments from as early as six (Luke) and as late as 15 years old (Marc), although most were between 8 to 12 years old. In describing being given their first instrument these participants recalled having spent months “bugging and nagging” (Dean) their parents, which reflects an early persistence in their interest to actively engage with music. Saying they would take any chance to play an instrument, as Dean and Frank recalled in particular, having one of their own became a strong aim. Their means of obtaining an instrument were limited, in most instances it was a birthday gift. Descriptions varied, although all were framed around the practical aspect of having access to an instrument they could choose to play at any time, and how it felt to own that instrument. Six mentioned attending lessons as a condition of being given their instrument, the other four described learning to play by listening to records and through trial and error. All described spending time alone teaching themselves through listening to music regardless of whether they took lessons. When asked why they chose to learn in that way they said it was an accessible method, how a family member or friend learnt, and through reading music magazines was how they understood contemporary performing musicians had learnt.

**Teachers and lessons**

It is necessary to first explain what was meant by ‘lessons’ and their context, as it initially can infer formal music education. As will be further explained in the following, the ‘lesson’ was not through any standard music teaching, they were either informal ‘jam’ sessions with an older musician or non-formal instruction through a typically unqualified ‘teacher’. Located in a home or garage, the participants describe very basic music reading or instrument playing techniques were taught. For most the lesson centred on playing their instrument to a record, and learning a song for the next session. The phrasing of descriptions where the participant did not “work well” (Wayne) with attending lessons framed them in terms of detachment; because their sense of how to relate to music did not fit into formal, predetermined, constructs. The majority, who attended for on average eight months, explained that while some “basic music reading” (Dean) and “introduction to new songs” (Luke) was useful, their learning on their own (and with their band) was more relevant to them. All participants who attended lessons had already begun to teach themselves, and had already been acquiring knowledge through listening to music for between two to four years. The point being, they started music lessons with a prior knowledge of music, and had already been actively pursuing their interest within family and friendship contexts.
Table 5.
Teachers and lessons: Overview of the six participants who attended lessons: detailing the content of lessons and teaching methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Sheet music</th>
<th>Played to records</th>
<th>Jammed with teacher</th>
<th>Taught improvisation</th>
<th>Taught technique</th>
<th>Created own notation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar</td>
<td>6-9 months</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>6-9 months</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>1-2 months</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Keyboards</td>
<td>6-9 months</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>6-9 months</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13/14</td>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar</td>
<td>6-9 months</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Length of time.** Wayne, Tyrone and Luke said they attended lessons with a particular teacher for less than four weeks; the reason for leaving was due to not liking how the teacher taught. Luke recalled his teacher “would sit in another room doing her nails because I could smell it” and Wayne said his teacher was “very nice but a really old man, who sat there eating sandwiches”. Wayne said his parents tried a “few other teachers” but he “didn’t like any of them”. Liam, Martin, and Luke went to a teacher for between six to nine months, saying they stopped because as Luke said, “the lessons were not giving me anything more” and “I was learning more on my own”. Dean also attended lessons for between six to nine months, although he said they were more structured in respect to his teacher giving him songs to learn from a song book. Martin said he had “sort of lessons” with an older musician for “about three years” which he enjoyed, saying

My previous teacher said he had nothing more to show me, and he knew I was serious about playing drums, so he recommended me to this guy who actually played bagpipes in the military, but he knew about drumming as well.

**Sheet music impeded learning.** Wayne recalled he did not like learning from sheet music, saying it did not “feel natural” to him, so he “ended up not going to anyone”. Luke recollected the first of his two piano teachers had taught using numbered musical notation, which he found useful but only if he had notated sheet music to play from. The second teacher did have sheet music, but as Luke said, “it was really only there because he thought I
needed it”, explaining this Luke said he had been able to quickly remember songs from listening to them, and the sheet music “got in the way”. Tyrone recalled his guitar lessons as being comprised of being given a song to learn, which at first he learnt from “figuring out the chord charts”, to then “memorising it, because it wasn’t hard”. His teacher would not allow him to play from memory, saying he had to read it from the sheet. Tyrone, like Wayne, reflected that the method of teaching he experienced was one where he “could not express” himself, his skill development through memorising a song was being undermined, and he decided “it wasn’t for [him]”. Dean’s experience was similar in respect to him having lessons where the teacher used a song book, and included basic instructions on reading music, although he left for a different reason as he explains

I had that good ear, so when the teacher played it for me first, I could remember it straight away, and play it back, but I would be looking at the book, so he thought I was reading it from the charts … he found me out, and said I didn’t need any more lessons, and to keep playing as I was, which was good of him really, he knew I didn’t need the sheet music.

Dean’s ability to memorise music after listening once was the most pronounced, although each of the other participants referred to either having a level of this skill already, such as Luke and Wayne, or they developed it as Tyrone, Jerry and Frank described.

Played to records, and ‘jammed” in lesson. Liam, Luke and Martin had lessons where the teacher put on a record; they would both play along with it as the teacher talked them through the song, explaining instrument techniques. They described it as being more like jamming with an older musician than a lesson. Martin and Luke both said their lesson was often, as Martin recalled, about “just putting on a record, and off we’d go … just playing it, even if I’d never heard it before”. Liam described his experience as learning a technique first, and then his teacher would play a record where “we both played along using that technique”.

Learnt improvising in lessons. While Tyrone, Wayne and Dean said they learnt to improvise later through using their “musical memory” as Tyrone described it, to “do a solo” or “add something of your own” to a song, the other participants said it came from learning to play by listening to records and jamming. Not only did Liam, Luke and Martin mention they learnt to improvise through this activity but Frank, Julie, Jerry and Marc as well although they did this through their own independent activity. Luke, Jerry, Marc and Frank all described being told by an older musician, or teacher, that many of the musicians they were
listening to were actually improvising which, as Luke said, “opened something up” where he could “start to express myself” and have fun with a song.

**Taught instrument techniques.** Being taught specific techniques, such as ways of strumming a guitar, were mentioned by Liam, Dean, Martin and Luke. The first lessons Luke attended were an after-school drumming class at his primary school, he said they “learnt basic drumming beats, it wasn’t complicated, we were just kids”. Martin’s drumming lessons were described as not typical in that he was not taught to read music, or about particular music styles. What he learnt was more about how to keep his posture in a way to avoid physical injury, how to hold the drum sticks, how to maintain a drum beat over an extended period of time, and different drumming beats and techniques. Dean said through watching how his teacher played the guitar he did “pick up a few things” such as where to place his fingers for the chords and notes. Liam recalled his teacher “taught me some incredible techniques, like how to play rhythm guitar … she taught me rhythm … it’s like a Maori kind of strumming, that kind of stuff you can take into anything, the sky is the limit”.

**Created own notation.** The six participants’ experiences of taking lessons included four detailing how they developed their own way of noting down a song in order to learn it. Liam, Dean, Martin and Luke developed their notation as a result of realising they did not work well with sheet music. Luke and Dean said they did not write it down, it was memorised from how they listened, as Dean explained “I realised early that there were intervals between the notes, so I used that to remember the song”. Wayne and Tyrone, while only attending a few lessons said they developed their own guitar chord charts and would remember the song from visualising the chart. Developing individual notation styles was not restricted to those who took lessons; all participants said they had developed their own way of noting down a song, which was at first written but as their skills developed all said it was “better to have it memorised, because if you lost your chart you were stuffed” as Tyrone explained.

**Styles of music heard or listened to during childhood and adolescence**
As a means of conveying the participants’ music context and as a source of learning, the following list reflects what was heard through family, with friends and the participants’ own independent music interest. Emerging from noting what styles of music were mentioned during this period, it was unanticipated that the music recalled was consistently similar for all participants: considering the oldest was born in 1947 and the youngest in 1966, placing their childhood years across two and a half decades. This music was said to be their introduction
and means by which the participants learnt to play an instrument, developed their understanding of music and it taught them how to conceptually approach song composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>During pre-school and primary school years</strong> – other people’s choice of music including radio station music.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blues – including Rag-time Blues, Classic Blues, Country Blues and Electric Blues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical – Avant-Garde, Baroque, Orchestral, Chamber and Classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance music – Swing, Boogie Woogie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk – Traditional Folk and Contemporary Folk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock and Roll, Adult contemporary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Late primary school to late adolescence</strong> – their own choice of music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blues – including Rag-time Blues, Classic Blues, Country Blues and Electric Blues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance music – Swing, Boogie-Woogie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock and Roll and Rock Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning the songs, learning the instrument**

**Two approaches.** Learning to play by ear was referred to as being through two different approaches. Seven participants described learning songs on their first instrument by listening to a record or cassette tape, commonly called learning by ear. Tyrone's description is typical when he detailed how he would “play a bit of the song, try that bit, play the song again … it would take ages” but that “the joy of getting it right” was worth all the effort. Three participants recounted learning to play music through listening as well, but they were not aiming to learn to play the song as it was recorded, instead they were improvising along with the song. Jerry’s reason was because he “didn’t have a developed ear yet, but I could imagine the song I wanted” so he used a song to “find something in it that I could play along with”. Marc explained that he “had a natural ear for music” but he liked to “interpret the songs in my own way”. Wayne said at first “it wasn’t from listening to records”, he would “just sit for hours playing what came to mind, what I found on my own”, and that it may have come “from watching musicians in my uncle’s band”.

**Early concepts of composing.** The participants also mentioned having developed early concepts of composing music from approaching learning to play songs in their respective method, because they were actively listening then applying their own interpretation. The seven who said they learnt to play by ear did develop strong improvisation skills, although from how they described their process it was as Luke said, “a natural progression, you learn and listen to so many songs, you realise there is a pattern to it, so when you hear that you can figure out what you can play”.

**Learning a little bit at a time.** How they learnt to play songs, and more generally about music, was “you learnt what was needed at that time”(Liam). Progression in their
learning was gradual and not sequential or consistent. Referring to learning in their early years, as Dean said, it was “enough to play in the band, just so we could do a few songs at the dance”. In another aspect of learning gradually, participants also referred to picking up “little bits” (Frank) from engaging with a family member, from a band member or their own playing as Frank explains

and so, between my father showing me a bit, my brother showing me a little bit and Jimi Hendrix records, the guitar across the road (at his neighbour's house), so I am starting to sort of teach myself how to play a couple of chords, and a couple of notes, and hearing things.

The participants appeared to initially undertake learning to play songs because of their interest in music. As they formed their own way of learning and began to actively engage with music through performing with others the reason they learnt songs was not only their own interest but in order to play in a band. Comments such as Liam’s that he “didn’t always like the music, but it was what they played” suggests that the participants were not attached to learning only what they liked personally, and were willing to learn just so they could be in a performing band.

**Jamming.** In the period between receiving their first instrument and joining a band, the participants spent time playing casually, or jamming, with peer group and older students at high school, siblings, or neighbourhood friends with the same interest. Typically, they were invited to play by an older student at high school, and were often the youngest person in the group. These sessions were located in either a school gymnasium or someone's home garage. How they felt about these experiences was, as Martin described, “exciting, I was getting to actually play with older students and I was still just learning”. Dean mentioned his jamming sessions as being “fun, I would walk over to their school at lunch time and play whatever we could”. Characterised as being fun, casual, without adult supervision, an exploration of what they could do, and learning to play with others in a “no stress, fun way” as Martin recalled. A frequent comment was that they were learning by doing, simply playing songs together and finding out how to play with others. The length of time each participant spent jamming with others varied from a few weeks to close to a year prior to joining their first band. When invited to join a band they did not stop jamming, and some said they were invited based on these sessions.

In a practical learning sense, these jamming sessions were mainly teaching them how to play a song together, in time, with other musicians. In saying they played songs everyone knew, it was also an encouragement to find and learn new songs, so they could continue to
participate in the group. Being exposed to different skill levels the participants said it became clear what they still needed to learn, although it also gave them an opportunity to see how much they had already learnt. From how the participants described this jamming activity period it was noted they did not appear to play with an initial intent to join or form a band, it was purely for the experience of playing music with a group. This is based on comments such as Frank’s where he “just wanted to see what we could play, nothing serious” and Liam’s when he said, “it was great, we'd share whatever we had, played what we could, just having fun”. Having experienced playing in a fun and collaborative way, it is suggested they were developing musically, and becoming known to other peer group, and older, school student musicians. They were all still learning, and seeking out opportunities to gain experience, essentially practising in a casual manner. It appears the students who invited the participant to join their jamming sessions did so with the same intent, to gain experience.

This jamming activity, it is suggested, formed a bridge between previous observational learning and activities with family and friends, their own learning of an instrument and the experience of playing in a group. The activity was new in this form, as previously the participants had only been able to observe others playing, and generally inferred a sense of accomplishment in being included.

**First band: Early high school**

It was a significant experience to enter into a first band, one that acquainted the participants to new contexts, sources and ways of working with their music interest and learning. Offered in the following quotes are insights into how they thought about this learning phase, and are a means of introducing the varied sources of learning within this stage.

**Learning how to perform**

It was our first exposure … it was there that we were learning how to perform (Jerry).

**What songs to play, gaining confidence**

I was learning about what songs would work for different bookings, like older dance music for weddings and things … how to entertain really, you know, so that whole getting up in front of other people and performing became second nature for me (Luke).

**Just to be able to get up and play**

We started doing some gigs, and that was great, but you know there would be no one there, but just to be able to get up and play music was a good thing, so at this stage I am about 13 (Dean).
Keeping it simple
So I could do ‘Wild Thing’ which was three chords, you know, and turn it up loud and everyone would go ‘Wow!’ It was shit house, but nobody noticed or knew the difference, for the purposes of a school dance that was great … we played whatever we could sort of get away with if it wasn’t too hard (Frank).

Learning how to play
What you are learning on the music side of things is … you learn a lot learning how to play someone else’s song … about arrangement, song structure, you notice patterns that recur … you are absorbing even if you are not consciously absorbing (Liam).

Learning stagecraft
Equally important was stagecraft, learning the difference between a band that might get up and self-indulgently stare at their shoes, as opposed to those that get up there and really perform (Tyrone).

Learning from when things go wrong
Being thrown in all sorts of situations … anything from dealing with equipment failure 2 minutes before you are about to go on stage, a string breaking in the middle of a show (Wayne).

Learning more from a live performance
You can practise but it’s not until you get out on stage that you really know whether it’s working or not … that’s worth ten rehearsals … you learn more in the one performance … like that guy can’t actually play, or that song isn’t going to work (Marc).

Of the ten participants Julie was the only one who did not play in a band regularly during her adolescent years, she did form a band for a primary school concert and sang with bands for high school concerts. The other nine joined or started a band when they were between 12 to 15 years old. Table 6, below, indicates what instruments were played, whether participant sang, how and when they first joined a band, frequency of performances and what they said was learnt from their experiences. It is to be read in conjunction with the findings in relation to sources of learning encountered and experienced during adolescence when they were performing in their first, and for some, second bands.

Table 6. Bands participants were in during adolescence
Detailing how they joined, length of time in band, frequency of performances and what they learnt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>How did they come to join</th>
<th>When did they leave first band</th>
<th>How often did they perform</th>
<th>What were they learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>- Sang a song with a band he knew, another band saw this and asked him to join</td>
<td>- Band continued until the end of high school. In band for just over two years</td>
<td>- At first, every few weeks as support band at dances - Within a year it</td>
<td>- Stagecraft: how to perform so audience danced - Song choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmonica player</strong></td>
<td>them, become their singer and played harmonica</td>
<td>- Disbanded as some members were going on to University - Formed another band with new members</td>
<td>was weekly, still a support band at dances - Recorded 4 singles, original songs - Started rehearsing “every Saturday”</td>
<td>- How to organise the band for rehearsal and gigs - Composing as a band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guitar player</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tyrone</strong></td>
<td>- Invited to join by older student</td>
<td>- First band lasted “for a year or two”</td>
<td>“May have done half a dozen gigs” at school dances</td>
<td>- Playing with a band in a live performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acoustic Rhythm Bass Guitar</strong></td>
<td>- Formed band with local students at high school</td>
<td>- Went until last year of high school</td>
<td>“Last two years of high school we were doing three gigs a week”. Cover band</td>
<td>- Stagecraft, coping with failing equipment, - Stress of live performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Martin</strong></td>
<td>- Older students at school invited him to join - “Must have heard me play or something” - Jammed with them first</td>
<td>- Played until end of high school. - Older members had already finished school - In band for nearly 3 years</td>
<td>At first, every few weeks, local dances - Became weekly, and played “in pubs, Mum signed me in” - Rehearsed weekly - Cover band</td>
<td>- Live gigs as a band, have to play “in with the others, not just what you want” - How to rearrange songs to suit band, wrote original songs with band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drummer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wayne</strong></td>
<td>- Forms band with cousins, parents instigated</td>
<td>- Band lasted for about 18 months. Lost interest</td>
<td>Publicly once, mainly rehearsed</td>
<td>- To play with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acoustic Rhythm Bass Guitar</strong></td>
<td>- Forms band with older students at high school, invited to join</td>
<td>- Played with band for about 2 years</td>
<td>- Played at a few high school dances and concerts. Cover band</td>
<td>- Learning songs - Live performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Instigates forming a band with local musician friends</td>
<td>- Played with band for 3 years.</td>
<td>- Jammed regularly, rehearsed weekly, and performed monthly to weekly. Covers and original songs</td>
<td>- Song choice - Exploring music styles, composing with others-getting gigs, dealing with venues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jerry</strong></td>
<td>- Invited to join band as singer after being seen singing with a band</td>
<td>- For “about a year”</td>
<td>- Rehearsed weekly, professional band, up to 3 nights a week</td>
<td>- Different music styles. stagecraft performance, musicianship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saxophone Clarinet Guitar</strong></td>
<td>- Forms own band, sings and plays saxophone/clarinet</td>
<td>- For “a few years”</td>
<td>Performs weekly, up to 5 nights</td>
<td>- Entertaining, band management, composing songs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luke</strong></td>
<td>- Formed band with school friends &amp; siblings</td>
<td>- For nine years. Other siblings joined over time</td>
<td>Within a year they were booked as a dance band weekly, up to 5 nights a week</td>
<td>- Stagecraft, song choice for different audiences, dealing with last minute problems, working as a band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drums Piano Keyboards</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Findings: 92

Joining a band whether invited or forming their own marked a common milestone and presented new sources and ways of using their learning resources. The bands varied from small dance bands with friends, playing with family members to being invited by older students in high school to join their band. Of the ten participants four formed their first band with friends or relatives, one is invited to join a band and also formed a band with relatives, and four were invited to join a band by older peer group musicians. Julie formed a primary school band and played in bands through high school but was not a consistent member of a band at this time.

The different sources of learning were drawn from noting both a continuance of multiple external sources but also reference to internal sources, where they learnt specific personal behavioural and attitudinal lessons. As previously mentioned they had already been acquiring a degree of learning from having observed the behaviour and approach to music.
attitudes of family and friends. In this next phase previous observational learning appears to be drawn on and combined with experiential learning as they encounter new situations associated with becoming a band member. As a retrospective comment, the participants identified this period as when they first learnt to work with others specifically in a performing band sense, as opposed to playing only in jamming sessions, and that it was equally as important as being able to play an instrument. The development of their instrument playing skills, performance experience and knowledge of music was described in a practical sense; where learning was experienced through 'doing it' and sources were other people, related activities including live performance as well as peripheral music resources. The consequential internal sources of learning are seen as having been the growth in their personal awareness of group dynamics, and what the socially and culturally formed rituals, habits and understandings were in the music scene at that time. In addition, there was development of attitudinal approaches related to musicianship, being realistic about their level of skill and knowledge, openness to learning from many sources, and viewing older more experienced musicians as authoritative.

**Those seen as an authority.** During the time the participants were in their first and second band in early to late adolescence, they acknowledged learning from other band members and peer musicians. Liam noted this experience was “not in a mentoring sense … as we became more professional and efficient, and worked with musicians that were a little bit better they would pass on stuff, like sharing how to make it better”. This sentiment is consistent in all recollections, with Jerry’s adding that “because you are associating with people who want to also learn and get better” you are progressing. What he is referring to, and is highlighted in the other participant recollections, is the notion of learning from peers who are more experienced and therefore seen as an authority. This learning was not said to be, as Jerry noted, “a sit down with me and learn”, it was through observing what they did, from talking, and then taking that home and practising on their own.

**Learning from feedback.** In another aspect of learning from other musicians is Martin’s comment regarding learning from feedback, as he explains you can do something on your own but until you have any other form of feedback, and not just any feedback, but from your peers who you come to see as authoritative… And because they were older than me they would have definitely had authority …once they sat me down and told me my drumming was too fast, it was not until then that I even thought of how fast I played…so, it was definitely a great learning curve.
The point Martin raised was learning through being able to listen to, and not be discouraged by, feedback or criticism from other musicians. Stated either specifically, or indirectly, this component of learning was mentioned by nine participants as being a crucial factor. If they did not listen and act on the feedback given, or if they took it personally, it could ruin their ability to learn because as Dean said, “It’s not about you, it’s about the song”.

**Learning from being the youngest.** It was noted that nine of the ten participants mentioned they were often the youngest person, from their first band up until mid-career stage when they were working in multiple bands and freelancing. The participants were asked if this may have impacted on their learning in any way. In response they said being younger generally meant constant learning opportunities in a positive sense, as Liam said, taking the approach of “always play with musicians who are better than you”. Tyrone’s comment that “now I was playing with a higher calibre of musician … they were older and more experienced, so I had to get in and learn and practise” exemplifies participant attitudes of a positive learning challenge. There were also references to stress in their explanations; Tyrone, Liam and Martin specifically mentioned realising that if they did not learn quickly it could jeopardise being invited, or continuing to, perform with a band. Tyrone referred to this as “they didn’t suffer fools”, which meant learning your part, being on time, picking up quickly how the band played and “finding how to fit into it”.

**What was learnt from other musicians.** From their first experiences of casually playing with others in jamming sessions, first bands, through to later adolescent and adult performing, learning from playing with another musician was a consistently expressed occurrence. It formed part of their described self-taught learning process, where one’s own knowledge, skill and attitudinal perspectives met with that of another and in the process became experientially mediated, reinforced or extinguished. Explained as being first and foremost about exposure to different ways of approaching, understanding and expressing music; experienced as different song interpretation, new music styles, and awareness of the possibilities in musical expression. Internalising these experiences the participants also described perceiving how another musician was emotionally, not just practically, performing which imparted expressive interpretative sensibilities within the music and in terms of stagecraft.

Initially these experiences were framed in terms of observing-imitating; although once a sense of their own performance concepts had developed each new experience became part of their ongoing cumulative layering of learning. As a learning process in the initial early adolescent phase it was as much about what to do, as it was about what not to do; particularly
in the area of how to play with a band to fit in musically, but also in the social and attitudinal norms of that group of musicians. It was a process all participants referred to as their continual learning attitude, and one where as Dean said “there is always something to learn … no matter how successful you become”. It is suggested that from initially learning through shared music performance where a significant foundational body of knowledge and skill was acquired, structured around opportunity and access to more experienced musicians, the attitude of openness to continued learning throughout their careers was initiated. It presented as a characteristic of self-taught music learning and one not about direct instruction, but rather ability to observe, perceive and process experience as a trusted source and one that enabled a sense of confidence to develop.

The instances of learning from another musician did not always happen through performing. In their first band the participants did not already know all of the other members, and through working with them a wider social circle of known musicians began to form. One of the ways these new relationships developed was through the sharing of records, in particular the newer or lesser known artists. Luke explained how a band member in his first band introduced him “to Credence Clearwater Revival, I’d never heard of them before, and it made me aware there was a lot of good music out there”. Similarly, Wayne recounted “we would be sort of discovering pop and doing all that stuff, and experimenting, that really shaped my musical direction” from the age of 14 to 17 years of age. Spending time sharing music, learning through playing together in a casual exploratory sense, was mentioned by nine participants as a formative experience during their adolescence and one they continued to experience throughout their careers.

In describing what had been learnt from other musicians they worked with during adolescent to early career period, there were general references to having observed, or picked up, what they saw as bad habits. References to bad behaviour observed were in regard to not being prepared for a rehearsal, not turning up on time, being “self-centred” as Luke commented, and being affected by alcohol or illicit substances which affected their ability to perform. A commonality in these descriptions was the participant’s recollection of having emulated the behaviour of another musician and finding it was not how they wanted to behave, or play, because it had a disabling affect. Dean mentioned specifically “I saw a lot back then, some really good musicians just out of it, I thought that didn’t look good, you find what you don’t want to be like from seeing things like that”.

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Learning environment in first band

Having joined a band, most participants said they felt nervous and aware of a pressure to learn quickly. How the participants felt about this type of pressure is exemplified in Tyrone’s comments that it was a “good kind of pressure” where you “listen to what someone with more experience is telling you” and “take being told off” as a learning opportunity, because “I had this obsession, so if I didn’t learn I wouldn’t be playing and that’s all I wanted to do”. Within the meaning of “good pressure” is Liam’s example where he describes feeling challenged to “get it right” when he says,

They put a lot of pressure on me, I wasn’t playing guitar with them ... I was a singer ... I had to sing and be a front man ... which I hadn’t done before and had to learn how, using what I’d seen others do and what felt right for me … I can still get nervous now even.

When Liam was asked how he coped, and what he now thought about learning with the kind of pressure he was describing he said

I kind of just accepted it, I was the young kid, so I would get knocked around a little bit … there was an aspect of toughen up princess, you know what I mean, if you are going to be around these guys.

A similar sentiment was expressed by eight of the ten participants although they said the others in the band were not difficult or unfair, but generally supportive. What was meant by supportive was found to be in the sense of being treated as accepted and included, for example when the band were deciding on song choice and arrangements. Frank’s comment that he felt “part of a musical community” when “a musician, or anybody whose opinion you trust and who makes you feel that, makes you believe that you can be a part of that community, saying things like you’re good, you should continue” exemplifies verbal support from other band members.

The notion of adapting. Another commonality was found in comments regarding coping with learning through adapting, such as Jerry’s when he said,

you learn what you need to know … and you can adapt to that … I adapted to singing because it happened to be, at that time, suited to my voice … I didn’t want to be a singer, I wanted to be a musician.

Adapting was evident within descriptions in the following ways:

- Adapting to the change from playing alone to playing to a live audience, meant playing and learning songs in a more serious sense. This notion of adapting is taken from comments such as Martin's when he said, “you had to step up if you

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wanted to stay in the band” and Tyrone’s reference to “feeling like you are dumped in the deep end” but that he took it as a challenge. Suggested also is an awareness shift, from learning as an individual to then learning as a band, a group.

- Adapting in the sense of adjusting their expectations in relation to what and how they would play their part in a song. A frequently expressed experience was learning that while “you could practise your part at home, and come up with something new, if it didn’t work with the song, it wasn’t in” as Dean recounted. In another example, Tyrone retold an experience where he joined a band, and in his nervousness, he started to play his part loudly and over what the others were playing. Recalling that “the band leader yelled at me to stop”, saying “what do you think you’re doing, just play what you’re supposed to” and he “felt humiliated, but it was a really good lesson because after that I just played my part solidly”. In regard to this, the participants recounted they were learning that to emulate professional and older musicians, to play outside their skill and strength levels, can translate into “playing from your ego and not from your heart” as Tyrone explained. Meaning, as opposed to learning and assimilating into ones knowledge and skill level, they could think it meant having to impress and “take over the song” (Dean).

- Adapting to the way a band played a song and their overall style was mentioned by Liam, Dean, Marc, Jerry, Frank, Wayne and Martin. Liam’s comment explains this when he said, “you had to fit in to the music being played” and Tyrone’s reflection that he had to “fit in sonically” to a band because “it didn’t matter what you could play, it was about how it all sounded when you played”. This was mentioned in respect to experiences of realising a band could play cover songs slightly differently to how it was recorded, they “had to really listen to what everyone was doing” in order to “understand how they played” as Frank explained.

Finding the music

In the period just prior to joining their first band through to late adolescence the ways in which music was sourced provided insight into how these participants learnt through their desire for exploring new music. Highlighting what was accessible to them, as well as resourcefulness and working with what they did have, rather than being discouraged by limitation. An unexpected theme emerged where rather than only focusing on what was in the
current popular music charts, they were drawn to lesser known artists both local and international, as well as newly emerging bands. For the purposes of playing in band they utilised the more well-known songs, although for their personal interest and song composition they turned to music outside the locally popular.

**Radio Programs.** Exposure to music through listening to the radio was mentioned either directly or indirectly, in childhood and adolescent memories of music. Jerry referred to “radio was king, it was all we had”, and Marc recalled

I’d hear other things on the radio and save up my pocket money which took me, like, weeks and weeks … and buy a recording … as time went by I started to buy Pop music. I’d save up and … ‘Dad, can you get me …’ and I’d write it down. This is interesting ‘cause, one of the songs I liked was Chuck Berry’s School Days which I later recorded a version of.

Liam's description included his experiences of listening to Pirate Radio as he says

I'd listen on my own transistor radio … there was Radio Caroline, a pirate radio, which would play a lot of American music, so we’d get exposed to a bit of other stuff, not blues so much but R&B … Radio Caroline really pushed the envelope because they were playing all American music and the British Rock music.

In explaining further, Liam described how this was his way of finding out about new bands and musicians, then he would try to buy it through ordering it in from record shops. Tyrone and Luke recalled listening to music on the radio in the late 1960s early 1970s, at the time they were in mid-primary school to early high school. Luke, when asked to explain how he learnt the popular music songs he played in his family dance band, explained that “we had to learn them from the radio every time a new song came out we learnt it”.

**Music and Record Shops.** Six of the ten participants specifically mentioned purchasing music, albums or single recordings from Record Shops. Dean, recalled spending “a lot of time just looking at all the guitars in the shop” when he was in late primary school into early high school years. The other participants’ descriptions suggest that at times they would visit music shops to view new instruments, if something had been advertised that was of interest. Noted were comments reflecting an attitude of resourcefulness when viewed in relation to their limited financial circumstances and limited access to music outside of popular mainstream trends. The notion of resourcefulness arose out of recollections such as Marc’s when describing buying records in his adolescence

Record shops had these cheap bins, the cut-out bins, brand new records you’d get for 25 cents. So, we used to go down and get all of them, Otis Redding, Martha and the
Mandela’s, James Brown, BB King, piles of these fantastic singles that no one else was listening to and they were all for cheap, so you could get heaps of them. In using the “cheap bins” they found, as Liam, Marc, Jerry and Wayne noted, artists whose music was the original influence for songs that were popular at the time. Unintentionally, the purchasing of cheaper music recordings exposed the participants to new songs and music styles, and as they reflected encouraged them to seek out music that was not in the popular mainstream. As a consequence of finding these artists who were not well known in their location Jerry, Marc and Liam, in particular, recalled ordering in their albums through local Record Shops. One particular consequence of being exposed to the lesser known artists was that “you were learning from where the current bands got their inspiration, so it was teaching us about the history of this music” (Liam). Influence of preceding genres, or particular artists, was not something anyone told them as Liam further explained “when you really listen, and get to know the different music you can recognise it”. Reflected here is the previously mentioned active listening evidenced in their primary school pre-instrument stage, one they utilised unintentionally in discovering influences in song composition.

Whether purchasing the cheaper music recordings or new release albums the participants mentioned having to save first, this meant finding ways to earn money. Martin’s comment is a typical example when he said, “you had to save up for ages, and wait for that album to come out”. It was noted the participants mentioned using the records they purchased to both learn more about songs and music styles through just listening, as well as using the records to learn to play their instrument. Apart from the music recordings, their limited financial circumstances could be seen as a source of learning; one requiring them to have enough value for learning about music to be determined to save their money.

**Learning from shop staff.** Learning from shop owners and staff was mentioned by those who regularly purchased music from Record shops. The participants described learning about new artists and styles of music, such as Marc’s recollection where he recalled the other big influence for me and a lot of other people was (shop name) which sold normal Pop music but was big on importing albums, whatever was new, that’s where I found artists like Jefferson Airplane and Mothers of Invention and all that stuff. I relied a lot on the people who worked there, I’d ask them what they thought about something and they would give me the run down.

In an unexpected connection, the participants said they learnt some music terminology from talking to Record shop staff, specifically from the way staff described new songs, styles of music or artists.
Record Clubs: mail order music. Ordering of music through mail order catalogues was mentioned by Dean specifically, and inferred by Liam, Luke and Jerry. Dean recalled being “about 10 or 11, it was after I got my first guitar” that his older brother “got onto the mail ordering Club, called Record Club”, where customers could select the albums they wanted to purchase and were given a few free records as well. It was, as Dean mentioned, valuable because of the “offloading of records from Artists we didn’t know here from America … it was all legitimate, they must have had a contract to distribute a certain number of those records”. Similar to Marc’s comments about finding music in the “cheap bins”, Dean said the additional albums they received were typically “old style blues, bluegrass and maybe some Country and Folk stuff, but much of it was great, I hadn’t heard any of it”. The value lay in exposure to older styles of music or as yet unknown artists. As Dean reflected, it taught him about different song composition, how songs can be influenced from previous music styles and it “kind of opened up a bit more for me, like Frank Zappa, I’d never heard that before and didn’t really understand it at that age, there was something quirky about his music that caught my ear”. Liam, in a similar comment to Dean, offers a further insight into how the participants typically expressed their understanding of why it was valuable to source, listen to and learn from non-mainstream music saying,

we took a step behind and were listening to the music they were listening to without realising, the music that was inspiring them to play this music, like the Rolling Stones were inspired by Chuck Berry and Bo Didley … you can hear it all through their early music as well, they were just copying it, you know even the Beatles were copying a lot, like from the Ink Spots with those harmonies.

Peer group word of mouth. Hearing about music through others, as Luke recalls “there were bands I heard of through kids at school”, was a commonly expressed influence. In Luke being the older brother who influenced his siblings it was noted he had someone older who influenced him, as he recalls

There was Allan, he was a bit older and his music taste included Credence Clearwater Revival, so it was rock … his influence was really about opening me up to the idea of finding other music that I really liked, that was interesting to me and not just for playing in the band.

Luke’s comment highlights that the participants were experiencing influences of new music through not only those they played music with, but school and neighbourhood peers who were interested in music socially. This places peer group influences through word of mouth
knowledge into notions of youth culture, where the participants were influenced by how their peers related to contemporary music at that time.

In this word of mouth commonality two findings were noted. First, the participants used this knowledge to inform, or affirm, their own song choices for working in a performing band. Second it was as a way of extending their range of new music exposure. In this finding there was an unexpected commonality where songs were learnt just to enable the participants’ band to continue being booked for gigs. They accepted learning what was popular at that time as opposed to learning only for personal interest. While this does not mean they were not interested in playing the music their band chose, it does suggest they learnt to be practical. Meaning, if they wanted to gain live performance experience they had to accept learning songs they may not personally like, which focused attention on skill and experience development rather than “playing for your own ego” as Tyrone reflected.

Meeting others with same interest

High school. The participants mentioned meeting others in high school who shared the same interest; Tyrone’s recollection is a typical example in high school, as it seems to be the case with these things, they come out of the woodwork. You would find people who, in the midst of a conversation somebody might say “Oh, I’m interested in playing Bass or I’m interested in playing drums, or I’ve got a drum kit at home” and then an instant bond happens that wipes out any other differences you might have as people because you have found this common ground, and so you gravitate towards those people, you’d find each other.

When asked if this was the beginning of what could be called a network, the participants said it was not as intentional as ‘networking’ but more a natural, also called casual, connection to peers with the same interest. Liam’s comment typifies another aspect of peer group experiences where both musical and non-musical friends were mentioned when he says

It was just what we were doing, just peer group … it was both music peers and others, but music always featured strongly, listening and playing we would play music together … but my two main friends were not really musically gifted, so I had some other friends, a periphery of other friends who I played in bands with.

Their social groups were described as being not only musician friends, although as they spent more time playing music it became more musician peers than non-musician. In a context sense this places the social connections beginning to form into spheres of different influences; practical experiential influences from musician connections and social music enjoyment from non-musician friends. This places these sources of learning within peer
Through social connections. Participant's families as previously mentioned valued music in an active sense, the interest extended into their social life which appears to have created a wider network of social relations centred on music. In having parents and, or, siblings interested in and engaging with music their social connections appeared to have an influence on participant. This was noticed in references to a parent's friend or neighbourhood acquaintance saying they had a child who played music and participant was asked to visit and see how they went playing music with them, or a parent's social or community activity lead to participant meeting other people who were involved in music. Older sibling's friends and social contacts were a source of connection to a younger and more contemporary participation with music, which by association led to entering into an older peer group social network. As a source of learning the exposure to, and derived benefit from, the social connections of family members gave the participants opportunity and experience. The opportunities and experience ranged from being introduced to musicians with whom they jammed, singing in a choir or finding an instrument teacher, to sharing knowledge and appreciation of music. While the participants generally formed their own music related social connections, it is suggested they acquired a sensibility about these types of relations from older family members which offered an early foundation. Specifically, they were learning how to relate to others in music based social relation contexts.

Music enthusiast school teachers. When the participants were asked if they had music lessons in their primary or high school curriculum, six replied they did have classes although as Martin said, “they were very basic, and not about playing music but about music like learning about music styles”. To contextualise, regardless of location or time period, the participants recalled few peers in either primary school or high school were learning to play a musical instrument. For example, Dean commented that “there were about 600 kids in our high school … and about three could play an instrument or were into music and learning it”. This frames and highlights, why four recalled a teacher who aided their learning in some way as having been significant, although only one was a music teacher. Luke recollected his connection to a high school teacher, describing

There was an English teacher at school, he liked music and played himself in a band, he encouraged us to enter New Faces, a talent competition on TV, we did the planning, but he helped us by giving bits of advice.
Luke reflected it was not only the fact that his teacher “saw something in us” and wanted to encourage him, it was also having to “figure it out on our own, like what amps to bring” and being able to “ask him questions” that made the teachers influence significant.

Dean recounted his experience of being encouraged by a high school teacher who saw his potential, saying

I was only focused on music, I was really obsessed with music, the music teacher at the high school saw that straight away and she used me in the school end of year concert, and that was another big turning point. Dean’s “turning point” was in the experience of playing for his peers, his parents who were in the audience, and being asked by the teacher to do an encore, because as he said it gave him confidence. Marc described a teacher who indirectly became a significant influence when he recollected

This good art teacher, he was a modern artist, but he was really good with kids who had talent. He brought in things to inspire and bring culture, for instance Jazz guys came, it was in the school hall, so we could hear it a bit, and they had like Jazz and poetry reading over the top, like Beatniks sort of stuff, so that was all pretty cool … so we were exposed to that sort of thing, like improvised performances. Marc noted that he was influenced by “being exposed” to the idea of “poetry and music together”, which he “was absorbing and learning from”. Frank described a teacher in primary school who had been a motivating influence, for other students as well as himself and his brother, to pursue their performing arts interests. He recalled

We had this teacher at primary school, he loved music and he got my brother and me to play something at the end of our weekly school assemblies. We played drums and trumpet, or something, and it started as a marching beat but then my brother would turn it into a Latin beat …. [the teacher] really worked hard to put on musicals too, we were in those playing something … he really inspired me, actually a lot of people … he told my brother and me that we were good and had to keep going because we had talent … that really meant something to a little kid … I was about 10 at the time.

**Learning through other activities - Adolescence**

Descriptions of learning activities in the period up until mid to late adolescence, in addition to those already described, included such activities as their band entering in a competition, attending live performances, making their own recordings, and early forays into song writing. In addition, two participants mentioned playing on local radio stations where unsigned bands were given support through exposure. In describing these activities the participants were
exemplifying what they meant when stating their learning had been often opportunistic and situational. As the participants progressed, each new development offered another component to their learning which was becoming focused on a more professional intent.

**Band competitions.** Seven participants (with their band) and one as a solo singer entered in a talent competition; they were from 10 to 16 years of age at the time. All felt there was something learnt in these experiences, whether positive or negative. Julie said she was entered into talent contests as a singer and felt the experience “was terrible, it was awful” because it was not “how I wanted to sing … and all that judging, the scrutiny, it was soul destroying”. Wayne recalled his parents “entered us in a competition called Pot of Gold”, he was 13 years old and “we got blasted by one of the judges”. The interest in music Wayne was developing he “kept it really quiet [he] just didn’t want any attention” because the attitude towards “playing a guitar and singing was kind of girly”, but after appearing on the Television show the students at his school saw it and “then I had to become the rebel to deal, to cope with the bullying”. For Wayne his method of coping was to “go into my own little world, I was always thinking about songs”, although the exposure did bring him into contact with others who shared his interest in music.

The other seven had entered as a band, and felt they gained positive experience from just having entered. Frank and Luke also entered a Television talent competition with their band; Tyrone competed in a Musicians Union band competition held in the basement of a Music shop; Liam said his band would enter local competitions, held in a public park; Marc entered his band in a Battle of the Bands competition; and Martin said his band entered a local band competition. The bands entered competitions within the first year of participant having joined, with Martin, Tyrone and Marc recalling it was within a few weeks. Luke’s comment typifies the general learning taken from being in the competitions when he says, “I think that was a good thing for us, I think competitions are kind of good because they make you realise what’s out there, what you’re playing up against … but it gave us experience, big time”. In their descriptions six of the eight participants mentioned not only learning from the performance, but through the audience and judges reactions. Seven of the eight participants commented they could better determine what they still needed to learn and improve on as a result.

**Attending live performances.** Whether as audience member, or after being the support band and staying to watch the other acts, all participants described watching bands perform live through adolescence. Frequently mentioned, as Liam recalled, was the music scene at the time “had a lot of bands … really good ones too” which he was starting to see
from about the age of 14 years old, as did the other participants. It was exciting, as Marc recounted “we’d go ‘holy mother!’ look at that! You know, you are picking things up”. In the sense of stage craft Martin’s comment that “you learn what to do, or really how to do it” and “even if it was lousy it was still great fun because you would get something from each one” highlights how the participants were approaching this learning. Dean’s reference to watching a band exemplified how they were using the live performance to learn not only how others played their instrument but the songs as well when he said

Every now and then one of the bands, their songs I would remember, that song! It was great! And the quick learning thing [his ability to recall songs he heard once], by the time they got to the second chorus I had already worked out the chord progression of the song, and I always remember thinking that’s neat how they do that change to that chord … I had my whole night there, and then I would go home, get on the guitar for an hour or two recalling that songs’ chord progression … Oh it was that! … it was an incredible music education for me.

Noted here is that in Dean’s example he was able to learn a song by hearing it once, whereas the other participants referred to a more general retention of the songs. Professionalism and performance standards were also mentioned as being what they were learning through seeing a band. Martin and Tyrone recollected, in particular, seeing a band that showed exceptional musical creativity, vibrancy and professionalism. For Martin it “blew my head off … it was so powerful … I’d never seen anyone play like they did before, from then on I was absolutely emulating, I would have copied those guys”. Tyrone’s recollection typifies how learning from watching live music was experienced when he retold how

we had heard of them, I remember thinking, I’ve heard these guys are really cool and, you just have your ear to the ground, and reading any music magazine that existed, so being in the situation of supporting really good bands was just the most incredible training ground. It was off season, the venue was a 1700 capacity, and on this night, there were 40 people there … I remember thinking this will be interesting, they will either put on a really great show or they will just switch it off, there are only 40 people. They came out and put on a show like the place was absolutely packed, they expended every bit of physical energy they had in putting on a show … I remember that to this day, being just so blown away at their commitment, and their truth to themselves.

In seeing how a band performed regardless of audience numbers Tyrone, and respectively the other participants, reflected they learnt about maintaining standards, and not being
discouraged. It was as Tyrone also reflected “a powerful learning experience … those things stay with you and get you through the tough times”. Because, as Liam commented, “you never know who is in the audience, and they came to see you, so they deserve a good show”.

Marc, Luke, Liam, Jerry and Frank all mentioned learning specifically about aspects of entertainment, as Luke said, “putting on a show … was about entertainment more than just about the music” from watching bands perform. Liam explained it as being exposed to people like Van Morrison ... very emotional expressers, I mean Van Morrison was scary on stage … like quite aggressive, there was a thing for lead singers to go off, you know to be ugly on stage that was okay, especially in the 60s … like Mick Jagger he emulated the black performers who were uninhibited, and one of the local bands had a singer that looked and sang just like him, we thought he was fantastic so we emulated him, that’s how we learnt we emulated.

Another aspect of entertaining mentioned was seeing Show Bands and musicians who performed as a character, adding a theatrical component to their understanding of performance. Frank recalled learning from seeing bands such as the B52’s in Los Angeles who wore costumes, saying it “opened up new possibilities, you could act and play a two-string ukulele, and still be good musically”. Luke said he admired a show band that liked to “dress up” and he thought “I’d like to do that, dress up as a character, make it more of a show than just a band playing” from seeing positive audience engagement.

**Early foray into song writing.** All participants mentioned composing music, typically beginning the song idea on their own and then joining with at least one other musician to complete it. Julie and Wayne mentioned starting to write their own songs from the age of 10, describing it as integrated into how they were learning to play music. Wayne explained it as “I was always writing songs, I think I wrote my first song when I was about 10 … so I developed playing and writing songs, and then with the school band we actually played them”. Similar to Julie, Wayne recounted how he was learning to play music through “playing around with the sounds” and in this he was creating his own songs. It was described as a combination of their own sounds, improvising and imitating songs they heard from selected records.

The other eight described their entry into learning to write songs through listening to records and developing their own improvised interpretation, or a band they joined were writing songs together. For Tyrone writing songs was what he originally intended to do saying “I only ever wanted to really play enough guitar to be a song writer … and from about 16 I started to write songs”, developing his ideas through being in a band and listening to
many records. Martin’s example typifies experiences of coming into writing songs with a band when he says

we were playing covers but also original songs, instantly everyone is involved with the song writing process, or putting a song together to perform it ... it’s really funny but when you are a kid and you don’t learn when it’s not your place to say anything, you just pipe up, you know, saying things like ‘I reckon it would sound better that way’ ... I was probably a precocious little kid but it’s great, it’s a good way to learn how to construct a song and try and make it better.

In Martin’s recollection he is also referring to taking a cover song and rearranging it to suit their band. This was because they did not have all the instruments for the original song, or “someone might not be strong enough a player to pull off their part in a song we liked, so we’d make some changes” (Martin). The participants described, like Martin, that working with song arrangements helped them to understand about composing because they had to focus on what made it sound good, taking it apart and reconstruct components of the song. In addition, as Tyrone mentioned “playing a lot of covers helps you learn about good song writing”.

Marc’s explanation of his song writing method is an example of typically how the participants who wrote songs on their own developed when he says

I’d started to write songs, I would scribble something down, an idea of the lyrics and melody, there was a piano at home so I would sort of, and a guitar, I was mucking around on them a bit, but I could do enough to scope out an idea, then I would take it to the band and get them to play it and then we would work on them.

It was noted that when the participants talked about their song writing they were composing without being able to write music notation, typically saying that “if you put a sheet of music in front of me given a few hours I could work out the song, I picked up the rudiments” (Marc). This raised the question of how they composed the songs. For those who came up with a song on their own they described making notations of lyrics and melody, in their own notation format or through having recorded their idea. When working with a band, either to progress their song or composing as a band, they described developing the song through a method similar to jamming, trying out how different ideas sounded. Essentially, the composing of the songs was achieved through being able to quickly memorise and learn the song idea. It was inferred they would make a recording of their song, or band members made their own notations of the song as it was being developed.
In these composing experiences the participants were not only gaining something from the actual song writing process, but it also changed how they felt about music. For example, Jerry recalled how he felt a sense of freedom in realising early that I had to come up with things that were interesting, and it was a good challenge for me … it gave me the opportunity to be free of that rigid, formal thing … it gave me something else, the opportunity to see if I could fly coming from somewhere else.

Another way this sentiment was expressed is exemplified in Dean’s comment when he said I realised you can actually write songs! So, we don’t have to learn the Stones or the Beatles … that was a big thing because now you are going from interpreting someone else’s song to now you can create your own … and that was endless, it has never stopped for me.

In these examples is the commonality of the participants learning to explore and create their own music in a way that made sense to them, as Jerry inferred, because they did not know about song writing rules only what they had, at that time, come to hear and understand in the music they were learning from. It is something the participants expressed as a defining characteristic of being self-taught in respect to song writing; having not learnt through any set rules or ideas about music they felt freedom in their creative explorations.

**Making recordings.** Six of the ten participants referred to having recorded their jamming sessions, band rehearsals, demo-tapes or making a recording in a studio. Five of the six described using cassette tapes to record their jamming sessions or rehearsals; they were using them to learn from hearing how they sounded. Dean’s explanation further describes the reasoning when he said, “we recorded everything … you never know when you might capture something good, or that might work in a song later”. Wayne’s comment that he was “always working on something, always recording it” draws attention to this as a method used to assist in developing song ideas and composing. In addition, from having learnt to record their music, even in this rudimentary way, these participants also mentioned taking this early experience into later career stages when they were recording an album. When asked to explain this further the general response was that it developed their conceptual understanding of how to not only record a song, but listen to it and work on how to make improvements.

**Playing on local radio stations.** Dean and Marc both mentioned local radio stations specifically as giving support to young bands that were unsigned to a Record company. Dean recalled
they would provide a lot of opportunities … like once a week in an old orchestral recording studio, they would do a gig in this recording studio live to air on the radio, get an audience in, they’d film it as well and it would go on late night ABC, all unknown and unsigned bands, so we did that quite a bit, and they’d do concerts, get some of the bigger bands in so the unknown bands could do the opening slot … it was always interesting, they played the alternative stuff, ones you’d never hear on the commercial radio stations.

Dean’s experience was described as being both the actual playing in the live-to-air concerts, and his exposure to “a good local scene” of bands that were not being played on commercial radio. Marc recalled also playing on radio saying the ABC had a few things … they had a radio shop that we used to go on Saturday mornings, live from the local ABC station, you’d go in and play a few songs, rough as guts but you had the experience of [being] on the radio.

The learning experience gained, as Dean and Marc recalled, was in being in a situation where your own playing standards were brought into a keener awareness. It was not the same as playing in a concert or for a dance; because most of the audience could only hear them they learnt more about honing their unique sound as a band. When asked how they came to know about these radio opportunities both said it was through word of mouth, and both already listened to the radio programs they came to play on. It was encouraging them, as Marc said, “you come away and go wow we were on the radio”. The other eight participants did not experience, during their adolescence, playing on live radio although they all mentioned listening to radio programs where unsigned bands played.

**Progress and the music scene**

**Being seen.** During adolescence six participants described being invited to join a band through being seen performing. In terms of this being a source of learning, their recollections suggest two themes. One where the experience of being invited to join a band after being seen provided reinforcement of their talent and skill level. For Marc, Jerry and Martin being seen led to joining peer level bands where they experienced different music styles, contributed to song writing and were involved in recording songs at a studio. Being seen also occurred in another situation, as Martin recounted

Well it always works out, just a luck thing really … I was playing in a little trio which was kind of a Rock instrumental trio, and they decided to do a demo tape … we went to [studio name], as it was in those days they would give you the overnight midnight til dawn shift … you would get one of the young engineers produce it for you so they
could learn … he didn’t like the band much but he did like me … he recommended me to this singer songwriter friend of his, we formed a band, gave it a good go … I was about 18 when that happened.

Martin said he learnt a lot more about song writing and what it takes to find the right musicians to form a good band.

For Dean, Tyrone and Wayne they were seen performing, and invited to join a band, by older well-known musicians. Dean was 14 years old, Wayne 16 years old, and Tyrone was 18 years old, when they were invited. For Tyrone, this meant “a complete change of direction” because he was asked to play rhythm guitar when he had been seen playing Bass guitar. Wayne’s invitation meant not only leaving his band but leaving home as well. Of the experience Wayne recalled

it was the biggest learning curve I have ever had, I’m only 16 nearly 17 and I’m suddenly playing to thousands of people … I was so nervous I threw up behind the speakers on stage on my first night … it was great learning from these legends … so for four years I don’t think I unpacked my bags.

Dean was only 14 years old, and his exposure was through being in a band with his older brother and sister and resulted in moving with his siblings to Sydney. The experience was described by Dean as one where he “was now exposed to a whole lot of new music, I played every day, all day, just playing in the band I learnt from every gig”. He said he was aware of the higher calibre of musician he was now playing with, but at the time he took it “as just the way it was” and did not “really think a lot about that”.

Dean’s comments reflect an aspect this commonality highlights, where participants expressed having learnt to have a level of detachment. There was a recurring theme of “well it always works out” (Frank) and “just a luck thing” (Martin) which suggests an early learning of “not resisting anything, any of these changes. You are learning, you have to get out of your own way emotionally” as Tyrone explained. What Tyrone, and the other six participants, said this meant was learning to be detached from their assumptions and expectations of what being a musician meant. To overcome being afraid to engage with something new and to not become over confident because they were invited; as well as letting events “take their own course” as Dean also related.
**The music scene.** During their adolescence into early adult career stages participants referred to how they viewed and experienced what they called ‘the music scene’ both as a young musician learning to play, and as a consumer of music. Tyrone’s description reflects the consistently expressed recollection of music being part of the structure of social engagement and how it afforded them learning opportunities when he says,

> I grew up in a world where going out to see a live band was probably, next to sport, one of the most ubiquitous forms of entertainment … come Friday night you’d go out and watch three bands, maybe ten, because you go to one place and think I don’t really like these guys … just down the road there is another gig with another great band … and so everyone had to be good … and they were able to be good because there were so many gigs to play.

Noted are not only the numerous opportunities to play, but the competition this presented. When asked if this was a source of stress, participants did not recall it as such. Liam’s recollection typifies their response when he explains

> It would have been just different communities, like there were different bands, quite a lot of bands actually, and I remember one of the bands were really great, they were from the housing estate, but they were really fantastic and they were kind of just rougher kids but we really liked them and they liked us, so there wasn’t really a tension between us, because we would go and see their band and they would see ours, there was a healthy kind of competition between us but there was no real, I didn’t feel a snobbery or anything.

The notion of acceptance, where the participants referred to their adolescent learning years as being where they learnt through seeing others play to a standard they wanted to achieve which was how they explained the presence of healthy competition. In respect to stress Luke’s comment that “accepting that sometimes you made a mistake, it was not what you wanted to do, you learn from it” suggested that while they were serious about learning and improving their skills they also came to understand that being “too serious about mistakes” as Luke explained further “could make someone too nervous, and not enjoy playing”.

**Learning from how they viewed music, and musicians.** When the participants were asked what they recalled about their learning environment in terms of musical influences, even though the eras crossed three decades, their answers were similar. Dean’s response is a typical example when he reflected that

> because it was the 70s, the best time for music where the bands weren’t writing to appeal to a demographic … bands were going ‘I like this sort of thing, what do you
reckon?’. You had everything from Led Zeppelin to the Carpenters to Disco, it was really a great time, it was creative, it was fuelled by creativity as opposed to let’s have a hit record … I mean people still were having hit records, but that wasn’t really the motive … it was eclectic. So, on any given night [at a venue] there would be three or four bands and you would go from some experimental jazz outfit … to progressive Rock.

Highlighted is the acknowledgement that they were exposed to and learning from a wide range of music genres. In seeing the creativity, as Dean mentioned, participants began to connect a song with an influence as Marc recalled,

I was excited by what was going on, contemporarily wise … see the good thing about the Stones is you’d hear the Stones version of a song and then you go ‘but that’s actually this other song, the original’ I was always interested in hearing the original …that’s King B by the Stones, that’s Slim Harpo, man that’s so good, and suddenly I am buying Slim Harpo albums.

In explaining how musicians were viewed as individuals, on a personal level, Tyrone’s comment highlights a sense of cultural influence assumed in being a musician when he said

There were things about musicians that I found very appealing … they were doing something that was rebellious, against the norm … something positive that was rebellious … never an inclination to do something rebellious that was destructive, or that would get you into trouble, but to do something rebellious against the sort of normalcy.

What Tyrone saw as “rebellious, against the norm” was not only within their music through song lyrics, but also in the lifestyle of a musician. While their desire to pursue music was mainly about music itself, comments such as Tyrone’s suggest they were also influenced by their understanding of what constituted a musician’s life, taken as being against the mainstream view of a working life. While all participants said they spent periods of time in their late adolescence into early twenties in a full-time job outside of music, taken until they found enough consistent work with a band, or the band became well-known. This raised the question of whether their aim was to achieve a full-time working life as a musician, to which participants said they did hope they could accomplish that but did not actually have a set plan to achieve it. Typically, it happened through just taking any work offered and focusing on doing the best they could with it and being pragmatic. Meaning that if offered work by bands who were working more often they would take the offer, seeing it as practical and not personal regarding other band members.
3. Early adult to current career stage

Learning from being in different bands

Being in their first band was where they “started to knock off the rough edges” as Liam recounted because they were “still young, and trying to learn whatever you could” (Marc). When that band ended eight participants described learning from being in a series of different bands. This is when they are in their mid to late adolescence; the other two participants were in their twenties when they began working with different bands. Typically, their first band played as a support band, for smaller local events such as dances, school concerts and lunch time performances. When that first band ended they were invited into either multiple bands at the same time or a series of bands. Commonalities found regarding what they were learning are succinctly expressed by Frank when he said

you learn to pay attention, to play your part but to really listen to what the whole band is doing, I mean the rhythms and beats, the habits of each member and of course you had to learn the songs.

In explaining his experiences further Frank said he was having to learn and adjust quickly, realising the band’s singer could change how she sang a song, or the order of songs in the set list and “unless you understand the music, the beat and rhythm of the music style and what it is, really it’s about being able to improvise until you get what is going on”. Having to fit into different bands, musically and personally, through observing and listening was experienced with more frequency; crucial to entering into a full-time music career. In addition, as Jerry explained, “you learn from just doing it, consistent experience, you are building up a reputation being in different bands, spending time just playing and getting better, different songs, different musicians and different audiences”. In referring to having taken what he had learnt from earlier band performance experience, Tyrone’s recollection that “you’ve got to think quickly on stage, this is one thing I had already learnt, you have to respond to whatever occurs because you don’t know what will happen … like a guitar string breaks just before someone’s solo” typifies another commonality found in learning descriptions where they learnt to be prepared for unexpected occurrences.

Learning what success means. Each participant is, or has been, in a well-known band that achieved financial success, as well as being recognised as having contributed to Australia’s music culture. A noted commonality was their attitude towards what success means, which Dean’s comment reflects when he says
no one ever told me, I learnt that … I had met people who were famous once but maybe weren’t any more … some would be really bitter … and others that see it as, well that was then and this is now … so, I had what I would call a realistic look at what is success or fame … number one it is very fleeting and another is you were made to be there, had [record company] not been interested we wouldn’t have been signed so we wouldn’t have had those TV Shows, we wouldn’t have had the radio play, we wouldn’t have had all we did.

For Dean, he had learnt through observing and experiencing success in bands during adolescence, although for other participants as Jerry’s reflection highlights it came through also experiencing

the down side of it is, of course, you just have to take, to forget about the income and just enjoy the experience … it was TV performances, live radio, it was working 300 shows a year, it was making records … being overseas … thinking that it would never end and then reality crashed in and it did end.

Participants expressed an early career understanding of success; it meant being able to perform consistently, typically working in multiple bands at a local and interstate level, which could provide a gainful income. Their experiences of being in a successful band at a national and international level highlight learning regarding their own personal choices concerning career and integrity as a musician. For example, Wayne described

I don’t regret it, we had a great and amazing sort of decade of being a young guy travelling the world having gold records, filling rooms … but that wore off, musically it just wasn’t enough … I just wanted to be a song writer … play my own things.

Luke described being in a band where “it got to the stage I was a bit over touring, because of the screaming girls, it didn’t really matter what you played to them on stage … the kids were drowning your sound out”. While they were experiencing success, and as Luke later said, he recognised it was “helping my career, I was becoming known”, suggest in this is learning about their own sense of integrity as a musician. In these examples both Wayne and Luke said they did not feel their own music was being expressed, which outweighed their band’s attainment of success.

When success creates problems. While Julie’s experience has differences to the other participant recollections, it introduced the notion that learning from success could be from unexpectedly negative experiences. In having an early adult career that included being an actress, Julie related how her musicianship and song writing were initially less recognised.
because of her acting success. This presented difficulties when she created shows that were considered art-house, and alternative, saying

I struggled still with ‘but you are [name]’ from [Film and Television shows] so there was this internal kind of thing that really hindered me, there was an idea out there about what and who I was and when I played it was different to that, so that was really difficult.

In another example, Marc recollected how he felt about his early career success and subsequent experience of going from a locally known musician to international success when he says

if I ever mentor anybody I would try to explain how fame can change you, how it can really affect your mind, you know you are along for the ride and everything but you don’t realise, because you have led a sheltered life without that spotlight on you … not the spotlight on stage but the spotlight everywhere, and everyone patting you on the back all the time … you don’t think it is going to but it does, and so I was a bit strung out at the end of it.

The point raised in these two quotes draws attention to the participants' experiences of success as potential inhibitors, where public perceptions created a persona and consequential expectations. Those expectations were said to frame and confine their sense of personal agency, requiring them to find ways of negotiating their careers towards a balance.

**Success and seasoned musicians.** While not all participants conveyed success as having the same level of negative consequence there was a noted consistent development of emotional detachment towards success; one found through exposure to the attitudinal norms of “seasoned professional musicians, you get this shift to everything being far more polished and organised” (Luke). In these settings the working relationship attitudes between musicians were collegial, respectful of each other’s talents and accomplishments, and encouraging of younger musicians. It was “always about the music, you don’t play all over someone, or try to make it about you” (Liam) even if you are well-known. This source of learning presented as one acquired through the gradual progress made throughout their career, one where exposure to working with a wide variety of musicians; from different cultures, working experiences and across genres. It was expressed as being both confident in what they did know, accepting of learning something new, and a solid sense of how to behave personally and professionally as a musician; it was not about acting like a “rock start” (Dean) it was about being yourself, and ensuring that ‘self’ was professional.

**Learning from other musicians in adult career stages**
Learning from other musicians, as the previous findings have outlined, was a consistent source of learning. It was an accessible and situation driven component, one inherent within the nature of music making and performance. What was learnt within their previous career stages, particularly during adolescence, was through a knitting together of one’s own knowledge, skill and experiences with that of other musicians who were also still learning, or had more experience. As such, it was not about simply imitating or accepting without experientially processing; it was about learning how to discern and make choices through considering what they had learnt, either experientially or directly. There were particular references to learning from other musicians in later adult career stages, ones that highlight the myriad of contexts and sense of it being an accepted part of their everyday working life. The first came from a line of enquiry focused on whether there was, or had been, a point in their careers where the sense of continued learning, or openness to learning, ceased or reduced. In response to this, they expressed the notion as Julie said, “you never stop learning, some learn from you and you learn from others”. It was an assumption that in referring to learning from other musicians, in this later career stage, that it meant those who were within their level of musicianship, although this was not correct. For example, Dean’s comment exemplified learning from younger musicians when he said

there’s been plenty of younger musicians that I’ve worked with that have shown me plenty … they don’t have the same experience as I do, they listened to different music growing up… there is a naivety, they have a different approach and I can always get something from that, learn something new … because I’ve been doing this for so long I know every chord every sound and it’s a bit of a drawback, but when you play with someone who doesn’t, they come at it differently and you learn from that.

Experiences of learning from younger musicians were identified in nine of the ten participant recollections, as Dean’s example highlights they did not see their own career success status as inhibiting them, in an ego sense, from further learning.

Continued learning was also expressed as coming from either working with song writers or bands where their style of music “didn’t adhere to the rules, which are really based on what has been done in songs already, or on classical music ideas of music” as Wayne commented. Martin’s observation illustrates this when he said

every time you play with a different bunch of musicians and you get into it, it’s a big learning curve … I learnt about maybe playing odd metered stuff, some did really weird time signature stuff … and then from that learning more about pop music with a song writer.
The participants also referred to learning from other musicians in the sense of entering a band and learning from the other musicians how to play within a different style of music, essentially transferring their skills and knowledge to a different way of playing. Frank explained this as

My experience had been with Blues artists, but traditional Blues … it was clean guitar sounds … I then worked with an agency where I played in like a seminal Australian Rock band, so from playing with them I learnt about more rock guitar playing, they played loud and distorted sounds … it wasn’t my style of music, but I was happy to play because they were a lot of fun.

In Frank’s recollection he said the other musicians did specifically help him to learn through direct instruction and playing together. The other participants mentioned their learning was through observing how the other musicians played, either applying what they already knew or suspending it to learn a different approach to playing, talking with them and listening to records of that style of music. Noted in Frank’s recollection is the notion of learning in an enjoyable environment, with musicians who they saw as “a lot of fun”, even when the style of music they were learning was not their personal choice.

**Music Business, learning in adult career stages**

In early adult career stages, during their twenties, participants described experiences where they learnt aspects of the business side of a band, or the music industry generally, from an older and more experienced perspective. During adolescence they were developing skills, gaining experience and were limited in their capacity to secure better financial and career progressive deals with managers, record labels, agents and venue owners. This was due to either their lack of knowledge or their band was not yet successful enough. Two general themes emerged, first they learnt through taking notice of what different people did in their support roles, from agents to managers and record producers. Second, they were learning through difficult and negative experiences, where a band’s future success could be blocked by mismanagement or unscrupulous agents and venue owners.

**Learning through taking notice.** Nine participants referred to learning from observing what promoters, booking agents and managers had been doing. Luke’s description is an example of how they chose to use their observations when he said,

When we formed the band, we realised that you don’t really need an agency, you just need to be a good operator, you need to go to a pub and say we can fill this pub up, give us a few weeks. We’ll take guarantee and the door, and if the pub is not doing anything on that night they have nothing to lose. So, they take us on, it takes off and
then the pub owner knows others, so they have a spare night … we do the same deal, we had [band member name] who was good, he loved chatting to people, so he became our Booker, and [musician name] he did the accounts … we all did something.

This example shows not only the use of their acquired knowledge of music business practices but also how each band member sought to utilise other non-music playing skills within their band.

**They saw us coming: unscrupulous dealings.** Eight of the ten participants recalled at least one experience where their band, or themselves as an individual musician, were treated negatively by a promoter, manager, agent or record company. Marc, Jerry, Dean and Luke all commented that they knew “everyone was still learning, the record companies, and the radio stations” as Marc said, because at that time in Australia the music industry was still developing. Consequentially, as Marc’s experience typifies, their negative experiences could have caused them to not continue working as a musician when he explains,

we got ripped off, we didn’t get paid, we got robbed, all kinds of stuff happened, we couldn’t go back and try to heavy a promoter, you know, they were all thugs and you just had to wear it … and the [record company] deal we weren’t too happy with the way that went, they were like big players and they wanted to get bigger and they just made these decisions that we found out about later … so that’s one of the reasons [band name] didn’t last as long as maybe it ought to have … we kind of got traumatised by it all, the crap that was going on with them.

The eight participants said they dealt with these negative experiences by learning to be more discerning with who they trusted, and became more involved in how they, or their band, were being managed. Participants were asked if, consequently, they had contemplated not continuing their pursuit of a future in music. The experiences did not stop their interest, participants said it was not uncommon and therefore taken as being something they had to be aware of and learn from.

**Music business as shared knowledge.** Learning music business management from talking with either peer or older musicians was typically, as Dean’s explained,

[Musician name] had a different experience than mine so he was a little bit more wary, a bit more worldly about the industry side, the managers and labels and all that sort of thing so I learnt a lot from that and we would talk a lot about different things about that.
Dean later described, which was a commonly expressed experience across all participants, how he took this knowledge into a band he formed which became successful, retelling how we were actually treating it as much like a business … we had a game plan, we had everyone putting their bit in from what they knew, if we didn’t know something someone else would … we’d sit down and discuss things like what sorts of posters should we do for this tour, what tour to do, what gigs should we do, should we have an opening act … you realised you were part of maybe a music community or something, people who loved music and knew something that helped …it was a team, that was what was really great.

In Luke’s description is an example of how participants applied what they had learnt from observing how bands were marketed by record companies, and used that to self-promote their band when he said he

thought to [himself] okay, let’s not do any record deals … we cut our own album and did our own promotion … like saying to a venue we’ll do a night and take a door deal and build up the audience, which we did quite quickly … then I ordered more records cut before we needed them, just to make it look like we were selling a lot … and then we had all these record companies calling us.

These experiences collectively highlighted how they had been taking in, absorbing, “anything to do with music management” (Tyrone), which included taking notice of what managers, agents and promoters had been doing. In Frank commenting that “so many musicians didn’t even know what was in their contract ... but I did so I picked up what I could learn from everybody” he drew attention to the participant’s active interest in the management of their careers, reflecting intent to become responsible for the career they were creating. In this sense it became evident the perspective was not about someone else, such as a manager, being solely responsible; as an adult professional musician they were seeing their music future as one driven by their own efforts, musically and personally.

**Change and technology in adult career stages**

The question of how participants dealt with change arose from observing how frequently they referred to changes occurring within their working life, and environment. Working life changes were in respect to band members leaving, entering a new band, playing within a new style or genre of music, sudden cancellations of booked performances, and being given work at short notice. Environmental changes referred to physical, emotional and situational contexts where, for example, they were suddenly playing to a large audience, performing in foreign countries, dealing with becoming publicly known or suddenly working with a well-
known band at a higher professional level. Changes occurring were either instigated by participant, or they were responding to a change in their work life or environment.

In respect to working life change, responses reflected earlier learning from adolescent years; from experiencing a sudden or difficult situation that in response caused them to develop an attitude of being prepared and accepting that changes happen, and things go wrong. The notion of being prepared was not only in a practical sense; it was also linked to participant being capable of making a change that could be personally or emotionally difficult. This is drawn from comments such as Luke’s when he described learning to remove a person from a band when he said:

There was this guy, he was a virtuoso guitarist, but I found out that he just wasn’t getting along with the band. I thought, you know what, if you’ve got a bad apple, doesn’t matter how juicy it was when it went in there if it’s going bad get rid of the apple because it’s just going to make all the other apples bad. So basically, just get rid of your bad apples as soon as you can. That came from experiencing people in bands over time.

In the sense of instigating change from observing a situation happening in a workplace context Luke again exemplifies participant sentiment when he explained:

You leave the bands for different reasons, normally band members they either get a girlfriend or they don’t get along with someone else in the band. Once I start seeing holes in that sort of thing I kind of think, you could stick around and be with a sinking ship, or you can jump off and swim to another ship that is about to take off or is being built, you see potential.

In these examples participants referred to learning through experience that reflected both a practical learning and an attitudinal learning. In the practical learning sense they had experienced situations where changes occurred that caused them difficulties. Examples of this were changes to work planned on both a financial and personal level; equipment failure; and giving work to another musician to substitute for them and they lose that gig. The attitudinal learning experiences came from situations where they did become emotional, or made decisions they later regretted, and in time said they could see how their stress caused them problems. In summation, participants expressed the notion as Marc said, “you just have to wear it, to accept what happens and keep going” and Frank when he said, “I’d been stressing about work and came to realise that it always worked out, whatever happened”. Their sentiments reflected a common opinion that to be able to continue as a professional musician
experience had taught them to maintain a degree of detachment, where, as Tyrone said, “you get your ego out of the way, it’s not about you personally”.

Closely linked to change is the theme of challenge; presented as an attitudinal approach. In one sense challenges were positively engaged with and became a source of learning. For example, Julie referred directly to initiating music projects as a challenge to test her creative boundaries, where she sought to establish herself within a niche style of music. Tyrone referred to being challenged when learning new songs, or genres of music. Jerry mentioned being challenged by his manner of working with music, as he said, “I have a music dumbness, I don’t know about the theory, but I know what I can do with music” which meant he “had to always find something interesting, challenge myself to find it”. Wayne reflected that he always “liked to take on new challenges, do new things”. In this sense the challenges were positive and related to learning through creative engagement with music, which all participants referred to specifically.

In another sense, the notion of negative experiences being a challenge was also found primarily regarding confidence. For some there was a link between consequences of band management and confidence. Marc described early career experiences where he was “crippled” by the outcome of management decisions as did Luke and Wayne. While not expressed as significantly, seven participants referred to experiences of being affected by a lack of clear management or mismanagement. These participants recalled having worked with their band to develop a level of success, and through management decisions the band either did not take progressive opportunities offered, or unfair financial contracts prohibited them from attaining reasonable financial profits. When asked whether they had learnt anything from these experiences Marc’s response typifies their attitude when he said, “It took time to recover, but you just make sure it doesn’t happen again”. The possibility that these experiences could have caused them to disengage with their music career was raised, their responses reflected an attitude of resilience. For example, Luke said “we could have gone overseas with [band name], we were ahead of our time … but it did give me a higher profile, you get known by a different level of musician, and I got work from that”.

Liam, Jerry and Martin, either in their early adult or later career stages, described experiencing being challenged by a different reason for periodic testing of their confidence. For example, Martin said “you had times where you wondered if you should be there” and Liam mentioned “even now I still get anxious, am I going to be good enough, give a good show”. In a general sense, this reflected a stage in their development of self-confidence, where by their late twenties they could engage with unexpected or difficult situations in their
working lives with discernible self-efficacy. This is based on responses to direct questions regarding how they learnt to cope with change, unexpected situations and difficulties. While each participant described coping with negative challenges in a different way, they did have commonalities of drawing on support from other band members, being realistic and pragmatic as well as acceptance, as Tyrone said, “you learn that things just work out, often in ways you don’t expect”.

**Adult career: Learning the terminology** References to learning terminology were made in respect to knowledge of how to communicate practical needs, such as Wayne’s response when he explained

> Like, there is feedback in the monitors’, I guess you pick up that language, like ‘look there is a top end squeal in my monitor when I hit that note’…so you learn how to discuss the practicalities of being there, putting on the show… you know ‘the DI box is naffed’ or ‘it’s not the tuner, if it’s not the DI box it might be’ you know that kind of language.

The participants also answered this question with an explanation of learning terminology in a music reading sense such as Tyrone’s comment

> Then you get some who know, or have been able to translate, ‘that is the G6’ and they could tell the difference … some go into the technical side, for whatever reason, so there is a lot of co-support because only one needs to read the music because then the rest will pick it up from that … even in really good bands there are cases of no one being able to read music.

Expanding on this Tyrone explained further that

> I didn’t know the names of the chords I was playing, and I’d been playing in bands for 14 years at this point and professionally for 8 years … I knew the ‘cowboy chords, you know the simplest chords, but anything with a bit of a twist to it I knew how it sounded and I knew where to use it appropriately, but I didn’t know its name. It was just ‘that shape’ or ‘this shape’ the chords on the fret board I would see as shapes … so my chordal understanding was how they sounded and the shape but not its name … I ended up learning them, and that was good, but it hadn’t stopped me from being a professional musician.

The participant’s responses to the question of learning terminology showed they were learning, as both Wayne and Tyrone explained, from late adolescence to late twenties, in a manner that was typically as Julie mentioned “I learnt it on the way, on the fly”. Descriptions of this learning were framed by the notion that they learnt as the information was needed, and
was not something specifically sought out, but was a consequence of being in music related work contexts. As Wayne mentioned, the terminology was acquired through observing how others communicated, and became necessary in a practical sense. The working environments where this learning typically took place were in situations such as; with musicians they had not worked with before; a mixture of formal and self-taught musicians; in recording studios; with a band that had a large support crew; or they performed in a manner and location that was new to them such as a theatre or Television show.

**Computer based music hardware and software.** The main sentiment expressed when asked how they had approached, and learnt, from changes in technology as it related to their music working life was that a “[self-taught musician] absorbs the new into what they have already existing in their knowledge and sensibilities of music” (Tyrone). Referring to having an “inner library of knowledge” that had been “built up from your own process of learning”, Tyrone’s comments drew attention to a commonality found across all participant responses. They were describing embracing technological changes with the attitude of taking their existing knowledge base and enhancing it, through self-directed learning of that new technology. For example, Liam illustrates this when he explained

> it was the late 80s and I started to get a lot of projects where I was writing music for documentaries … when the musicians I liked to use for recording started to be too busy and were not available, that was when music was becoming computer based … the early Fairlights were out, and I said I am going to learn this so I bought myself an ASR10 sampling keyboard, an Atari computer, a Wave station module and a 688 tracker recorder on cassette … it was a big learning curve, but I just learnt it … I had a friend who was really good at Que Base and another that was good at sampling, had stickers on everything, I had idiot sheets on how to do it and I started to compose music with it … now all of that, a whole studio, is in here [indicates the equipment].

Liam’s comments highlight participant engagement with technological changes, such as early forms of computer hardware and software, as being primarily due to practical considerations. For example, due to not being able to use the musicians he liked for recording documentary music, Liam sought a practical solution which did not restrict him from completing commissioned compositions on time. Other participants expressed the practical aspect as being more contextual, meaning they encountered it within their work environment, such as Frank when he said

> So now you are learning a whole lot of new things, because that’s when Fairlights came out… so now we are in the recording studio, we are working a lot with
Fairlights, and programming sounds and sequencing, it was the age of all that stuff … we were learning by doing it ourselves … I would want it to go (imitates the music) but how do you do that, then someone else would go ‘oh yeah, we just do this sequence and hook that up’ … so you learn it that way.

Common to all descriptions was the inclusion of at least one other person from whom participants learnt, there was someone in their network who already knew how to use the new technology. It was described as learning over time through either direct instruction, or watching how someone used the technology. Noted also were references to taking their existing music knowledge and assimilating it with the music possibilities presented through the new technology. Dean’s following remark is both an example and raises a frequently expressed point; while the new technology could offer sound effects and sequencing which expanded their notion of possibilities within music, like the other participants, he felt it could limit you, it can be a very narrow road, using the effects, I realised later that returning to actually playing the guitar, where they wanted it to sound like one, brought me back to the basics … so I learnt from that, now I know it again from another perspective.

Dean’s point highlighted the learning of new music based computer technologies had been for practical and creative reasons, yet the experience also taught them to re-appreciate playing music with the actual instruments, as opposed digitally produced sounds. Reflecting on this point in the second interview, Dean commented that it was about your relationship with the technology and the instruments you perform with, something new comes along and you embrace it, take it a distance, explore it, then bring it back in to what you knew before … how do you make just the basics work in that song without all the effects.

There was an additional aspect raised by participants which links back to Tyrone’s comment regarding having “an inner library”, where they acknowledged not being adept with computer based music hardware and software, but as Frank said, “if you know how you want something to sound you can [tell them]”. This point highlighted as Tyrone later discussed “others seem to go to the technology without that inner music library … and in that absence the musical relationship is directed and dictated by that technology … for them it’s the technology that has the music”.

**On being a professional musician**

**Personal temperament.** As participants either recalled experiences of being in different work situations or responded to a direct question about what professionalism as a
musician meant, they consistently referred to learning about temperament. In a general sense this referred to learning that being a musician meant, typically, working in a band which was essentially a team within which they needed to maintain amicable working and social relationships. Frank’s explanation offers an overview of how this was framed when he said, you find a middle road where you develop a level of professionalism in the sense that you can work with others and … you keep things professional to make it all work … the reality is that at a working level, like what I do now is about 90 percent travelling with 10 percent playing, so the majority of the gig is that … a lot about being a professional touring musician, the professionalism on stage is a given, but a big part of it is the rest of that touring time … because that is going to dictate how you get along with them on stage … not always but often enough.

Another aspect participants mentioned highlighted learning that personal temperament was often a deciding factor in being invited to join a band, or auditioning for one, as Frank also explained “look it doesn’t matter whether you are good or not, but could they work with you … there is a lot of that”. When asked how they had learnt, or become aware of this factor, participants explained it was through experiencing being in bands where, as Tyrone clarified, someone wasn’t able to “get along with people”. In expanding on his response Tyrone explained

In the beginning everyone is on their best behaviour, it’s not until you are put under any sort of pressure that you see how people will react. You really don’t know until you experience that … and then you find some not asked back because of that behaviour … you have to be able to work as a team.

Descriptions of situations where they had seen how another person’s behaviour could end a musician’s career potential were, as Luke described, “you know people who are excellent musicians but because they are abrasive and rubbed people the wrong way” they no longer find work as a professional musician.

Linked to their discussion regarding professional working standards and temperament were comments associated with specific learning experiences, such as Liam’s when he recalled

I got this musician to work on a show project, gave him months to prepare, and when it came to rehearsals he didn’t know the songs, he said he was going to just play what he thought fitted … you can’t do a show like that, people are paying a lot to come and see you … so it’s about learning to research the musician thoroughly, it’s horrible when you find out and it doesn’t work.
Positive learning experiences regarding temperament were also recalled, where in their early adult career the participants described working with one or more who “were excellent musicians and gentlemen, that taught me a lot, just a higher level of professionalism” as Luke recalled. Martin, Dean, Liam and Tyrone all specifically recalled experiences where, having joined a band that was already well-known and successful, they “found everything was different, like a family, a bit cliché but true. You were treated well, everyone talked to you, no one was aloof, there were no egos, just everyone getting along” as Martin explained. In the sense of learning to be aware of how they behaved, as Dean commented “in that kind of set up, where everyone just gets along professionally, any selfish or bad behaviour really stands out” and “word about that gets around quickly” which means “you get less work or none at all”.

**Attitude to learning music.** Reflecting on his learning as an adolescent Marc’s summation typifies how participants generally described their attitude to self-taught learning when he says,

> What’s happening is that if you’ve got any talent you are learning very quickly, when you are in your teens it’s very important because you are like a big sponge, you are just soaking up stuff, you learn … because you are enthusiastic about it, you’re not sitting at home waiting for things to happen, you’re making them happen … and by doing, learning by doing it, because we were playing regularly, we were all going to school, we were only allowed to play on the weekends … actually the band’s average age was about 15, our youngest was 13 and we were the youngest R&B band around.

Participants emphasised the point that their learning was based on enthusiasm, but also, and most importantly, the notion of learning by doing. In this they were referring to “any chance to play, you gravitate to people who are similar” as Tyrone said, and even though “we only knew enough to play a few songs at the dance, it was good enough” as Frank recalled and enabled them to start learning through live performance. In a comment regarding his approach to learning through experience Tyrone offers another example of participant attitudes to learning when he says,

> it’s all character building, even as simple things like you have the worst flu, your head is about to explode, and your ears are blocked, but the show must go on … I think that is one of the saving graces that you learn from this business, because there just isn’t room to go ‘oh, I really don’t feel like it tonight, I really don’t feel
like getting up on stage’. No, that’s not an option.

The notion of learning from experience, as Marc and Tyrone’s comments outline, referred to the active seeking out of engagements that would provide progressive learning. This distinction was noted when comparing how participants described their adolescent learning. Jerry’s comment offers a succinct example when he referred to “all the practising wasn’t going to get me anywhere if it didn’t fit into anything, I couldn’t progress unless it did”. The point raised in Tyrone’s comment highlights their sense of progressive experiential learning, where personal work ethics were formed through encountering difficult situations. The notion of “character building” suggests learning on a personal level, highlighting a commonly expressed reflection that they developed a strong sense of self-discipline they linked to notions of musicianship.

Concluding summary of findings

Presented in these findings are the sources of learning, as identified in the participants’ learning biographies, from earliest memories of music through to their current career stage. Through including the years prior to learning an instrument, insights have been gained into some of the participants’ early formative influences and sources of learning. Whilst each participant cited having felt a natural inclination towards music from as young as pre-school years, the music activities present in their home from parents or older siblings created an environment in which they felt able to freely explore and experience music in their own way. Sources of learning in the phase prior to learning to play an instrument started with hearing music a parent or older sibling chose through their personal enjoyment of music, from this the participants came to admire and appreciate music being enjoyed for its own sake. It was this sense of value for music, and the enthusiasm a family member showed, that conveyed inspiration to the participant as a child. In families where a parent or older sibling played an instrument or sang, the participants were able to make a connection between music heard on records or radio with seeing someone actually play an instrument or singing. As they entered primary school their interest in music gradually increased, citing spending hours listening to records in which they learnt to recognise the rhythms, melodies and patterns within songs and genres. This insight into music was recalled as something they came to recognise on their own, as opposed to it being taught to them, and through such learning they felt motivated to learn to play an instrument themselves. Additionally, the music they were listening to was not only contemporary but often from lesser known, or previous era genres such as Blues and older Country styles. The sharing of music through listening with others, and talking about
music began to occur in mid to late primary school years where typically an older sibling or a friend’s older sibling was present, which allowed for learning from peers and more musically literate older adolescents.

From when the participants initiated their own choice to pursue music, and intent to learn to play an instrument, the sources of learning increased where previous family influences became sources of learning. This is because these influences were drawn on when engaging with others in active music learning. At this stage, sources of learning they were exposed to, or actively sought out, were connected to playing with others through jamming, band rehearsals and live performance. Equal time was spent alone learning their instrument and new songs, as well as playing with others. Performing with a band during adolescence was cited as their most significant learning phase because they were performing regularly. The participants were, then, exposed to more experience, a wider network of other musicians and learnt early understandings of music industry workplace sensibilities. It was noted that sources of learning were experienced as individual learning and group learning in this early phase which appeared to continue into adult career stages. The participants stated their music learning, and use of sources of learning, developed gradually and in an ‘as needed’ approach where new knowledge and skills were often acquired through opportunity, or need arising from live performance experiences. There is also noted a cyclic pattern of returning to previous sources of learning where they matured their understanding through, as they said, finding something new in a resource (typically a song they already knew).

Table 7. Findings summary tables
The following tables summarise the findings in each theme or commonality they further describe and explain how the sources of learning contributed to the participants’ music learning biography.

Summary: Mother’s music at home findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s music at home</td>
<td>- Emerging awareness of music, different music styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Immersion in music through consistent music playing at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Her choice in music early influence – musical memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Having her own record collection impressed music appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Realising music was valued in their family, more than average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary: Father’s music at home findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Learning</th>
<th>Commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father’s music at home</td>
<td>- Greater influence from his playing of records, and having a record collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Used some of his records to learn to play instrument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary: Parent’s music events findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Learning content commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home entertaining</strong></td>
<td>- Connection between music and social engagement in a familiar and trusted location, the family home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Brought music out of just their family and into shared enjoyment with family friends, and extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Exciting and enjoyable experiences, loud music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reinforcement for, and of, their early interest in music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Engagement</strong></td>
<td>- Admired parent’s involvement, their musical talent set a standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Began to form a more serious attitude towards learning music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Positive feedback and encouragement inspiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It introduced them to engaging with a music group outside family, or their friends at that time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Summary: Mother singing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Learning content commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mother singing     | - Admiration for her singing ability and talent  
|                    | - Indirect influence from her active engagement in learning songs, exploring music and challenging themselves - learning sensibility.  
|                    | - Connected singing with enjoyment, learnt harmonise |

### Summary: Father singing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Father singing     | - Enjoyment in listening to, and joining in with his singing  
|                    | - Admired father’s talent and enjoyment of singing  
|                    | - The fact that he sang was, reinforcement for their own singing  
|                    | - Admired father’s creativity, ability to compose lyrics  
|                    | - Admired that he was self-taught |

### Summary: Parent playing an instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Parent playing an instrument | - From time spent with their parent who played musical instruments the participants absorbed, or picked up, basic understandings of music.  
|                    | - The parents were admired for their musical talent, so comments and praise were a significant influence.  
|                    | - Parents showed enthusiasm in playing music, and they were seen as being accomplished, which was described as being a foundational influence in valuing music, and musical talent. |

### Summary: Siblings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| One sibling more influential | - Admired older sibling’s interest, self-taught learning and ability  
|                    | - Sought to emulate, observing what they did |
| Choice of music     | - Drawn to the music older sibling listened to, it was exciting, connected them to older sibling  
|                    | - Their choice was a specific genre of music  
|                    | - Sought to become included in older sibling’s peer group through showing interest in their music choice  
|                    | - Soon developed own appreciation for the music  
|                    | - Used this music to learn to play an instrument  
|                    | - Advantaged by having learnt current popular music, helped them to join bands performing regularly  
|                    | - Older sibling’s music choice ahead of local music scene, sourced music from international bands, and unknown artists  
|                    | - Admired and was encouraged by older sibling playing in a band, and being exposed to their peer group musician friends |
### Sharing their interest

- Gradual learning through sharing interest, engagement
- Access to sibling’s records, song books, instruments, music magazines
- Shared knowledge through listening to records and talking
- Some sharing of how to play an instrument
- Trusted and admired sibling because they were in a band, and their choice of music was considered ‘cool’ and popular
- Played in a band with older sibling from periodically to joining the band

### Summary: Initiating own interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Learning</th>
<th>Description of commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Radio - local stations, regional stations**  
- family owned radio, and personal transistor radio | - Hearing the current popular music stations, way of finding out what was popular  
- Chose to explore and find stations that played different music, sought out what sounded enjoyable and interesting to them |
| **Records - record collection of a parent or sibling**  
- Their own records and borrowed records from friends | - Hours spent listening ‘intensely’ with intent to understand what made the song interesting, how a song was composed  
- Used the records to learn to play an instrument  
- Experienced significant moments of excitement, and inspiration in hearing a new song  
- Created their own ‘space’ and formed their own way of relating to the music |

### Summary: Friends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Learning</th>
<th>Commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Older peer groups** | - Learnt from older friends who were either interested in listening to music or played music themselves  
- Felt a sense of acceptance and validation for their interest, and developing knowledge and instrument playing abilities  
- The older brother of a friend provided those without siblings’ access to music, knowledge of and indirect guidance in music taste |
| **Peer Group** | - Tended to gravitate to peers who were also interested in music, more to those who played an instrument  
- Friends supported their interest through sharing records, talking about new bands, and attending live performances with them  
- Typically, they went to school with these friends, where they became known to older students who invited them into bands  
- Music was the dominate form of activity within their friendship group |
Early Networks

- Childhood and adolescent neighbourhood friends would spend time together sharing listening to and playing instruments
- Engage with different experiences through being exposed to different families where music was, and was not, valued
- Through word of mouth local community found new peers who were learning to play an instrument, would ‘jam’ together and some formed bands with them

Summary: Significant memories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of memory</th>
<th>Commonality reflecting sources of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Connection to a music community | - Gradual awareness of being part of a group that connected to a larger community of musicians  
- Provided support, opportunity and reinforcement for their gradual learning of music  
- Early sense of future possibilities in music |
| Sudden inspiration | - Experiencing a moment of sudden awareness, where a connection is made that inspires them, experienced as a personal milestone  
- Realising they could do something, like play a chord, and it felt suddenly exciting as an achievement |
| Self-belief | - Experiencing playing with others where they found they could play adequately, or well, and this grounded their sense of belief that they could learn to play music  
- Often playing with older musicians where they had to ‘keep up’, encouraged them to believe they could learn in that environment |
| Sheer excitement watching a performance | - Inspired through feeling excited watching a performance  
- Using the experience to set a level of musicianship standard  
- Taking what they saw and seeking to emulate it, because they valued that style of performing |
| Creative expression of their own choice | - Feeling inspired from having instigated forming a band, where their own ideas are explored and experienced in live performance work settings  
- Feeling a sense of freedom when creatively working with songs, making changes to suit their band  
- Freedom to creatively explore through trial and error without judgment with peer musician group  
- Sense of happiness in simply playing music, learning with friends and exploring what they could do together |
| Playing for fun to playing live performances | - Experienced as ‘jumping in at the deep end’  
- Becoming more serious about their learning  
- The practical experience providing for growth of confidence and accomplishment  
- Learning what they still had to learn |
Findings: 133

Learning to accept change

- Experiencing changes made within bands such as instruments played, song choices, re-arrangement of songs, teaching them to accept it as a learning experience
- Forming the attitude of learning from change, but incorporating it into their own knowledge base

Summary: Lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Description of commonalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of time attended lessons</td>
<td>- Average age when starting lessons 11 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Average was for 8.5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Parents instigated lessons, thought it would help them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Stopped mainly because they felt it was not teaching them anything they could not learn on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet music</td>
<td>- Five had sheet music in the lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Learnt very basic music reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Did not use sheet music to learn songs on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Did not like learning from sheet music, it inhibited them in their learning because it did not encourage ‘listening’ to the songs or developing ‘an ear’ for music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played records in lesson, teacher accompanied them</td>
<td>- Teacher played records, and they played along, with or without the sheet music, all played song from memory and did not use sheet music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Some teachers would play together with student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Some teachers played in a ‘jamming’ improvisational way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught techniques of playing their instrument</td>
<td>- Four of the six said they learnt some basic techniques of playing their instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Not all teachers taught technique specifically, said it was from observing how they played when playing together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Those who were taught said it was very basic, such as how to strum a guitar, hold a drum stick or hold instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created own notation</td>
<td>- Four of the six developed their own form notation because it made more sense to them than sheet music, was to them practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The other two formed their own notation after ceasing lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- All participants developed their own notation style whether they took lessons or not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary: Learning the songs, learning the instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning by listening</td>
<td>- One approach referred to learning by ear, where they listened to a song, and gradually learnt to play it, figuring out the notes themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Another approach was to listen to song and play in an improvisational style with it, until they could play the song and their own version of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of learning</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Joining first band  | - Stagecraft: how to perform to an audience, to perform live with other musicians on stage  
- Song choice and song arrangement to suit their skill level and band instruments, to separate own choice from that of band  
- How to deal with last minute problems, like equipment failure  
- Learnt how to get along with other musicians, musician group culture, practices  
- Work as a team musically, practically, sharing responsibilities for band management  
- Learning how to compose songs collaboratively  
- Learning quickly – to play new songs, how each band member played so they could 'fit in' musically, higher standard of playing  
- Generally felt it was 'a good pressure', encouraged and inspired them to learn specific things, learn what was needed at that time to perform and continue in the band  
- Generally friendly, they still learnt what professional personal behaviour meant through own experience and observing others.  
- All but one was the youngest in band, learning from older more |
experienced musicians, accepted them as an authority in music and performance knowledge. Accepted ‘being told off’ as how they learnt what not to do

- Felt supported, learning in and as a group who shared experiences they were all learning from each performance and rehearsal
- Learning from a performance – how well they played a song, how well they played with band as a whole, how to read an audience and play to entertain
- Early learning of how a band works as a group, musically and getting along personally
- Challenged by the experience of needing to adjust, and adapt, their assumptions and expectations about what it was like to play in a band, learnt to be practical and realistic

- Typically played as a support band, generally covers, which taught them to develop their skills and knowledge slowly through frequent performing.

### Summary: Finding the Music.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Radio programs** | – Listened to local and national stations that were popular to find what was new in the mainstream music culture  
– Sought out stations playing unsigned and upcoming artists and bands, tended to be regional stations  
– Sought out stations playing music from England and USA |
| **Music and record shops** | – Look for music they heard on the radio  
– Buy ‘cheap bin’ records to try them out, finding music from older genres and artists less known in their location  
– Learnt about different forms of song composition  
– Go alone, or with siblings and friends, sharing the exploration of music experience |
| **Learning from shop staff** | – Ask advice from shop staff on recommended artist/band albums  
– Learnt about music genres from talking with shop staff  
– Learnt some music terminology from talking with shop staff |
| **Album covers** | – Reading information on the back of albums, and inserted material, learnt which musicians played, records producers  
– When included in inserted material, learnt the song lyrics |
| **Record clubs – mail order** | – Some magazines included advertisements for Record Clubs, which were mail order catalogues, bought albums of well-known bands and additional albums of lesser known artists  
– Broadened exposure to new and older music genres |
Summary: Learning environment in first band.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning on their own</td>
<td>- Enjoyable and comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- usually their home</td>
<td>- Interesting and could choose own music to learn from</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Self-paced, did not have anyone telling them they had to practise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Frustrating, it took a long time, but worth the effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Could make mistakes, trial and error without anyone judging them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamming with peers and older musicians</td>
<td>- Enjoying exploring what they could do, as an individual and as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- located in school gymnasium or hall, a local hall, at their home or a friend's home</td>
<td>- Typically, their first experience of playing with someone else</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Unsupervised by an adult</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Felt exciting, included in a group with same music interests, encouraged because they were invited to join in</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Felt it was fun, no pressure, casual but still wanted to try their best</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Started to learn what playing skills they needed to develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Was friendly, a means of getting to know others who were also learning to play music, felt it formed a bond regardless of any differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Early means of becoming known by other musicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing in first band</td>
<td>- Good type of pressure, was exciting but still needed their focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Learnt to listen to those with more experience, seen as authority</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Challenged to fit in musically, understand how others played songs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Coped by accepting any pressure as a learning curve</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adapt from playing causally to being serious, intent to learn more</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adapting to new situations with musicians they did not know yet</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adapting their expectations, takes time to gain skill, their ideas and efforts not always what worked for a song, always learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- To respect the playing of other band members and not take over in a song, learnt how to express musically within how the band was playing the song such as doing a solo part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Generally supportive, if they put the effort in to learn songs, be on time for rehearsals and gigs, and listen to advice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary: Influential school teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Description and learning content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>- Created opportunities for students to experience being in a musical theatre show, a school concert or brought in bands to expose them to new music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Recognised participant as being talented, encouraged them to continue with their interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teacher’s own enthusiastic engagement with music was inspiring, created sense of music being fun and interesting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Summary: Other activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of learning</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| **Band competitions**                   | − Eight participants entered one or more band competitions  
− Learnt how well they played under pressure and from the feedback judges offered  
− Was encouraging as it provided them with learning from competing with a positive attitude  
− From watching the other bands, they acknowledged the higher level of performance, and differences in how they performed  
− Was one way they could start to become known |
| **Making their own recordings**          | − Learnt from hearing how they sounded performing, alone and as a band  
− Learnt to value capturing their jamming sessions and rehearsals, it provided a record of progress and a source for potential song compositions  
− In the process of learning how to record using cassette tapes they developed an understanding of how to prepare, organise and execute recording to produce a demonstration tape that sounded as good as they could achieve. |
| **Attending live performances**         | − Attended as audience member or they had been the support band  
− They did with friends and/or other members of their band  
− Felt inspired by watching bands who they saw as exemplifying a high professional standard in terms of stagecraft, entertaining the audience  
− Seeing a band not discouraged by a small audience, equipment failure or poor venue conditions was taken as guiding them in how to be a professional musician  
− Would observe and learn how other musicians performed, emulating those they liked  
− Felt they could learn something from every band they saw, even if they did not like their style or genre of music  
− Used it as a way to see and hear bands playing different music to their own interest, expanding their awareness of music |
| **Playing on local radio stations**     | − Two participants mentioned playing live on a local radio station when in a band in their adolescence. Both did so regularly for up to two years  
− Learnt the value of developing their 'sound' because on radio the audience cannot see them  
− Felt excited and encouraged by the experience, and indicated they were achieving some progress towards becoming a professional musician  
− It exposed them to a wider audience, resulted in getting better band bookings  
− Exposed them to other local bands they had not heard before, learnt from seeing the different ways they performed, arranged and composed their original songs |
Composing songs

- All compose music, starting from between the ages of 10 to 15.
- Referred to it as a consequence of how they were learning because of listening to many songs
- Learnt from band working with cover songs, changing the arrangement, to suit their skill level and instruments
- Learnt to compose through band 'jamming' together to create the song
- Learnt to work as a team, collaboratively, contributing their instrument part
- Learnt that composing had no rules, it from how it felt

Summary: Progressing through engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description of source of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Being seen by another band| - Through playing in a band they were seen by someone who wanted to form or add another band member  
- Developed the attitude, through experience, that engaging in playing publicly others were able to know you, and what you could do, which meant 'getting known' and possibly working with other bands as well.  
- Some experienced joining a band that was already well-known and finding they had to learn quickly, and cope with playing to a much larger audience and with a higher calibre of musician |
| Recommended               | - While working with one band, someone in the audience could like what you did and recommend you to another band  
- Recording engineers, agents, band managers and crew would notice someone and recommend them for a band, or for work in a recording studio, collaborative song writing or a music project |
| Learning from the experience | - Detachment from their own assumptions and expectations of what it meant to be playing with a particular band and taking it on a realistic and practice level  
- Not being overwhelmed by the experience of playing with well-known musicians, or being over confident because they were invited  
- Letting events take their own course, meaning they learnt not to become stressed |

Summary: The music scene.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonality</th>
<th>Description of commonalities</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Opportunities and competition      | - Music was seen as being part of the social structure of where they lived, there were a lot of live music venues which afforded them both playing and observing opportunities  
- Because there were a lot of bands playing, even at one venue, the musicians understood they had to play what audiences liked and to a high enough standard or the audience would leave to see another band  
- Saw it as healthy competition, bands would go and see each other |
performing which was supportive as well as a learning experience. This was more typical with peer group bands, because they tended to be the support acts.

- Through seeing bands who were more experienced they were learning what standards of performance they wanted to develop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How they viewed music and musicians</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Musicians were seen as working creatively with music, where they were not focused on whether their music was appealing to a certain audience but instead focused on expressing their own song ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There was a wide variety of music in the public domain that was accessible, from Classical, Jazz, Folk and Country music to Rock and Roll, Rock, Soul and Rhythm and Blues. They felt this was positive because it gave them more styles of music they could learn from, therefore more types of bands they could play with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Saw the variety of music played, often at one venue on the same night, meant musicians could develop to a higher standard because of the influence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Their aim to become a full-time musician was about being able to earn a living from something they felt passionate about, although none said they set out a plan to achieve that aim, it happened through taking all chances to work and opportunities offered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Had an initial idea of what a full-time working life as a musician would be like, the experience of it was more time consuming and involved than expected.</td>
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**Summary: Adult career stage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonality</th>
<th>Description of commonality</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| On being self-taught | - Considered the only way contemporary music was learnt, something you had to teach yourself  
- You were 'graded' by peers, the main form of learning was from 'doing it'  
- Saw it as how they developed their own originality  
- Through forming their own understanding of 'the rules' or 'patterns' within music, then seeing there were no rules, felt able to approach playing and composing music without constraint |
| Learning about the music business | - During adolescence they were developing skills, gaining experience and were limited in their capacity to secure better financial and career progressive deals with managers, record labels, agents and venue owners.  
- They learnt through taking notice of what different people did in their support roles, from agents to managers and record producers.  
- They were learning through difficult and negative experiences, where a band’s future success could be blocked by mismanagement or unscrupulous agents and venue owners. Learnt to acknowledge that it can happen, sought to inform themselves so it did not happen again.  
- Predominant source of learning, apart from their own experiences, was from talking to other musicians about their experiences.  
- In early adult career started to apply their observed knowledge of band |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
| Learning from being in a successful band | - Learnt that success was something that could be fleeting, to accept and enjoy it while it lasted and to not assume it would continue  
- Success happened through not only the efforts of the band, but a lot of other support people, therefore it was both a personal and group success.  
- There was a lot more work involved than just performing, the hours and location was different to a regular job but it was still a full-time occupation  
- Learnt to judge for themselves whether to continue with the successful band, as sometimes it was affecting their health, personal relationships, or they wanted to work on a different music project with other musicians  
- Learnt that becoming 'famous' changed your life, from living freely in your daily life to having public and media attention constantly. Had to learn to cope, not to accept all the platitudes and to remain realistic.  
- Tended to form a close group of trusted people, often other musicians. |
| Work ethic and financial security | - Learnt they had to ensure their own financial security because working as a musician could be inconsistent  
- Working in more than one band at a time, instigating creating their own work through forming a band, taking additional freelance work, and having work offered to them through word-of-mouth recommendations.  
- Their source of learning appears to be in recognising their financial stability was linked in a personal sense to their own level of musicianship, and more broadly to their ability to remain actively engaged in new music projects and work opportunities.  
- Expressed that in being professional, they were at times working with music styles they did not like personally, because they wanted to be working and remain actively engaged with music. |
| On being a professional musician | - Temperament: learning that being a musician meant, typically, working in a band and they had to see it as being part of a team within which they needed to maintain amicable working and social relationships  
- Often musicians were invited to join a band based on their personality, and how it may fit in with the existing band members. To accept that and not take it as indicating they were not capable musicians.  
- It did not matter how good you were, it was largely based on whether they could work with you, which in itself taught them to form a basic positive work ethic  
- Learnt from observing how someone’s behaviour could end a musician's career potential.  
- It did not matter how good you were if you behaved in a negative way, being abrasive and arrogant, you were not going to be called on to work with bands.  
- When in a band where everyone worked professionally, any selfish behaviour or negative egos would stand out, and it would become known quickly.  
- Working in positive and professional work environments where 'it was like a family' reinforced and encouraged working within those ethics. |
| **Learning the terminology in adult career stages** | - Would learn terminology and some music theory from other musicians, some were self-taught, and others were formally taught  
- Encountered the learning incidentally, as they were working and talking with support crew  
- In some instances, they asked someone to explain something.  
- Referred to learning terminology as being something they acquired gradually, through 'picking up' how other musicians discussed music.  
- Did not feel their lack of knowledge was inhibiting, tended to already know what they were talking about but used a different way to describe it. |
| **Learning from other musicians** | - Expressed learning as being something they continue to engage with in everything they did, there was always something new they could 'pick up'.  
- Attitude of learning from any other musician, regardless of their age, how they had learnt or whether they had played professionally or not.  
- Understood that other musicians would approach playing music differently, particularly younger musicians who would have been influenced by different music which meant they interpreted songs differently.  
- Expressed an attitude of not being egotistical when it came to learning from other musicians, appears to reflect a cultural attitude within this musician group  
- Frequent mention of learning being more likely within a fun and casual situation, such as in a band rehearsal, jamming and working on composing music. |
| **Dealing with change** | - Working life changes mentioned were in respect to band members leaving, entering a new band, playing within a new style or genre of music, sudden cancellations of booked performances, and being given work at short notice.  
- Environmental changes referred to physical, emotional and situational contexts where, for example, they were suddenly playing to a large audience, performing in foreign countries, dealing with becoming publicly known or suddenly working with a well-known band at a higher professional level  
- Developed the attitude that change can be a positive progression, to not be afraid to initiate change for financial, creative or personal well-being reasons  
- The notion of being prepared was not only in a practical sense, it was also linked to participant being capable of making a change that could be personally or emotionally difficult such as letting a band member go, or leaving a band  
- From experience they learnt that situations, such as bookings, can change at short notice and that plans and offers of work 'are only words' until they actually happen  
- Even though work levels could fluctuate and change quickly, they were generally always working which in later career stages taught them they did not need to feel stress about continuance of future work  
- Challenge: linked to change where they initiated new work to challenge |
themselves creatively. Coped and worked with a change such as a band ending by challenging themselves with learning new songs to work in a different band or creative project such as forming a new band.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- computers</td>
<td>- [Self-taught musicians] absorb the new into what they have already existing in their knowledge and sensibilities of music”. Referring to having an “inner library of knowledge” that had been “built up from your own process of learning”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- recording software</td>
<td>- Embraced technological changes with the attitude of taking their existing knowledge base and enhancing it, through self-directed learning of that new technology. Learnt how to use it through trial and error, watching how someone else used it and spending time acquainting themselves with its uses.</td>
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<td>- Were introduced to new technologies through other musicians, band crew or on their own.</td>
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<td>- Common to all descriptions was the inclusion of at least one other person from whom participants learnt. Referring to taking the basic rudiments which, over time, they developed and learnt how to place that knowledge within existing understandings of music</td>
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<td>- Accepted they would not become 'experts' at using the computers and music software, but they knew enough to be able to work with it, or someone they knew was better acquainted and they worked with them collaboratively</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Saw it as a way to explore new creative possibilities in music</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Embracing quickly the changes in communication caused by mobile phones and the internet enhanced their ability to work collaboratively as they did not need to be in the same place.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mobile phones and the internet meant always being available, learnt to create personal boundaries between work and personal life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Having experienced working with music through use of technology they found it could limit them if they did not also work with music through 'actually playing the instrument' and returning to simpler playing and composing.</td>
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Chapter 5: Discussion

I’d put the record on, I didn’t know what I was doing, I didn’t know how to play guitar but I’d worked out there would be certain notes so I’d put the record on and just sit there and use my ear and work it out (Dean)

The previous chapter presented music sources of learning commonalities and themes as derived from a grounded analysis treatment of the interview data. The two theories, biographical learning and social learning theory, were used as a conceptual backdrop for the research design, defining ‘source of learning’ and drawn on to further interrogate the data. In using this approach the intent was to investigate and uncover what discernable learning sources could be evidenced from within the participants’ own autobiographical music learning narratives. As such, the findings and analysis remain within the context of a participant centred view to hear their music learning journey, without direct reference to the two theories. While each participant’s learning biography was unique in one sense, they also shared many common attributes. It is within these commonalities the sources of learning are now discussed in three sections to align with those of the findings. While attention is drawn in this discussion to considering the sources of learning within the understandings emerging from the recollections, they are to also be read with the theoretical lenses as overarching concepts.

To reiterate, this study is an explorative investigation into the sources of learning a self-taught professional contemporary musician encounters or seeks out and utilises across their music learning biography. Focusing also on learning experiences, learning content and contexts in which their knowledge and skills were acquired. Social learning theory provided the framework in which external sources of learning were positioned, and biographical learning enabled constructs of experiential learning and processing to be framed as internal sources of learning. The contexts of their learning are an area where both theories intersect, and will be viewed relative to the respective theory being addressed.

It is relevant to the reading of this discussion to also restate how a source of learning has been understood in this study, and to present their characteristics as seen emerging from the findings. Read with these understandings, the intent is to offer a further layer of conceptual framing within which the sources of learning discussion can be placed.
Source of learning: understandings and characteristics

A source of learning could be, although not limited to, another person, material resource, situational experience, self-initiated activities as well as direct and indirect exposure to social and cultural norms. Across a lifetime there are numerous sources and potential sources of learning encountered, not all are consciously evident with many left unused or unacknowledged until a later time. In this study, then, to consider something as a source of learning the defining evidence was in whether the participant indicated having used or been influenced by it. Therefore, something became a recognised source of learning within varying degrees of significance if the participant directly referred to it, or made reference to it having been influential at the time or later in life. This is because in describing later adult career working life experiences they made reference to areas of learning within the descriptions; ones that would have required certain practical skills, knowledge, attitudes and understandings.

While the sources of learning are presented as grouped into a general age based progression of similar music related life events, they were not characterised as being separate singular sources or learning events. Their encounters with sources of learning indicated a cumulative characteristic, where each source appeared to have a connection to others through, and because of, their agency within the activities. Essentially, the ability to choose their own way of engaging with, and learning, music shaped how and when they encountered, learnt and used their sources of learning. As the participants navigated their own exploration of music the descriptions reflected influences of previous learning, in a back-and-forth return sense, adding to or finding new meaning.

This cyclic trait in their learning pattern highlighted that it was not solely about what had been learnt, it was characteristically also about how they were using and transforming their knowledge and skills. Significantly, they learnt from each experience what could be used at that time, as these experiences were repeated there was something new or a more detailed understanding was gained. This is taken from frequent references to having learnt from whatever resources they could find or were exposed to at the time, getting an initial understanding, then through subsequent learning sources realising a more complete understanding. This was described as an organic process, situated within the flow of opportunities available to them. For example, music heard in childhood was returned to when first learning to play an instrument, first composing music and also in later adult career composing. Each time, they learnt something different about the music, progressively
encountering a greater depth of understanding about a song or genre. This also highlighted a characteristic where their sources of learning were not contained, or limited, within set boundaries of definition, influence, period in which it occurred or location.

Another characteristic was the continual presence of simultaneous multiple sources which reflects the contexts in which learning took place. Amidst this myriad of music related external learning content their recollections showed a further characteristic, development of discernment in what to choose to follow or learn, indicating an internal source of learning. The capacity to recognise something as a useful source of music learning became a core component of how participants progressed. It is suggested the choice was, in part, based on trust. Specifically, trust in someone they knew who engaged with music, or the advice given by an accepted authority. For eight of the ten participants the known person was a parent, older sibling or relative who actively pursued music through playing an instrument or singing; described as talented and knowledgeable their music opinion was therefore trusted. For the other two it was a parent’s love of music; they were knowledgeable across genres. In addition to there being a trusted person within immediate or extended family, four participants also referred to trusting the opinion of a particular primary or high school teacher. Only one teacher taught music, and one was also a semi-professional musician. These teachers were trusted because of their knowledgeable and enthusiastic love of music, conveyed through instigating school musical concerts and productions, and at school assemblies. Trust, then, was important as a means of connecting their growing interest in music with an external source that exemplified learning possibilities, and reinforced music as a valued self-taught learning pursuit. This was a characteristic in adolescence where trust in an older, more experienced adolescent musician gave direction to their learning. It was also noted in descriptions of adult career experiences where an older more accomplished musician’s opinion, knowledge and skills were a trusted source of further learning.

The second part framing this characteristic was development of trust in their independent thoughts, sense of practicality and experience; self efficacy. This is taken from noting that while reference was made to someone else’s music opinion, or observed music playing, the participants expressed independent thoughts arising from how they understood or experienced that knowledge or activity. For example, in the early learning stages they referred to choosing music because of feeling a connection, a sense of interest and excitement, initially because it was valued by someone they admired. As time was spent exploring that music through “hours and hours of listening” as Tyrone and Jerry said, where
they sought to “understand what it was doing” as Marc mentioned, they not only found their own appreciation but formed a learning trait. It was the process of discerning how to use their sources as applicable to them as learning musicians, and as relevant to the situation it was being applied in. One situation this was evident in arose out of descriptions of being in bands during adolescence. For example, Dean mentioned “I’d try out something, more like how to behave because I’d seen someone doing it and it seemed to work, but it didn’t work for me ... didn’t feel right ... you learn that quickly”. Dean’s example reflected learning to discern, even from someone they admired, what to accept as usable knowledge for themselves.

**Discussion sections**

Introducing each section will be an overview of the relevant learning phase, followed by a thematically organised discussion which further explains each source of learning and places it within the relevant literature. The first section addresses the learning phase up to when the participants received their first instrument, which on average was eight years of age, and is situated primarily within family influences. In the second section learning sources are centred on, and catalysed by, learning to play an instrument and active participation in a wider range of music activities primarily during adolescence. Marked by leaving school, the third section addresses progression into a full-time professional career focusing on experiences within the music industry up to their current career stage.

**Section 1: Early learning phase prior to first instrument**

This first learning phase began within an environment of music immersion, it was present as part of their everyday life; initiated through the music activities of family members. Cited as having been an early opportunity in which exposure to music allowed them to feel their own natural connection, it is a time of direct and indirect influence. From this felt connection a gradual awareness about music grew into an intentional active engagement; one where exploration and self-directed interest progressed motivation to learn to play an instrument. At this time, freedom to explore and gradually uncover learning about music independently was important. It meant they had chosen this interest pursuit, even if it was through admiring a family member’s music knowledge and talent. Such freedom allowed them to seek out music experiences wherever opportunity afforded, limited only by what was accessible. With music resources available through family, local radio stations and primary school friends, this phase is primarily within the context of a home environment; known people in a familiar place.
external sources of learning were situated within the activities of family member’s music activities; playing music at home from records and the radio, home entertaining, singing and playing an instrument all for personal enjoyment. Internal sources of learning are seen as having acquired knowledge through trusted people, being inspired in self-discovery moments and began to form an initial understanding about music.

**Music was always playing**

The home environment as the first context in which music was encountered created a sense of music being a normalcy of everyday life. Although, one of their early realisations in primary school was finding their friend’s homes did not have music playing in the same way, which became a point of reference. This was expressed in phrases such as “I thought everyone had music playing” (Frank) or “It came as a real surprise, some friends’ houses didn’t have music playing” (Martin) which lead to seeing their family valued music highly. This point is made as a way of placing the initial context into perspective; regardless of era, location or socio-cultural factors the playing of music at home regularly did not present as being typical, or particularly common. Therefore the participants’ home environment was, as deduced from their recollections, considered unique in this respect; something they later acknowledged as having valued.

In terms of what was learnt specifically from hearing music played at home, it was the music itself (music genres and styles) and how to appreciate and value music. Exposure to various genres and internalising of music was a foundational early learning because it formed the initial relationship with music they came to further pursue. Its source is identified as being a dynamic between the external music being played and their (stated) natural inclination towards music. This is consistent with studies such as O’Flynn (2006), Finnegan (1989) and Gay (1991) where the connection between music heard in early childhood and a musician’s later music career genres is seen as causally related. In this regard it reflects the notion of musical habitus, as discussed by Rimmer (2006), because as is evidenced in this study the family members’ prior music influences and preferences consequentially become imbued into the participants’ initial immersion in music. This early exposure to music is viewed as common in the learning biography of a person who becomes a professional musician (Gordon, 2003; Forrester & Borthwick-Hunter, 2015). The home environment is considered to be “crucial in early musical development” (McPherson, 2009, p.91) and is where music values are acquired through immersion in music orientated family life. For the participants in
this study music was an integral component, it was something to be freely enjoyed for its own sake, part of daily life.

One difference noted between the findings in this study and the general content of literature on music in early childhood was the notion of intention. While it was typical for choice of music to be that of the parent (ter Bogt, Delsing, van Zalk, Christenson & Meeus, 2011), the reason it was played was to intentionally introduce their music for enhancing early cognitive development and to initiate lessons (Ilari, 2005; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002). The participants in this study referred to music being played in the home solely because it was the interest of their parent, or older sibling, and as a consequence they were hearing it as well. There was no reference to any educational intention, and in only one instance did a parent intentionally introduce music (Luke).

While nine of the ten participants stated there was no direct parental intention to encourage an interest in music, there was an indirect influence; taken from consistent reference to one or both parents loving music. Their descriptions linked becoming aware of how much a family member loved music, the observed enjoyment and genuine interest, with notions of their own music values. Inferring that the values derived from understandings conveyed through this observation became part of their own attitudinal sensibility towards music as a pursuit. Furthering this, Boer & Abubakar (2014) describe families who actively engage with music together in the home as forming family rituals. While not expressed in this study as the family playing music together, per se, but the notion of music as a ritual was present and noted in how participants described the regularity of music activities in the home. From this perception, this ritual, the participants’ subjective interpretation of other family members’ music activity within a context of dedication and enjoyment encouraged the belief that music was something they could also learn; it was not only accessible but attainable.

Music playing in the home was described as being absorbed, and unconsciously accumulated; the participants’ called it musical memories, which as Jäncke (2012) discusses would be a natural outcome of their home environment. This early absorption of music is linked to later active music listening, from passively hearing the music they progressively became more active in their listening. As an external learning source, it was initiated by a family member and contained their music choices; at this time the sense of taste in music was based on how a family member understood and interpreted the songs. Using these initial concepts they describe gradually becoming aware of their independent music appreciation through intentionally engaging with listening to particular songs. In this time prior to
receiving their first instrument, learning about music through this gradual accumulation of understandings from absorption, family and their own sense of what was interesting about the songs created an intimate relationship. Music was described as being something one could enjoy exploring, and in such activity a sense of accomplishment was experienced in self discovery, such as recognising a song’s melody sounded similar to another song without being told.

While knowledge acquisition through self discovery was evidenced it was also, for eight participants, through varying degrees of direct engagement with a family member during childhood. This interaction was initiated by participant, it was occasional, and tended to be listening to music or talking about music in a one-on-one situation. Inferred from descriptions was that as the participant showed interest in music the moments of sharing in listening and talking about music emerged. From these encounters they learnt not only from the parent’s knowledge, but also from their expressed attitude. A parent’s attitude toward music is cited as being a significant influence on a child (Davidson, Howe, Moore, & Sloboda 1996; McPherson, 2009; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Chadwick, 2000). In this study the degree of influence cannot be clearly determined, although based on descriptions emphasising early self-determined engagement with music it appears to have been a formative component.

The participants expressed the view that music was in them naturally, and when placed in their home music environment afforded a means by which the inclination towards music was fostered. This reflects Rice’s (2003) work on early childhood music influences where children who are able to freely engage without intervention from an adult will be more naturally drawn to music. In seeking to determine evidence of how this may have initially manifested, it was found that all participants described engaging with music play in pre-school to mid-primary school years, using toy instruments or singing around the house. This reflects a dynamic between environment and participant in a co-created sense; while many different toys and games could have been played with, they chose the music related ones. Their family had created the music environment, but the participants chose to freely engage with music in “a natural way” as Wayne reflected. Being able to engage with music in their own way was important because their descriptions emphasised that an interest in music was their own choice, they were free to engage or not, and no obligation was felt to follow a family members interest. This presents as counter to studies such as Tunnell and Groce...
(1998) and McCarthy (2013) where family and community interest in music was such an identifying aspect of their culture that younger members were expected to become involved.

As a retrospective comment the participants reflected that in having been able to develop their interest in music through exploring what they found to be of interest, in what presents as an autodidactic approach (Mak, 2006; Solomon, 2003), there was a greater motivation and sense of ownership of their music learning. This autodidactic approach, expressed as being a natural way, drew attention to the notion that these participants framed their relationship with music as something ‘natural’ as opposed to it being mediated and translated through constructed formal learning. It is suggested that this early contextual sense of freedom to explore music as an experience encouraged the development of their self-taught, or autodidactic, approach to learning music.

**Home entertaining and community music making**

Five participants recollected their family held house parties at home, four mentioned being involved in a community music group, and one said he spent time at his family’s Reception venue where live music was played by his Uncle’s band. These activities occurred more prominently in the participant’s childhood up to early adolescence. This was an early experience of music as social engagement; one involving family, in a familiar location, which linked music with family friends, neighbours and local community.

Recollections of the house parties suggest the participants were included because they described how the music was “exciting” (Martin), and as Julie recounted “my mother had these parties, with a full band, it was huge. So that was all around me”. These experiences were situated in the participant’s early home life as an expression of their parent’s enjoyment of music, in most there was someone playing an instrument or singing. This reflects the notion of parental habitus as discussed by Wasileweski (2017) where the music activities of one or both parents, who at this time carry a degree of music authority, convey attitudes and knowledge which then become a formative influence. In regard to this being a source of learning it presented opportunity for observing spontaneous, or casual music making, and enjoyment of music constructed by the music sensibilities of predominantly self-taught musicians and music devotees. Descriptions conveyed the sense that the participants were at this time becoming more aware of music as not only something one sits and listens to but engages with through live music or records. These events were experiences that took music out of their immediate family sphere and into an extended group of known people. Expressed in this broader context, it is suggested this contributed to the participants'
understanding of how music connects people, how others respond to it, and being able to play music was valuable. The value of music was, then, translated as being not only a personal, or family, value but one that held currency within a social group.

Involvement in community music groups was for Jerry the neighbourhood social music making gatherings where “someone was always playing something” and “we’d all just join in and sing it was fantastic”. Marc became involved in a local church choir through his mother, and to a lesser degree Liam sang with his local church choir. Frank joined in with his school’s concerts, which his mother helped to produce. Marc’s experience was more regular and continued for about three years, for the others it was periodical and infrequent. In these instances, while the participant was asked to join by their parent, it was because the parent was already involved. In one respect this reflects the sentiments found in ter Bogt, Mulder, Raaijmakers, Nic Gabhainn (2011), Davidson, Howe, Moore, and Sloboda (1996) and McPherson (2009) where a child’s music involvement is often derived from a parent’s choice. The difference in this study was these participants were already engaged in self-taught learning of an instrument or singing, and their parents invited them based on their already expressed independent music interest. It is the only situation, in this study, in which parents were cited as having involved their child in a music group activity outside the family home.

In terms of what was learnt in the community music groups, it introduced these participants to a music activity outside the family home, a context in which their parent was present, but unlike the home entertaining there was a structure to the activity. Jerry’s experience of neighbourhood social music making did present as being similar to the house parties, although there were references to it being more intentional in respect to the focus being on playing music together, rather than the party aspect. All noted this introduced them to learning as an individual, as Marc commented “you had to get the song right”, and one’s part within that group because “if you played someone else's part they would get upset”. In a more general sense, this engagement brought them to a sense of “becoming more serious about music” (Marc). In addition, as Frank noted, he felt supported in his desire to continue his learning because of the positive feedback given by his mother and others involved in the school productions.

These findings reflect the forms of developmental learning that can be realised when children participate in community music, as Mills (2008) notes it enables opportunity for “self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy” (p. 3) to be fostered through the individual and
group learning experience. Mills further explains how engagement in community music activity is mediated by interactions with other musicians, group music values, and either formally structured or personally perceived group rules. For Marc, Frank, Liam and Jerry the experiences were a positive reinforcement in their music learning in addition to the practical learning acquired. In noting that participants mentioned the experience of these music activities, at an early age, added to the growth of their interest in music a less obvious finding arose. Within the wording of their descriptions were direct, or inferred, references to attitudes regarding musical ability and attainment expectations. With no applied regulated standard levels mediating learning, their concept of musical ability and learning progress came from within that of the music group. The group’s standard of music performance was one that worked with each member’s skill level at the time, where skill development was inspired by personal motivation through enjoyment in performing. It is suggested that from this experience these participants acquired the attitude that even though they were still learning they could still participate: their skill level could be accommodated which encouraged continued involvement and inspired further music skill development.

Parents singing

Mothers singing. A mother singing is taken as a source of learning that was both an external and internal source. For these four participants their mothers sang at home, were observed learning songs, singing with others and for three they sang with her. Such observational learning was framed in terms of admiration for her talent, as much as it was a time of shared learning experiences. This connection between the mothers singing and a sense of trust created by her talent flowed into their learning experiences. Meaning that because these participants felt their mother had talent, was knowledgeable and accomplished, when sharing in her singing practice or observing it a sense of wanting to learn was inspired. This exposure gave them an example of musical talent, connected singing with enjoyment and learning of how to sing a song, as well as finding they could also sing. Marc, Jerry and Liam learnt about harmonies and how to sing with others, Frank learnt more indirectly through listening to his mother sing at home frequently. These experiences suggest a form of musical habitus (Rimmer, 2006) which was itself the context for these sources of learning; the actions of the mother in her singing, and for two it was practicing singing for a choir, created the opportunity for engagement. Sharing this early interest was described in terms of either direct or indirect teaching moments, such as Liam’s learning of harmonies and Marc’s “absorbing” of songs. In each recollection the mothers were said to have been actively
engaging in learning songs, exploring new music and challenging themselves in that learning. It is suggested this imparted the beginnings of a learning sensibility, taken from similarities between how participant described their learning approach and how their mother’s activities were described.

**Fathers singing.** In the sense of father's singing being present as a source of learning it was as much from his actual singing, as it was from the fact that their father did sing, and very well, both at home and with others. The notion of musical habitus (Rimmer, 2006) is apparent in this source of learning in terms of conveying the father’s self-belief about the place singing has as a male within their personal and local community spheres, and that singing was something one could learn in a self-taught natural learning sense (Kohut, 1985). This is based on descriptions of how fathers had learnt through their music activities, either from the father’s family or their independent interests. Liam's childhood experiences were of male family members singing hymns together, his rich descriptions of the room they sang in and what it felt like to hear them all singing together suggests it was an early foundational experience, positively affirming male singing. Frank was exposed to male singing in an exuberant more theatrical sense; his reference to “the power of the human voice” was said with admiration for his father's vocal and lyrical creativity. His father's ability may have presented a positive example of musical talent and the possibilities within music. Julie's experience of her father's ability to not only sing but compose limericks while singing for other's entertainment became her originating source for composing melodies and lyrics. Julie made specific reference to her father as being “quite accomplished” even though he was “not formally trained” in music, a sentiment the other participants referred to as well. Participants framed descriptions of their fathers singing in terms denoting high esteem for not only their singing ability, but also because they were self-taught and yet were quite knowledgeable about music. It is suggested this high esteem directed, and encouraged, these participants to also learn through self-taught means because their fathers provided examples of what could be achieved in this manner.

**Singing with family.** It is suggested, based on the work of Wasileweski (2017) that the musical habitus of the parent contained a deep love of singing which translated in the participant, as a child, a similar sense of singing as an admired ability. Because singing was described as a common activity within their home life, as they learnt to sing through direct and indirect guidance it not only enabled vocal development but instilled their parent’s approach and beliefs about singing. Liam’s comment that he carried his mother’s sense of
harmony into his current adult singing exemplifies this point. Additionally, each participant used the expression “I admired my [mother’s or father’s] singing” which according to Wasileweski (2017) links affirming emotional connections to the child’s own singing ability. This would mean that the child (participant) valued singing through the emotional lens of admiration, the admired person then singing with them became an encouraging and affirming learning environment.

Of the ten participants nine sing with their band, they sing lead in some songs or are the lead singer. Five of the nine said one or both parents sang, one said his older sister sang, and one said his grandmother could sing well. Two described singing with siblings, without reference to a parent singing. The five with a parent who could sing appear to have learnt and taken directly from their parent’s attitude and approach to singing. In the four whose parents did not sing, three referred to singing with one or more siblings in a band during late childhood into adolescence. One said he sang with his cousins in a band during late primary to early high school years. As a source of learning it developed their relationship with singing through engagement with close family members; in a sense through a co-created musical habitus. How the family member related to singing influenced the participants’ learning relationship with singing, which in turn became part of their involvement and learning relationship with the bands they worked with. The inclusion of singing as part of the participants’ music career, the degree to which they focused on singing as musical ability strength had a correlation. Those who began to learn to sing through a parent expressed a higher regard for, and use of, singing in their musical careers than was conveyed in the other four. One exception was Wayne, who has been lead singer frequently in his career.

One additional finding emerged when analysing learning sources in relation to singing. While all participants compose songs, the five who had a parent that sang described song composition as a more significant element in their careers than the other four. This point requires further research, although as a preliminary suggestion there could be a link between the close relationship these participants had with songs through their parent singing, the admiration they felt drawing them into a deeper connection with the music which inspired the emergence of composing as a stronger value. This is taken from four of the five mentioning early attempts at song composition or adapting songs when in late primary school, when first learning an instrument and prior to joining a band.
Parents and siblings playing an instrument

A parent playing an instrument at home, and in extension an older sibling, is a source of learning based on how these recollections were described, and references to direct learning. This finding contains evidence of a ‘natural learning process’ element, as proposed by Kohut (1985) where one observes, forms a mental image, imitates, engages in trial and error, then practices (Criss, 2008). First, participants described their recollections of a parent, or older sibling, playing an instrument as being something they were exposed to from an early age, and it was recalled as a valued memory. This was drawn from participants expressing their admiration for a family member’s musical talent and skill, having observed them enjoying playing their instrument and being dedicated in their learning and skill development. When asked if this was more a retrospective view, they said it was something felt even as a small child. Again, as noted previously, the emotion of admiration is imbued into their originating source of learning in respect to playing an instrument; which as Scháfer, Sedlmeir, Stádler and Huron (2013) discuss is an underlying factor in the growth of their intrinsic values for music. Some studies, such as (McPherson, 2009), found that parents and older siblings with musical talent can overshadow, and cause the younger family member to feel incapable of achieving a similar level of musical accomplishment. Although, in this study the observed talent and admiration was conveyed by participants as an encouragement for them to attempt to realise their own musical skill level. As a source of learning, and drawing from the work of Davidson (1999) and Lamont (2011), it is suggested that this early admiration instilled a value for not only music but more specifically the playing of an instrument because they had an independently acquired intrinsic value for this learning.

Second, all but one family member who played an instrument was self-taught. The fact that they were self-taught was a source of learning in terms of it being an example of something they could also achieve. Parents being self-taught provided more of a conceptual example, based on descriptions referencing how a parent generally approached playing and learning new songs. There was one exception, Frank’s father could play numerous instruments including the guitar, and he did spend time casually playing with Frank in his early adolescence. Older siblings who played an instrument played guitars which the participant also chose to play because they felt a more relevant connection to the instrument. From these older siblings, the participants described observational learning, which offered them basic instruction in terms of instrument playing technique. They were not given any significant level of direct instruction on how to play an instrument by a family member.

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Kohut’s (1985) natural learning process is evidenced in descriptions of observing a family member, mentally creating an idea or image of what they were seeing, then once they had their own instrument a process of trial and error led to achieving a level of skill which they then practised. In addition, the affirming aspect of admiration for the musical ability of someone they are emotionally close to, as Wasileweski (2017) indicates, could have linked their learning to a set of positive attitudinal approaches. Meaning, the participants already felt a valued connection to music, they admired the musical ability of someone close to them, so when they began to learn to play an instrument it was with these positive attitudes.

Third, the participants referred to viewing a family member who could play an instrument as being able to evaluate and provide authoritative feedback because of the high regard they felt for their observed talent. It is a source of learning because it provided them with evaluation regarding their own progress in learning an instrument, and support in terms of their sense of value in wanting to continue. The offered feedback is taken as a source of learning through noting how participants accepted, and therefore used, the family member’s comments. This supports Wasilewski’s (2017) discussion where a parent’s opinion can be enabling or disabling to a learner musician. Placed within a self-taught music learning context, having someone who was seen as being capable of genuine feedback and that person was also a loved and admired person, appears to have been a significant source of internal learning, which translated into motivation to continue developing their music skills and talent.

In studies such as Wasilewski (2017) it was noted that some music students shifted attention from a parent’s opinion to a person who presented as being an authority, or was talented, because the parent was either not a musician or they played in a genre the student was not interested in. In this study, contrary to Wasilewski (2017), participants maintained a level of learning attention within their family, which may have connected ‘authority’ in music knowledge and skill with a trusted person regardless of music genre interest. It highlighted their learning characteristic of gradual accumulation, where rather than disregarding parent or older sibling’s music it became a layer of knowledge they built on. Reflecting this characteristic is also, as previously mentioned, discernment in who to trust. Ascribing feedback ‘authority’ appears to be initially derived from the participants’ early admiration of a family member which created, in a sense, a benchmark. Meaning, feedback from “someone who actually has talent, they have experience, means a lot more” (Frank). In learning through a self-directed, self-taught, approach the presence of an authoritative affirming source of
feedback was stated as having been crucial to sustaining their progress, because it “meant I was doing something worthwhile” (Dean).

**Older siblings, older peers and peer group friends**
The influences from older siblings and through a friend’s older sibling were present in the period prior to receiving their first instrument and also as part of their adolescent music learning experiences. During this time there was a cross-over of influence from parent’s music, an older sibling or older peer and their own self-initiated music activities. The extent to which each participant learnt directly or through indirect observational means varied, and it was not described in terms suggesting any semblance of a lesson. Learning was framed in terms of shared time in which something was talked about, or observed, and then participant spent time applying that knowledge or skill in their own way. Influence from these sources were recollected as being ones in which they ‘absorbed everything’ prior to receiving their first instrument, then as learning and application of knowledge began in a practical way time spent with older siblings and peers altered. As will be discussed in the following section, there was a shift from contact with older siblings and their peers, to older peers’ participant became associated with through their own music activities. This shift highlights a learning progress from sources derived through the music activities of family and their friends, to ones the participant had formed themselves. This drew attention to situations in which the participant built on previous opportunities, where learning had come through others to then taking more responsibility for their independent learning. It reflects the notion of self-directed learning as discussed by Knowles (1975) in respect to the participant taking initiative and determining more of their music learning needs. The following discussion includes sources of learning that extended into the period when participant was learning to play an instrument and into adolescence.

From the age of approximately mid-primary school through to late adolescence a commonality was noted were all participants had regular contact with a person, two to five years older, who was engaged in popular music activities. Those activities ranged from listening to music together and talking about the songs to observing their self-taught learning of an instrument and playing in a band. For six participants the older person was a sibling and their music peer group, the other four including one whose older brother did not pursue an interest in music were influenced by a friend’s older sibling and their friends. Emerging from this commonality was a theme of transmission of knowledge through participant being included in an older peer group whose dominant interest was contemporary music. It is as
Folkestad (2006) emphasises, a crucial component of self-taught informal learning. Because of that inclusion, whether in their home environment or that of a close friend, the participants were able to make use of the knowledge and experience opportunity it offered. From this as Folkestad (2006) also states, learning is within a body of knowledge that had been acquired by others, in the passing on of such sensibilities and attitudes the participant learns through an existing culture of music understanding. In terms of their learning biography, these engagement influences built on the participants' existing interest in music at a time when they were becoming aware of wanting to learn to play music themselves. For some participants this experience coincided with having been given their first instrument.

The growing body of literature on how musicians learn outside of formal education, catalysed by such early work as Finnegan (1989) and later Green (2001) identifies the commonality of “picking up skills and knowledge from elders and peers, watching and listening and imitating” (Coulson, 2010, p.256). As previously discussed, most of the participants in these studies were in adolescence, and still progressing in their learning, which means in this respect there is a comparison. In one sense the commonality Coulson (2010) highlights is consistent within this study, the participants did learn through observing and interacting with older peers. Although, in another respect there was a difference found regarding the degree to which learning from an older person was significant, and how it was positioned. In the literature emphasis is placed on the learner’s direct group of music peers, (Baker, 2012; Westerlund, 2006; Jaffurs, 2006; Lebler, 2007) where an influence from family and older people is conveyed as being more incidental or peripheral. Yet in this study the participant descriptions show a consistent presence of a family member, or a friend’s older sibling, who was accessible and inclusive in sharing their music knowledge and experience. Whether this reflects a location or era specific culture was considered, and found to be inconclusive. The locations participants lived in during adolescence covered three different countries, and the eras spanned across three decades ending in the early 1980s. Further investigation would be required for an understanding of why participants in this study experienced a higher incidence of family and older musician inclusion in their learning during adolescence than has been indicated in other studies.

The activity of listening to music together with an older sibling, older peer group and peers was cited as being where the participants were introduced to more contemporary, popular music, genres and styles. This became a source of learning because the participants gradually built on their previous parental music exposure, which included time spent listening
to music alone. References to talking about the music were explained as discussing and sharing opinions on song meanings, how they were constructed and the value of different musical expressions in the songs. In addition, seven participants had a known older peer who was self-taught and playing in a band, where they occasionally observed rehearsals and jamming sessions. It is suggested that as the participants were included in these interactions, taking their music interest into older social groups, it became a pivotal point that began to mature their understanding of music and motivation to learn to play an instrument. In applying Rimmer’s (2006) understanding of musical habitus these music activities were akin to youth groups co-creating their understandings of music through shared experiences and as such validated certain attitudes and values for music.

At the time these shared experiences began, the participants had already begun to listen to music on their own, where they intentionally sought to ‘understand’ (Marc) the music, recognising patterns, rhythms and melodies. This created an intersection, a cross-over, of their own independent learning with that of the shared experiences, essentially creating a blending of knowledge from the two. It is suggested this early blending of learning sources provided a semblance of structure, where independent learning was formed and shaped by how they understood what they were observing, listening to and interacting with. Meaning that as the participants developed their own ideas, acquired their own knowledge about music there was also a consistent presence of a knowledgeable older person (often a sibling or their peer group) with whom they could verify, or gauge, their learning. This presence was experienced in varying contexts, from regular contact with an older sibling, less frequent but still consistent contact through a friend’s older siblings, to known older musicians through having joined a band.

Noted also were comments regarding the acquisition, through these interpretation experiences, of attitudes and understandings in a music culture sense. This refers to learning the culture of their immediate music community of adolescent and older musicians, which began prior to the participants having joined their first band. Learning was gradual and continued into late adolescence. Through joining their first, and subsequent, bands participants drew on this knowledge, which appears to have given them an informed advantage. This is relevant to the point that the participants were acquiring not only knowledge about music and instrument skills, but they were also learning from within an existing network group of musicians. Which as Coulson (2010) proposes creates “cultural capital” where what has been learnt and used appropriately serves as advantageous prior
learning for the participants. This point highlights a significance in the influence an older sibling, or inclusion in a friend’s older siblings’ group, had because it became a source of learning in which not only music knowledge was gained but also the less obvious intangible social norms of musician group cultures. For example, through learning songs an older sibling had introduced to them they were able to jam with older musicians, which often led to joining a band. Having been exposed to musicians who were in a performing band, they acquired initial concepts of expectations and cultures within musician groups which meant they learnt quickly how to work within a band group both personally and musically. This point is not intended to diminish the independent learning each participant described, rather it places their music learning as being made possible, if not more successful, because there was access to learning from one or more older known musicians.

**Initiating their own interest**

In determining the sources of learning within the participants' early childhood, as previously discussed, the initial sphere of influence was characterised by situational circumstances existing within their family home life. To refer to a home life where music was always playing did not in itself mean the participants would therefore become musicians, without further intent to learn it could remain an influence only and enjoyed as an appreciation for music. From how the participants described the beginning of their more active interest there was a moment, or period, in which a decision was made to pursue learning about music more intentionally. It was framed in terms of layers, or combinations of influences, and was distinguished by a series of events over the course of their early childhood to late primary school years that inspired motivation. As Davidson (1999) highlights in her discussion on why children start to learn to play an instrument, it is motivation born from the perceived desire for connection to, and with, something valued where the value stems from a trusted source. That trusted source in this study was initially a family member; from having made a choice to pursue their interest in music each participant encountered as a consequence further music related learning opportunities. The cumulative experiences built on each other where from each one they became aware of something new, or more, in respect to music.

The experiences were, as previously mentioned, the interactions on a daily basis within their family, events where music was playing and for some attending live music performances. One of the first activities described in reference to having decided to initiate their own music learning activity was listening to music alone. It was something accessible within the family home and ranged from a parent or older sibling’s record collection to
listening to a specific radio station music program. Preceded by years of hearing, becoming more aware of music, observing how others enjoyed music, when listening alone they could determine their own understanding and relationship with songs. It essentially gave them an opportunity to find out, on their own, what they thought, or understood. According to Solomon (2003) this is an important source of learning from an autodidactic perspective. Discovery through self-initiated activity, on their own, was described by the participants as containing a sense of accomplishment in finding they could recognise a pattern in the music, an influence from another genre. The characteristic of learning motivation being propelled through moments of one’s own discovery moments is recognised as a characteristic found in how vernacular musicians learn (Haroutounian, 2000; Green, 2001; Woody & Lehmann, 2010; Coulson, 2010). Although, in this study the participants were encountering this component of music learning at a younger age, from between six to nine years of age, rather than in adolescence as has been cited in the literature. That achievement served as a motivation to continue, a marker indicating they were capable of such learning.

Second, as indicated by Woody and Lehmann (2010), this intentional listening, learning how and what to listen for, served as an important prior experience when they began to learn to play an instrument. Listening to music, alone and with others, was cited as being one of the activities that increased desire to learn to play an instrument. Third, their growing emotional response to music, as Schäfer, Sedlmair, Städtler and Huron (2013) discuss, encouraged continuing with the activity because, even before knowing what the lyrics and emotions meant in a more experienced and deeper sense, it “felt exciting, and fun” (Martin).

Taking the activity of listening alone into context, through having their own music learning experiences, when sharing activities with older siblings and peers it is suggested the participants entered with some level of music knowledge ‘currency’ (Coulson, 2010). While references to older siblings, and older peers, contained recollections such as “whatever they were into I was” (Tyrone) and some listened to certain songs because it was popular with the older person, the participants also acquired their own independent understanding. This is based on comments, such as Tyrone’s, that while influenced by their older sibling they wanted to have “something of my own”. Reflected here is the gradual development of their own music taste, way of relating to and learning songs. It is suggested this attitude was one developed over time through how they encountered, and their environment fostered, learning music. As a commonality this reflects three findings. First, the participants were consistently translating the music experiences and knowledge into their own way of understanding, as
opposed to being given understandings. Second, the way they expressed their learning inferred a sense of ownership, where they intentionally sought to determine and create their own music knowledge and later instrument playing skills. Third, while admiring the music talent, tastes and knowledge of a family member, descriptions conveyed a desire for independence. Meaning, they did not seek to only copy, or emulate but to form their own learning independent of another family member, and even older peers, learning.

Section 2: First instrument to being in a band

This second learning phase starts with participant receiving their first instrument; it marked the beginning of their ability to actively participate in music. For some, a basic level of music instruction was engaged with in a short period of private lessons in which a modicum of notation reading, and technique was acquired. The self-taught learning of their instrument and short time of music lessons occurred in the same period as joining their first band. It was significant that these lessons were not perceived as contributing to learning connected to performing in their band, or how they felt music should be learnt. The sources of learning were predominantly cited as ‘learning by doing’ in connection to joining a band, and performing regularly from early adolescence. What was learnt extended beyond just playing music into areas such as musicianship attitudes of professionalism, working with known and unknown musicians on a personal level, entrepreneurial skills, song adaptation and composition as well as music business. Described as being the period in which their most significant foundational learning took place, by their mid to late adolescence they were performing in a band on a weekly basis; as semi-professional musicians. Their external sources of learning were primarily situated within the contexts of live band performance, and peer and older peer group musician contact and activities. While the internal sources of learning were deduced as being not as much about the learning of songs as it was about acquiring their own learning style, own understandings about personal and musicianship behaviour and what it meant to be a musician. From this foundational learning these participants were able to further build their music careers; because they were seen as not only capable musicians but importantly ones others felt they could work with.

Learning the instrument

When the participants were given their first instrument it was said to be after showing an interest for a number of years, and as Dean mentioned he “pestered” his parents for “ages”.

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One exception being Luke whose father bought a drum kit for him to learn to play. The age when given their first instrument typically ranged from six to twelve, with Jerry and Marc both entering music learning as singers they obtained their first instrument later, at 14 and 15 respectively. In literature relating to parent involvement in a child learning to play an instrument (Creech, 2010; Creech & Hallam, 2011) a consistent finding is the importance of parental support and involvement. In this study parents were not described as being involved, such as observing or listening to participant practise and support was conveyed as being more practical such as suggesting lessons. It was, as suggested by Bèzenac and Swindells (2009), motivation to learn through the participants' “intrinsic value” (p. 1), therefore the absence of direct parental involvement did not dissuade them.

The aural learning approach, or playing by ear, was noted to be how all participants learnt, through either listening and copying a song or improvising over a song. It is considered the traditional way musicians in most contemporary genres learn, particularly Rock and Popular music. Although a study by Franz (2017) draws attention to the historical background of learning music, explaining how all music was initially learnt aurally until notation systems developed in Western Classical music. This reference is made to highlight that an aural transmission of songs and music knowledge, as was experienced by the participants in this study, is a source of learning found presently in most non-western and non-classical music traditions. Franz (2017) also points to this method providing modern musicians with a means of accessing their more creative music abilities, something participants in this study also mentioned. Essentially, the participants said that because they had learnt in a manner referred to as ‘through the music’, where learning was through listening and playing over a song as opposed to through music notation, it meant a “more intimate and deeper knowledge of the songs” (Tyrone). This developed their improvisational, creative adaptation and song composition skills which began in early adolescence.

All participants described initially “playing around on [their] instrument to see what [they] could do” (Wayne) and while some took lessons there were commonalities in their instrument learning. The first area relates to a previous finding that prior to receiving their first instrument the participants had spent from one to four years listening to songs with the intention of “understanding it” as Marc mentioned. This was not the same as hearing music in the family home; it was a specific activity of intent to learn. From the intentional listening source of learning where basic song construction, rhythms and melodies were learnt, participants mentioned taking the understanding they had acquired and then using it when
learning to play songs on their instrument. Within this are links to Kohut’s (2005) natural learning and Forrester and Borthwick-Hunter’s (2015) freedom to explore and engage as necessary within natural learning of music. It is suggested this was a significant aid in their ability to progress relatively quickly in their learning. This is based on participants referring to beginning to play with others within, on average, a year from when they first started to learn to play their instrument: they were quickly able to “keep up with them” as Martin recalled. Essentially, because they had already acquired a relatively wide range of songs they knew, from having understood the typical patterns and similarity in songs they could “play in with a song, even if I hadn’t heard it before” (Dean). While this is considered a typical learning process within popular music genres, in particular Green (2001), acquiring this skill and knowledge at a young age (from six to twelve years old) could be considered as not typical.

The second area where sources of learning were found in relation to learning of their instrument was in an area that has been partially addressed: from having observed others playing. Within their descriptions is a deeper sense of how the natural learning (Kohut, 1985) process was experienced. Observational learning began with family members, a friend’s older sibling or a family friend and progressed in adolescence to peer group musicians. The observation itself was described as learning technique, and the different ways an instrument could be played. Therefore, it is taken that participants were not simply watching, but doing so with intent to memorise and apply what they saw to their own developing techniques. The ability to translate what they saw into their own instrument playing was said to be one of the difficulties faced in teaching oneself, although it was also one of the greatest rewards. It was explained that in going through a trial and error process, even though it took longer than being instructed, it meant they could more intimately understand their instrument and own playing. Through playing something differently, or uniquely, as they learnt a song was where a lot of their early exploring and uncovering of their own style of playing unfolded.

A third area where sources of learning were found, related to how participants framed their descriptions of learning with references to the emotions felt within the learning experiences, and the environment in which they learnt. The importance of the learning environment has been affirmed in numerous studies such as Chadwick (2003), the home learning environment fostering music engagement (Forrester & Borthwick-Hunter, 2015; Yu & Daraganovo, 2014; McPherson, 2009) and learning environments favouring a genre that reflects a community such as Bluegrass music (Tunnell & Groce, 1998). While the literature
refers to the need for a “safe space” in terms of the learner not feeling pressured or afraid (Hendricks, Smith & Stauch, 2014) less attention is paid to how an emotional connection to music factors into learning environments. In respect to the consideration of emotionally safe places in which to practise, participants in this study referred to, as Martin said, “my parents were great, they didn’t mind”.

Regarding emotional connections, in this study it was found that when the participants mentioned aspects of their early learning of an instrument they did so using emotional descriptions. For example, Julie’s description inferred pride that she learnt to play guitar on her own saying “I did that on my own, it was all me, all my own” and Tyrone’s comment that he felt a “great rush” of excitement when he figured out how to play a chord. Frank mentioned his sense of enjoyment in being able “to just sit and play around on the guitar on my own”, Martin and Dean both conveyed their excited anticipation of being able to play their instrument during their lunch time or after school. For Wayne it was the sense of contentment where playing his instrument drew him into his “own world” and for Jerry playing music with his friends was “the best time, we all had fun, even if we sounded terrible”. These emotional descriptions convey the point that learning to play an instrument was associated with personal pride in their accomplishments because they achieved them through their own efforts, and enjoyment and fun in the process itself. This reflects the emotional connections highlighted by Schäfer, Sedlmeir, Stádtler and Huron’s (2011) work regarding positive emotions being a precursor to instilling intrinsic values. In this respect, it is suggested the reason why they felt this way was because the participants were able to determine their own learning process, including who they played with.

In addition, playing their instrument meant they were entering into a personal “world of [their] own” (Wayne), one that felt exciting because their learning process, while gradual, gave them motivation through the small accomplishments experienced. All participants said they spent a significant amount of time on their own figuring out how to play songs, and a lot of trial and error which, as they reflected, developed in them self-discipline, determination and acceptance. The acceptance referred to “knowing you still had a lot to learn” (Jerry), that learning to play music took a long time and “you learnt what was needed for a song at that time” so “you didn’t expect to know it all” (Frank). Learning to accept they were “always still learning” (Dean) meant, as all participants conveyed, that as they progressed into their adult careers they were able to learn from other musicians without a sense of defensiveness. In analysis this point emerged as a significant factor in their ability to continue progressing,
based on their commonly expressed reflection that how well a musician works with others, in an open and accepting manner, identifies them as someone capable of working well in a group.

**Teachers and lessons**

Eight participants were given their first instrument when they were between six to twelve years old, as previously mentioned Marc and Jerry focused on singing first and obtained their first instrument in mid-adolescence. Luke played drums first, and received no lessons; his father bought a piano for which he did have lessons. Frank taught himself percussion drumming in his early primary school years; his older brother gave basic instruction on a wider range of instruments during his later primary school years. For the six who did have lessons their parents had suggested it would assist them in learning their instrument. Of the six, two did not continue for more than one month and the other four attended for an average of eight months. Sources of learning were noted in both groups, where participants used the experience of attending lessons in unexpected ways.

Wayne and Tyrone, who stopped lessons after a month, referred to their decision as having being made because they could “not relate to that way of learning music” (Tyrone) because it either inhibited their own expression, or “learning from a sheet of notations just wasn’t doing it for me” (Wayne). One point raised by both participants was that self-expression in playing music was important, as Tyrone said when he was told to stop playing because he “wasn’t reading the music” and to “play only what was there” he “knew it wasn’t for me”. While Wayne said he tried a few teachers, his comment that “the teacher sat in the other room eating sandwiches” which made him feel uncomfortable, was also why Luke said he did not continue with a teacher. This point draws back on the notion of “safe spaces” (Hendricks, Smith & Stauch, 2014) and highlights the negative affect a learning space can have where one aspect can impact and disable learning potentials. What Tyrone and Wayne learnt highlighted their sense of self-awareness regarding how they related to learning to play an instrument because they had already felt a particular sense of connection to music. Both reflected that it made them decide to approach music with a more serious intent to learn their instrument, which meant accepting to teach themselves through what they called a trial- and-error learning by ear approach.

It was an unexpected finding that the four participants who did continue with their lessons described using what they were learning to aid their own self-taught progress, rather than following what the teacher was instructing. Lessons were explained as being more of an
opportunity to play with an experienced musician, where they did not learn from sheet music but from listening to a song and memorising it. While as a source of learning they did state that basic understandings of how to read sheet music, some instrument techniques, and guidance on improvising were conveyed they placed this knowledge into their own way of learning. Therefore, lessons were a source of learning, but it was how they filtered this knowledge into what was of use to them that altered its significance. In each instance the participant had already started to teach themselves to play their instrument before attending lessons, they used some of the instruction to improve how they were already learning. In deciding to stop taking the lessons the sentiment that they were not learning anything new was initially considered to be related to the participants' desire to learn in their own way. In analysis the timing of when they took lessons was compared with when they started to play casually with others, jamming, and an overlap was noticed. It is suggested that as the participants began to be invited to jamming sessions, and start to perform with a band, they saw what they were learning in these lessons as no longer relevant. As Luke said, “I really wasn’t learning anything more I was playing in a band so that was really where you learn”. In comments regarding leaving music lessons the main reason was not focused on their learning within a band, rather it was learning as an individual through jamming sessions and live performance experiences.

**Jamming sessions and social connections**

In the participants' learning biographies, as previously mentioned, the sources of their learning have an overlapping characteristic in terms of time period and layers of influence. In the period up to receiving their first instrument they had already encountered others who were interested in music; either a family member, through a family members social group, school or local neighbourhood peer group. Their desire to learn to play an instrument, while expressed as being of their own volition, was also within and influenced by their lived experiences of sharing a music interest with others. In the period of time when they were learning to play an instrument, their connections with others who were interested in music changed. The previous music sharing with peers and family members continued, although now they also came into contact with others who were already playing an instrument. In this phase the value and motivational strength of their previous learning experiences, where music was a fun and interesting pursuit, met with experiential evidence that the participant could learn to play an instrument. Crucial in this were the participant’s opportunities to play with others, in particular older peers, in a casual and affirming social setting.
Detailed accounts of learning through jamming sessions is limited in the literature, although as May (2005) described “Jam sessions, which took many forms, were an integral part of aspiring jazz musicians' lives, providing a breeding ground for creativity and innovation” (p. 25). While referring to jazz musicians, the account is similar to how participants in this study related to jamming sessions: and, it could be argued they are necessary in the development of a musical imagination. The jamming sessions were described as being fun, sometimes spontaneous, where “we were just playing around, seeing what songs we could all play … there was no pressure” (Liam). This co-created sense of exploring, sharing and learning while experiencing casual playing together was said to have taught them the first steps in how to play as a group and how to work in with others musically. Meaning, their way of playing suiting the way the group played a song. And initial experiences of learning to be able to personally fit into a music group, to accept they were all still learning, and that through jamming with others they were creating opportunities “for others to know about you … you started to build a reputation” (Jerry).

Conveyed here is a contextual understanding of how the participants were learning within spheres of influence. At this time they were gaining early learning skills within an environment where their social networks and that of family and friends, provided opportunities to learn through music playing activities such as jamming sessions. This finding presents differently to the learning circumstances described in studies on informal learning of popular musicians. Generally, as Green (2001) described, while learning is done alone and with their small band group, the learner and their group are relatively isolated where contact with other band groups or more experienced musicians was incidental and casually opportunistic. If viewing just the activities of participants in this study they did also learn alone and within their band group, which supports the literature, although this would not be considering the broader scope of their music sources of learning. When seen in its entirety there is a flow or encircling webs of interconnections through which sources of learning emerged. The parental influences were still present, older siblings and older peer groups remained consistent and the introduction of new adolescent musicians through joining a band and meeting other bands built on and expanded their opportunities for further learning.

The sense that learning was through informal means where there is a relationship between learning and social context (O’Shea, 2012; Karlsen, 2010; Green, 2001; Lilliestram, 1996; Finnegan 1989) was present in descriptions of how the participants met other musicians. It was referred to as being through word-of-mouth, as Martin explained “I don’t
know how he knew I played drums … this older student I didn’t know just came up and asked me to jam with some other guys”. Tyrone’s comment conveys succinctly a commonality found in participant experiences when he said that once he started to play music “it just happens … they come out of the woodwork … someone says they play and next thing you’re jamming with them, seeing if something can come from it”. Reflected in this is a natural flow of common social relations through which the participant gained opportunities, learnt from and co-created further learning opportunities. Meaning, because the adolescents learning music wanted to “just play, have fun seeing what we could do” (Liam) they sought out other “like-minded” (Tyrone) learners they could contact. In seeking out others, the participants were referring to word-of-mouth within their peer and older peer group. Being invited to a jamming session, or arranging one, occurred in all participants’ learning biographies. It was often their first experience of playing music with others, and in most instances, they did not know the other musicians. All mentioned that it was from playing with others in this casual jamming sense that they were either invited to join a band or decided to form a band.

**Joining their first band**

The participants in this study formed or joined their first band between the ages of 12 to 15 years of age, and most were the youngest in their band; something they said continued to happen throughout their music careers. Starting out as support bands at local dances, the frequency of their performances began as periodical or on average once a month; within 12 to 18 months they were performing weekly, then up to three times a week towards the end of high school. One exception was Julie, who spent most of her adolescence in bands performing for school concerts and entering Talent contests where she would sing solo. In this phase of learning the participants agreed that their experiences were like being in a type of apprenticeship, because they were “learning by doing” (Marc), which involved forms of adapting. Jerry described this adapting most clearly, evidence was seen in terms of ability to adjust what had been learnt into a new situation, adapting ones attitude through awareness and adapting to playing music differently to what they had practised. In their self-taught learning progress adapting is seen as an internal learning source, one developed as a response to their music activity experiences. It is suggested that their desire to continue performing in a band motivated them to learn how to attain what was required to sustain their involvement; being able to adapt meant their learning was moulded through practical and group cultural influences.
The ‘apprenticeship’ started with their first bands, where they progressively attained support band bookings for more successful artists and bands. During that time they were experiencing situations where immediate application of their knowledge and skills was required, for example if they were booked at short notice or equipment failed during a performance. The older more experienced musicians, to some extent, replaced the role of ‘qualified’ teacher; either in their own band or through observing and contact with successful bands and musicians. This reflects the model of successful learning proposed by Lyons and Bandura (2018) in respect to its experiential basis; they “learnt what was needed at the time” (Frank), their individual learning blended with the band as a whole, and progressed through mediation of problems and opportunities. Drawing again on the notion of apprenticeship, Lyons and Bandura’s (2018) explanation of successful learning reflected the participants experience; where “learning [is] a set of activities, or process, not merely an outcome” (p. 141). Meaning, in their “learning by doing” (Marc) the sources of learning drawn on to inform them were as much from experiencing their enacted knowledge as it was from progressive accumulation of that knowledge through increasingly more professional performance experiences. This finding is reflected in the work of Smilde (2008) where the biographical learning of formally taught musicians “throughout their lives” (p. 246) was found to have been most significant when actually doing, or working with, their music knowledge and skills. This comparative point draws attention to the value of learning through engagement in actual real life situations, where the circumstances afford opportunity for application and testing of knowledge and skills.

What the participants were ‘doing’ was, as will be discussed, not only performing in a band but also other related activities. It is suggested that the participants were experiencing unintendently what Bennett (2009) advocates as a more conducive perspective where they learnt to give equal value to all aspects of musicianship rather than only live performance. Essentially, that while live performance was an important learning source it was enhanced and improved by attention being given to quality of preparation, exploration of new music, breadth of variety in music learnt, stagecraft, audience response and casual jamming sessions.

The following discussion will first address learning within their band, followed by presenting how their additional activities contributed to, and comprised, essential learning experiences.

**Live performance learning progression**

In the findings it was detailed what the participants' learnt from performing to a live audience, as they commented “you learn more in one gig, than you would in six months of
rehearsals” (Marc). Investigating further what it meant to learn from a live performance, for each participant what they learnt and when it was learnt, varied although they exhibited the following commonalities. Initially it was how to play songs together with their band with enough accomplishment to “get away with it” (Frank) because the audience “didn’t know the difference” and they could dance to it. The participants said they were learning to take what was understood about how to play a song and adapt it to the way that group of musicians performed. It was a necessary learning experience because it taught them to listen carefully to how the band was playing, so they could ‘fit in’ (Frank) musically. When asked if this was something they were directly taught the participants said it was not, it was something they had been doing while listening to recorded music and they found it useful in a live band situation. In addition, as Frank’s recollection of being in a band with professional musicians in adolescence exemplified “I was so new, I hadn’t experienced playing like that … so I had to think under pressure, just do what I could to keep up” but “the guys in the band were great, they helped me, gave me advice”. While it was something he felt came as an intuitive response, Frank later said the other musician’s advice was to simply take notice of how each member played and to listen to what is being played, rather than what you think should be played. The participants said this was a crucial aspect of their learning, and one that once understood enabled them to play at a more professional level. This presented as an example of how they were using knowledge and skills acquired within a previous source of learning (intentional listening) and applying it to make use of another source of learning (playing with a band).

In needing to compete with other bands for support band places, and through watching how the more accomplished bands performed, they learnt to adapt songs to fit their band and “have our own sound” (Martin). In itself this presented insight into a less obvious source of learning. Through comparing descriptions of how the participants said they worked within their adolescent bands it was noted they referred to accepting and working with the strengths and weaknesses of each band member. This was not in terms of whether the band member had prepared or learnt a song. Rather, it is based on comments that there were “not many who could play an instrument … and out of those, they liked other music” (Dean) their limitation appears to have created an unintended source of learning. It is suggested they learnt to appreciate that “you worked with what you could do” (Jerry), this was not expressed as a negative judgement. These situations created opportunities for resourcefulness musically,
because they had to adapt songs to skill levels, and to support each other through focusing on how to develop strengths.

The initial development of musical skills occurred over three to four years of regular performing while attending high school. Lamont (2011) and Esslin-Peard (2017) emphasis that regular performance opportunities are a crucial necessity; they enable the acquisition of more refined musical skills if a career in music is being sought. Specifically, because it allows for development of “a deeper understanding of … learning …to perform in a variety of venues and to create a product that [is] acceptable to audiences” (Esslin-Peard, 2017, p. 96). This was also evidenced in this study. Eight participants recounted having joined their first band within a year of first learning their instrument, for Tyrone and Martin it was only a few weeks. The other two were eight years old when given their first instrument, they spent time learning on their own and developing song composition skills first; they began performing with a band two to three years later. At this early stage, when their band was still improving, and they were as most participants described sometimes sounding terrible it is suggested the strength of their internal learning, coupled with these practical learning opportunities, provided them with persistence to keep trying after experiencing difficult audiences, or bad performances.

**Persistence**

Two aspects emerged in respect to their persistence, which presented as an internal source of learning. The first being the participants' gradual accumulation of prior experiences where the collective value for music as an interest pursuit was continually reinforced. This, it is suggested, formed a foundational sense of purpose, a sense of believing they could become a musician themselves. Each participant had at least one person who presented as a positive example of accomplishment as a musician, either a talented family member or older peer musician. The participants, in respect to this, all conveyed that it was their love of music itself, and performing, rather than “being in it just for the girls” or “just wanting to be famous” (Dean) that defined their resilience. Lamont (2011) discusses this point, where if the reason why someone is learning to play music is based on an intrinsic self-directed purpose they are more likely to build a genuine desire for, and sustain, a long term career in music.

Building on the first, the second aspect of persistence, and again an internal source, was seen in descriptions of learning from other bands, and older musicians. This is where the participants, either directly or indirectly, began to understand what it meant to be a performing musician and was based on the culture created by each group of older and
professional musicians. Referring to the culture of expected behaviour, attitudes towards being a musician, how to progress as a musician, and how musicians related to each other. Folkestad’s (2006) notion of transmission of knowledge through the cultures within groups is evident here. This is based on descriptions such as gradually learning through “players who were more serious” (Marc), “being part of a community” (Frank), and “you’d get musicians coming to check your band out … there was competition between bands, but it was all good” (Liam). In addition, there was also access to professional musicians who as Liam recounted “were really good, we’d ask them questions and they were really helpful, I think they saw us as having some potential, so they wanted to help”. The source of their learning, then, was from the quality of their contact with experienced and professional musicians, both in an observational sense and through direct interactions such as talking with them. Noted also was their conveyed notion of learning how to discern who, and what, to learn from which highlighted a commonality of assigning a degree of music learning authority to older more experienced musicians.

**Authority: learning from experienced musicians**

It was anticipated the participants would have learnt from older peer group musicians to some degree, but it was not expected this learning would be as accepted, and authority driven, as was conveyed. It was, to clarify, mediated by the participants' experience of working with what had been advised, or shared, where it was then accepted, modified or discarded. The instances this occurred in were generally found within band groups, particularly as they progressed to join new or additional bands in late adolescence. Tyrone’s recollection conveyed one way this was experienced when he said, “they’d been doing it a lot longer so whatever they said I listened … it made me a better musician”. Marc and Jerry mentioned taking what had been advised, or observed, “and putting my own spin on it, I wanted to make it mine” (Marc). The presence of experienced musicians, who they could relate to because there was a shared interest in similar music, their expertise was evident, and they were accessible, created positive learning experiences. This learning approach was seen to continue into later adult career stages, based on frequent comments regarding always learning from “playing with better musicians than you are” (Liam) and when entering into a new form, or area, of music work they sought, and were able to, learn from those experienced in that area. This point links back to the previously discussed notion of trust, where experiencing trust in the knowledge of someone who was talented and skilled began within their family,
and continued into the accepted music learning culture of the music groups they became involved in.

**Common sense**

A theme emerged in analysing the participant’s recollections of band experiences during adolescence, one that, it is suggested, became essential to enabling progress towards a full-time career as a musician. It was common sense, the learning of what constituted common sense within the sphere of their music environments; meaning practical and resourceful approaches to problem solving, planning, organisation and even within their creativity. This phase of their music learning was, as previously mentioned, akin to being in an apprenticeship. Common sense is seen as having been formed through the participants’ initiative and agency combined with that of their peers within environments of influence from more experienced musicians. The notion of common sense as a theme is based on concepts of workplace learning where the application of problem solving, and system organisation was found to be unique to each workplace (Gerber, 2001). Attention was then drawn to the point Gerber (2001) made concerning workplaces being unique in their practices and cultures, which meant that what one workplace group determined as a logical solution may not be how another workplace group viewed the same situation. The participants in this study entered into workplaces with each band they joined, or performed with, which resulted in learning from a range of problem solving perspectives. While in their adolescent bands they learnt workplace common sense within the work culture contexts created by the older more established bands, through observational and direct communication with other musicians. The musicians were, in a broader group sense, learning through the socially constructed and mediated music cultures of audience and music business. Learning within these layers of experience contexts and influences allowed for the possibility to learn through immediate outcomes in actual music industry circumstances.

Evidence of experiences where common sense, it is suggested, was developed and defined was seen in the following notions that emerged from the data analysis. In order for the participant’s bands to achieve regular performances as support bands, they “had to figure out what the audience wanted” (Jerry), and work with their “ability to adapt songs to suit the band … we played covers, so we changed them a bit” (Martin). The common sense learnt in this respect is seen in relation to them experiencing that it was not enough to just be able to play cover songs, they had to compete with other bands and “win over the audience, or at least not get something thrown at you” (Jerry). This was achieved through drawing on their
own, and the collective experience of their band members. This experience, as Tyrone explained, meant “you learn about what makes a song good, why it works” in order to be able to make creative changes.

Work experience, a staple component of an apprenticeship, was comprised of not only playing in their band, but also learning through as Martin said, “back then you had to do everything yourself”. This referred to activities such as setting up on stage, attending to their equipment, getting bookings and dealing with booking agents, venue owners, and promotion. The participant’s descriptions in regard to this conveyed use of their own ideas, different band members contributing their experiences, and advice from other musicians. Essentially, through the participants having to engage in “real situations, we actually had to learn it all as we were doing it, on the hop … as it was happening” (Marc) their acquisition of workplace common sense (Gerber, 2001) came from taking notice of what other bands, band managers, booking agents and promoters were doing. The participants were exposed to, and involved in, how a band functioned in a music business sense. Luke explained how he approached the management of a new concept band as “why not do it ourselves, we knew what [the managers and agents] did, so we did it ourselves” which expresses the same attitudinal approach as Jerry, Marc, Dean and Wayne. While this was on a smaller, more local scale, they appear to have used this experience in their later career stages.

In a less obvious instance of common sense, they referred to accepting they would not always like all the songs their band played. It presented as an acquired practical attitude, one derived from recognising that to remain as a working band meant performing songs for their audience as opposed to just what the band wanted to play. It is suggested this may have contributed to their personal concepts of musicianship as a professional musician. This is drawn from comments where they explained that throughout their careers they have accepted some of their work not because they “were into that music” (Liam) but because it was work.

**Entrepreneurial sensibilities**

The theme of learning common sense as a music workplace sensibility also highlighted how the participants began to develop entrepreneurial sensibilities. Development of skills and thinking in this regard are fostered in circumstances where the learner has direct active involvement, experience is processed constructively, personal theories are drawn on and tested and the learners values, goals and self-efficacy are congruent (Rae & Carswell, 2000; Hietanen, 2015). Through the participants' self-taught learning approach, they were already accustomed to taking responsibility for their learning and progress as a musician. Doing so
within their progressively co-created musician group culture, provided the sources of learning required to cultivate music business acumen. Those sources were, as previously mentioned, found within observation of how other bands operated, acquainting themselves with what managers, agents and promoters did, and their own band experiences. In a music career view their entrepreneurial skills were developed in adolescence and cited more specifically in references to early adult career stages; when the participant was involved in building a band’s concept and audience base. In addition, as Hietanen (2015) cites there are also personal attributes associated with entrepreneurial skills such as the ability to network and negotiate. While the notion of networking was something the participants generally rejected, in favour of seeing it as more of an organic flow of interaction between likeminded people, they were still developing music industry interpersonal skills. Negotiation skills were mentioned by most participants as something “you had to learn, so many musicians didn’t even know what was in their contracts” (Frank). How this was learnt was, as Luke said, “you had to treat it as a business … it is a business”. This reflects the internal learning from experience, which some participants described as not always a common attitude but one necessary to continue as a full-time musician.

Finding the music
Prior to joining their first band the music participants were listening to was at first from a family members choice, as has been previously discussed, and then from their own exploration individually and with peers. In having joined a band they referred to needing to find music their band could play and suited the audiences. Initially, their sourcing of songs came from what the band members already had access to; from family, their own or friend’s music recordings. As their band became more aware of the need to be competitive and have music their audiences would enjoy, the means by which they acquired new music contained some unexpected responses. Explaining that they found new music through hearing it on the radio at first did not appear as unusual; it was how most new music at the time was introduced. What was unanticipated were the accounts of actually learning to play the new songs solely from listening to it played on the radio, which served as both a source for finding what would be popular and learning to play the songs as well. This required use of their ability to focus listening skills on song patterns, recognisable rhythms and melodies, the ability to memorise a song and translate what they heard into their own instrument playing.

A second commonality arose where most participants tended to find non-mainstream and regional radio stations to listen to because they said it was where unique and interesting
new music from less well known bands could be found. When asked if these songs were ones they used for their band the participants said it was where they found some new material, but that it was actually more for their own interests and creative development in composing songs. In this regard they were indicating that from early adolescence there was a separation between music played for their band, personal interest music and music used as inspiration for song composing.

This point links with another source of learning noted when participants recollected purchasing music from record shops; they were places where the participants could access music from a wider range of genres than previously encountered. Their descriptive phrasing that “you’d find all this music, not the pop stuff” (Wayne), and “you’d find these obscure records, that had all this older music on, and it was the music the bands of the day were inspired by” (Marc) revealed how they were using this access to music through record shops. They were open to listening to new music, because as Wayne, Marc, Jerry, Liam and Dean commented in particular, it was intriguing and exciting to find “what else was out there” (Marc). It could be considered a typical activity for an adolescent to frequent a record shop; it was the only way, aside from mail order catalogues, that music could be purchased. What did present as different was their interest in finding music that was “not the mainstream stuff” (Wayne), particularly international artists who were not being played on media in their area.

It is suggested this non-mainstream interest could have evolved through a series of exposures which reflect how their sources of learning contained levels of influence and further learning beyond its initial encounter. From exposure to music in childhood they developed a level of music appreciation which was furthered by their self-initiated music listening activities, such as listening alone to family record collections or specific music radio programs. Through contact and music engagement with peer and older peer musicians in late primary to early high school years they were then adding to the scope of music they were exposed to. By the time they began to learn their instrument and play with a band, for their age, they had a relatively matured sense of music appreciation. This was because they had responded to each level of exposure with an open approach to learning, as Marc’s recollection exemplifies “I got this album of Frank Zappa, didn’t understand it … but after this friend explained it I then listened again and got it … ended up liking his music”. In Marc’s quote is also an example of how they were not just listening to the music, rather it was described in terms indicating an intention to ‘understand’, to learn from what they were hearing.
Another commonality found in response to finding unusual music in a record shop was their conveyed sense of achievement when, after hearing the works of previous era and genre musicians, realising they could recognise influences from one genre on another. It was experienced as Liam said, “I suddenly realised all these songs like from the Rolling Stones were really from Muddy Waters” which felt exciting because “you were discovering where it all came from” and “it felt exciting because you could hear it for yourself” (Jerry). They had “found it on [their] own” (Liam) and it redirected their focus to “finding the original source … where they got it from” (Jerry) which in doing so “taught you about the history, then you really understand the music” (Liam). Through their active engagement with seeking out music to listen to they were not only learning through exposure to a wide range of genres and styles, but also forming their own understanding of music history through the influence music styles have on each other. The sense of motivation, and achievement, felt within this self-directed learning process was a significant contribution to the forming of their self-efficacy in learning about music.

One reflection regarding the participants’ descriptions of discovery in their learning highlights the absence of a sense of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in their understandings. Discovering something in a song or about music more generally was significant because it had meaning to them in their way of understanding. For example, Tyrone described how his older brother had played a few chords on a guitar, and in those chords he heard a favourite song yet it could have also been from many other songs. His excitement at having been able to connect a simple chord with a song he knew was “powerful”, which ignited his desire to learn more, it was “game on, what else is there?” The point being that the source of learning was the act of discovery, achieved on their own and as they progressed the motivation felt within that act directed them towards further learning, which if necessary would modify any misunderstandings.

**It was more than just being in a band**

Three band related activities are mentioned by the participants that present as experiences of learning which progressively contributed to their eventual progress towards full-time careers as musicians. The first was entering in band competitions, which as a source of learning was said to have “exposed us to what was out there, what other bands were doing” (Luke). These competitions were entered into at different ages; Frank was still in primary school although the others were between 13 and 16 years of age. A well-structured competition can have a positive impact on a learner musician when constructive feedback is given because it
contributes to the learner’s self-belief (Schnare, MacIntyre & Doucette, 2011). Findings in this study support this observation. Participant descriptions refer to how most found it a positive experience, even though their bands did not win, because “it was the experience” (Martin) that mattered. In asking what this meant they said they did not enter expecting to win, it was taken as an opportunity to learn from and one that motivated their band. The motivation came from seeing how well other bands of the same age group could play, which served as a point of reference for their own musical development.

A second activity frequently mentioned was attending live performances, typically with other members of their band but also friends. Attending live music performances as an audience member is a common social activity, although the participants described specific learning from each performance. As noted in the findings the participants were often inspired by how a band performed, and the excited response it created in the audience. This presented as a significant learning experience because they were able to “see how someone played, the way they moved or held their instrument” (Dean), essentially providing a direct example of techniques. Which it is suggested, was taken with the attitudinal approach of a lesson. In particular, how the band’s or musician’s performance was entertaining as opposed to simply playing a song.

Comparing these adolescent live performance attendance experiences with the participants’ later descriptions of professional musicianship, the attitudes expressed show a learning link. For example from seeing bands that just stood on stage and played the songs without audience engagement Tyrone said he learnt that “just looking down at your feet” was not acceptable. Dean similarly mentioned he had learnt that “if you can’t get on that stage and own it, you shouldn’t be there” from seeing musicians who were just playing as opposed to performing. Additionally, the participants included in their professional standards that you “always playing as if the room was full” (Tyrone) and to see creative potential in another’s performance where “this guy played a two string guitar, and I thought … you can do anything” (Frank). This activity highlighted their characteristic of “absorbing everything” as Dean, Wayne, Marc and Jerry specifically mentioned, and also reflects how they used each experience to further contribute to their learning. At this stage the content of their activity descriptions conveyed a sense of not rejecting but accepting all experiences as having a learning potential. This point emerged from noticing the participants mentioned, for example, that even if they did not like the music a band played they “could always learn something from it … something in a song, or how someone played” (Martin).
The third activity was song writing, something all participants said they had begun on their own and through working with their band was able to develop further. It was a collaborative process that taught them how to build and develop songs through working with other musicians. Descriptions of this process contained the notion that “it was about the song, and not the person” (Dean) and indicated the focus was not solely on the composer. Meaning, that as they developed their song ideas and invited others to “bring in their part” (Marc), it taught them they needed to be open to how a song idea can be transformed through the input of other musician’s ideas. Essentially, this indicated that while the experience taught them in a practical sense about the creative process of writing a song it was also instilling personal creative work attitudinal approaches. Primarily, as was consistently mentioned, they could prepare a new part for a song, but if it did not work they needed to learn to accept it and “not take it personally” as Luke explained.

Sources of learning that informed and developed the participants' song writing was directly stated as having been from first, listening to songs over a period of years starting in their early childhood. This was referred to as their musical memory, and they said that because of how they learnt, through listening intensely to songs, the consequential knowledge this allowed them to acquire aided in their understanding of how a song was composed. Second, the participants commented that in having played “other people’s songs” (Dean), which when “they are good” (Tyrone), over time, collectively contributed to them learning what made a song sound good. A third source of learning was taken from how they mentioned that in their early bands they would adapt a song to suit the abilities of band members, which required the ability to understand the song musically and to develop a level of creative or improvisational skill.

These activities mark a point in participant’s learning biography where not only experience and knowledge through being in bands was achieved, but they were also seeking further opportunities to gain a more professional level of musicianship. While presented separately, they were experienced within the same time frame, and learning from one informed and brought to them further sources of learning.

**Section 3: Into an adult career – professional musician**

The third stage begins when participants had finished high school; some took employment in non-music positions until they were able to sustain ongoing work as a musician. Sources of learning in this phase remained within the contexts of live performance and band group.
activities although there was a shift. The actual activities in themselves remained the same, what changed was a focus on being able to remain working as a musician and more frequent opportunities to work with high calibre musicians. It was when they all experienced being in a band that achieved national, and international success which brought sources of learning from within a more music industry commercial sense; their activities were now not solely on creating and playing music. The external sources of learning, then, were within progressively more professional and managed contexts requiring a growth and more matured application of previous internal sources and learning. While they described adolescent band experiences as being where the foundational levels of their musicianship acumen were acquired, in progressing towards being a full-time musician a continued sense of learning responsibility was evidenced. A commonality was their references to accepting that being a professional musician meant maintaining motivation, doing a lot of repetitive work and that in every performance something can be learnt. Attitudinally, the experience of being in and working with well known bands remained pragmatic; to stay focused on the music meant they did not become overwhelmed. Descriptions of their later adult working life were less detailed; therefore the following discussion focuses on the main commonalities and themes. Attention is drawn to the characteristic of cyclic return, where further layers of learning from the same source were evidenced.

**Progressing attitudes**

Emerging from the participants' recollections of being in bands during adolescence were references to acquired attitudes. It is suggested these attitudes formed a foundational base from which they developed as a musician, ones that informed their actions, choices and behaviour, which consequentially became their musicianship standards. In a sense it could be seen as a form of “cultural capital” (Coulson, 2010), an attitudinal currency which provided them with advantage when entering into higher levels of professional progress such as joining a well-known band. Progress was in regard to the ways participants approached practical, organisational and creative aspects associated with being in a band and producing their own song material. These attitudes were developed gradually during adolescence; the learning became more consistently experience based, particularly during the transition from semi to full-time musician. The participants were aged between 14 (Dean) to 21 (Martin) years of age when they began to perform as a full-time professional musician, transitioning from semi to full-time for most occurred between 16 to 18 years of age. Progress into a full-time career was seen by the participants as something akin to luck, although they held similar attitudes...
which it is suggested contributed to being offered progressive opportunities. In addition to practical attitudes towards the work involved in learning music, being organised and on-time for rehearsals and performances, the following four attitudes were consistently mentioned and presented as significant contributors to career progress.

**Always perform your best.** Within descriptions of the culture, or practices, of musicians in their area the participants referred to knowing other musicians would “check them out” (Martin), as previously mentioned. In addition, they said it was also common at that time for band managers, booking agents and record company scouts to source new bands, or specific musicians through attending performances. Reflected in this is the notion of a co-created musical habitus (Rimmer, 2009) where the practices of music industry people influenced the practices of the musicians and vice versa. It is suggested this created a source of learning because of how the participants responded; with the attitude that every performance was worth playing their best, even if to a small audience. This was acquired through word-of-mouth from hearing how other musicians progressed, and from watching a band perform well even though there were few in the audience. While also expressed as the expected standard for any musician, it implied this attitude was also a coping method, a form of resilience enabling them to continue during the early phase of a new band building their audience.

As a personal reflection they recollected how it felt to know the audience included other musicians who they often admired: initially stressful, they used it to learn how to mentally separate from being too aware of the audience. For example, Tyrone recalled having heard that two well-known guitarist were in the audience one evening, describing it as stressful because it can mean you feel too conscious of your playing. On that night during one song a string broke on the lead guitarist’s instrument just as his solo was to start, Tyrone said “I knew his part so I jumped in and did it making sure I kept it simple”. He reflected that his ability to stay focused on the song, and what was happening on stage, as opposed to being detrimentally focused on who was in the audience enabled him to “think quickly”. Tyrone was invited to join the band the two well-known musicians were in after they saw him perform, exemplifying how an attitude can contribute to career progress.

**Work well with others.** A second attitude was noted in the shared opinion that being able to get along with others, “have something to contribute” (Tyrone) or “be a good vibe” (Dean) meant it was more likely they would be recommended for work opportunities. This point is reflected in Dobson’s (2010) study of musicians negotiating advancement in a
context that is both social and work orientated, saying they “stressed the importance of reputations in the networks of musicians in which they operate” (p. 240). While in Dobson’s (2010) study the participants were stressed and felt unable to cope because they had not experienced it previously, it was something participants in this study had within their musician group culture since joining their first band. This attitude remained consistent from adolescence through to current career stage and drew attention to another area of learning this created. To maintain a good working environment for a band, or a collaborative composing project, the participants needed to learn how to deal with instances where someone was not working well. For Luke this was “getting rid of a bad apple… or the whole lot goes bad” and “sometimes it’s just about personality” (Frank). The consistency of comments regarding the need to ‘get along with everyone’ from all participants underlined the importance of this attitude, which meant being aware of how other musicians worked, an awareness of “fitting in” (Frank) to a group in a social sense and developing professional coping skills. The coping skills were, as Luke discussed in particular, about being able to accept personality and musicianship differences, and to view a band “as a business” which meant maintaining the band as a constructive workplace.

Accept all work offers. A third attitude was found in comments regarding accepting work offered, which meant as Marc said, “take all offers to perform, record, or be part of something different”. This was mentioned in reference to expanding from being in their first band to then taking offers of work across a variety of bands. The importance was explained as being both the challenge of working with different styles of music, new musicians, the expansion of their network and increased exposure which as Jerry said “contributed to your reputation”. In this attitude commonality a link was noted between references to the participant having accepted a variety of work in late adolescence into early career stage and the broad range of music styles and types of music work engaged with in later adult career. As a source of learning the attitude of accepting new work in areas not yet experienced meant being open to new music, which then became in itself another source of learning.

Self Awareness. There is a fourth area of noted attitudinal approaches, less obvious they emerged from comparing descriptions of experiences where the participant was invited to join a professional band in late adolescence into early adult career stages. The attitudes appeared to have been developed as a response to working with “a higher calibre of musician, you’re now working with seasoned professionals” (Martin). First, they mentioned having to acquire a level of detachment from their own assumptions and expectations of what it meant
to be playing with a particular band, taking it on a realistic and practical level. Second, that being overwhelmed by the experience of playing with well-known musicians or over confident because they were invited was not “done” (Martin), which reflects learning from musician culture norms. Third, letting events take their own course, meaning they learnt not to become stressed if an offer of work was cancelled, or changed. These attitudes were taken as indicating internal sources of learning because in having expressed them as understandings it indicated they had processed and acquired coping responses to the experiences of progressing in their music careers.

The music scene
The music scene contexts, in which participants were learning as a musician themselves, refer to the presence of live music available in their local area. Making the distinction between experiencing a live music performance as audience member and as learner musician conveys a significant aspect of this source of learning. They did not attend as passive enjoyment; it was always as a learning intent. Each participant referred to the variety of live music available to them during adolescence and into adult career stages. Being able to “walk down the street and find bands playing … all different kinds” (Dean) was to them a valuable source of learning. Learning through seeing many different bands playing a variety of music genres; from this exposure they were able to understand something in their own learning. It was not described as simply imitation; there was an integration of what was observed with how they had understood music could be played, or expressed in a performance. Being already in a performing band they could gradually build into their working knowledge new ideas in a more immediate way. Attending live performances, as either support band or audience member, constituted a valued form of learning; one requiring the capacity to understand how to translate what they were learning in that experience. This form of knowledge transmission, in a self-taught learning context, was not only as an individual acquiring understanding through an experience. It relied on being able to determine what was of value, and that value was drawn from not only their opinion but was mediated by expression within their own musician peer group (band). While this source communicated content such as instrument technique or stagecraft, it also carried notions of learning to work within their talent and skill level. For example, the participants recollected experiences where they, or another musician, had tried to play in a way similar to a musician they had seen and it had not worked. It was necessary, as they further explained, to understand that while it was good to aim to perform to a higher level of musicianship, if one did so before being experienced, or accomplished

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enough, it translated as showing off. If they were not able to understand that, and adapt, those musicians tended to not continue; because their expectations, attitude and ability to work with others did not align with accepting that it took a long time to achieve such musicianship.

In terms of what genres and styles of music were being played live, there was a wide variety of from Classical, Jazz, Folk and Country music to Rock and Roll, Rock, Soul and Rhythm and Blues. Seeing a variety of music played, often at one venue on the same night, meant that local musicians could develop to a higher standard because of such influence. They felt this was positive because it gave them more styles of music they could learn from, therefore more types of bands they could play with.

This source of learning also contributed to their definition of a successful musician, and as a consequence became tied to their own sense of identity, standards and perceptions of talent. From the bands playing a broad range of live music, the participants inferred the view that a musician was successful when capable of working across genres and styles. A capacity noted by Menger (1999) as being necessary to sustain a career. In addition, they cited these experiences as also defining their creativity; their idea of how a song could be composed was drawn from hearing bands blend styles and transform cover songs. This meant their music learning environment was imbued with an attitude of freedom within musical expression, because they experienced different genres at the same time presented them as a collective whole; it was all music. Essentially, live performance across genres created a conceptual view of music as not having boundaries, something they drew on creatively. While capable of recognising the differences, what emerged was their ability to detect the similarities and utilise this in performance and composing.

**Professional career: Attitude**

The notion of having a “professional career” was met with a degree of amusement; because framing their working lives in terms of ‘career’ carried a type of attitude to ones working life they felt did not fit with their perception. Rather, they saw it as being more a case of “well, if it keeps going that’s great” (Tyrone) and “it was all I could do, I had to make a living” (Frank). None of their comments were expressed in the sense of undermining their achievements and they were not dismissing their very active ongoing involvement in music projects such as composing, collaborative music work and continued band performances. Although it did set the tone for how they had approached their working lives in realistic and practical concepts. In this respect it was noted the participants were not, as discussed by Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz, and Dahlgren (2008) or Juuti and Littleton (2012), needing to form their
identity as professional musicians. Rather, their gradual introduction to working as a musician had already formed their sense of identity based on references to having been a professional musician since adolescence.

The participants’ response that their adult working life as a musician was set in an attitudinal framework of relative practical detachment raised the question of what experiences, collectively, could be the source of this attitude. When asked how this approach to their working lives had developed, their main source of learning was said to be simply experience. The central point appeared to be that the source of this learning was the participants' experiences with stress, both in themselves and within their work contexts. This can be viewed as a basic notion applicable to any work situation (Lazarus, 1995; Beehr, 2014), although for the participants negative stress was “what ruined careers” (Tyrone).

A common theme was their processing of stressful situations with a form of reasoning as Frank’s comment typified when he said “I got to this stage … and I thought why am I worrying… I’ve always had work come in”, and Wayne’s when he explained “there’s always something you can be working on” in respect to creating work for himself. It was noted that the participants, in regard to obtaining work, commented that they were “not really one for self-promotion … from doing one thing, if you do it well, you get more work, someone calls you” (Tyrone). This relied on being part of a working community of musicians, one in which they had acquired a level of currency through being known to others and having positive working relationships. Stress expressed as bad performance or negative relationships with others meant as Luke said “you can be a great musician … but if you’re always causing problems [because of stress] then no one wants to work with you”.

The main notion is that development of attitudes from acquiring initial sensibilities, even prior to being in a band, was a gradual application of experience and self awareness. Being able to perform in a band from early adolescence meant such experience, contact with other musicians and initial exposure to what a working life as a musician meant, afforded early foundational attitudinal orientations. This was expressed in terms of personal realisations as well as through social contact with other musicians. Either as direct advice from those whose experience they trusted, or understandings gained through hearing other musicians retell their experiences. It is a dynamic between trusted external sources and their ability to processes, evaluate and apply the learning.
Professional career: There was no plan

Considering their working lives were viewed as not a career but rather it was “just what I do” (Marc) led to noticing they also mentioned entering into music without a plan. They did not have a “set plan like I’m going to achieve this by this age” (Tyrone), it was as Martin said, “I thought I’d give it a go for a year, see if I could make it work”. The absence of a career plan did not translate as a lack of agency, or intent, all participants said they wanted to be able to work as a full-time musician. What it did reveal was how they had drawn from previous experiential learning during adolescence, which exposed them to the realities of working as a musician, where change was a significant characteristic. It is suggested that as a response, the participants learnt to adjust to this change characteristic by accepting and working with its inconsistency. Meaning, because they did not expect consistency their working lives were organised around the potential for cancellations, alterations and also the potential for new work opportunities. Direct reference was made to having learnt “to not expect something was going to happen until you’re actually on the plane” as Marc explained, this further evidenced their learning of how to cope with difficulties which caused potential counterproductive stress. The commonality of participants saying they did not, and still do not, have a career plan was explained as also meaning they could appreciate what they had achieved without an age based judgement.

The conveyed absence of a personal career plan, however, appeared inconsistent with the fact that these participants have sustained long term working lives as musicians, including being in bands that are nationally, and internationally known. What did present as a form of planning was their response to experiences of band mismanagement, and “unscrupulous deals” (Marc). In early career stages, as Luke, Marc, Frank, Liam, Wayne, Tyrone and Jerry mentioned, they directly experienced mismanagement extinguish a band’s potential further success. Drawing on the previous discussion of acquired common sense, these participants responded by ensuring they knew more about any dealings, contracts and management in a music business sense. This, it is suggested, reflected their application of a practical acquired common sense response as opposed to being dissuaded from continuing in their music careers. It came from, as Frank said, “you talk to other musicians, they all had a story of something bad, it was just how it was … so you know you’re not the only one”. For nine of the participants this meant being directly involved in the management of their band, where they worked collaboratively so that “everyone had a job, [name] was good at accounting so
he did the books” (Luke). The point this draws attention to is the participants' active solution response in a planned practical sense, where previous learning informed their solutions.

Absence of the notion of career, or a career plan, also highlighted how these musicians related to what they worked with; there was an openness to accepting a variety of work which translated as “not being bound by a set plan” (Tyrone). Derived from previous experiences of the inconsistent nature of the music industry and how success can be unexpected or short lived, career planning meant expecting a certain outcome. Such expectations were incongruent with the realities of their working lives. Descriptions conveyed the sense that being active in a variety of music work, which increased not only financial gain but musicianship, experience and network connections, was their adapted approach to ‘career’. As such, the focus was on each set of work projects or tours, within set time frames as opposed to longer term future work planning.

**Professional career: Composing songs and music terminology**

Arising from a detail in descriptions of how these participants worked, stating they “were not readers” (Dean) meaning they did not read music to play, learn or compose songs was the question of how this worked. Their responses reflected an aspect of musicianship skills, and the source of learning in acquiring knowledge of music terminology and theory. First, in adolescence they had developed their form of music notation, which was used solely to learn a song that was then memorised or as a guide to the songs for performances. In adult career stages this learning system had been further developed, so they only needed to hear the songs a few times before it was committed to memory. This capacity to learn songs aurally did not present as a problem, all participants had worked with orchestras, Television show bands, in music theatre bands and stage shows where both formally taught and self-taught professional musicians performed. While notation reading was not used, they did explain how terminology and some basic music theory were acquired.

Drawing back to the learning characteristic where they acquired what was needed at that time, or felt a need to understand, are descriptions of absorbing knowledge through hearing how other musicians communicated music concepts verbally. The source of this learning was encountered incidentally over time through interactions with others in their music contexts. As previously stated, the participants constantly assimilated, in a piecemeal manner, new information as it was encountered. Interestingly, it was noted they were not unaware of music theory; simply using different words to explain it. This is based on instances where the participant had something explained to them and they responded with
“oh, so that’s what it’s called” (Jerry) and that “I knew the note to hear, I just didn’t know its name” (Tyrone). In regard to communication, they tended to convey what was meant through actually playing the music which circumvented problems arising from differences in terminology.

As a source of learning, this way of working with music without notation or music theory knowledge as would be learnt through formal means did draw attention to three points. A lack of knowledge in a formal sense did not inhibit their music learning progress. To acquire the knowledge when it was needed meant they were at a stage where the meaning could be immediately understood, or applied. The absence of music theory, expressed as rules or set concepts about music, meant their creative music ideas were said to not incorporate a sense of limitations. In considering whether knowing music theory would have been a limitation, the response was that if as a learner musician they had approached music as something with rules it would have been a conceptual constraint. Meaning, as they mediated their learning through a sense of reference to an authoritative experienced musician, who was themselves self-taught, the notion that music had rules was not conveyed. If they had been told there were rules they said it would have altered the creative freedom felt. It was in the notion of musical freedom of expression that they learnt, and came to develop, how to understand and relate to music.

When composing songs, in particular collaboratively, they would make recordings on a cassette tape of their ideas and take down ideas using their own notation system. From the basic song idea, they would essentially use jamming sessions with their band, or other musicians, and form the completed song. The process involved initially committing the songs to memory, and later having someone translate it to notation if the song became popular. The participants found “not having been formally trained meant they did not know about any rules” (Liam), music was “without rules” (Frank). When composing they “had a sense of freedom” (Frank) which as Dean said “meant the possibilities were endless” and because of “not knowing the theory” (Jerry) they often came up with songs that were “not what anyone else would think of” (Jerry). The source of learning in composing was said by the participants to be from years of listening to songs, and learning cover songs although, it is suggested, it was also from a form of resourcefulness. Meaning, from having to adapt songs for their band during adolescence, and learning what songs were popular with audiences to enable their band to continue being booked, it required using creatively their level of collective skills and knowledge. Essentially, in having to work with what they did have, it brought a potentially
deeper experiential understanding because it had to be simple yet appealing, and they were able to get immediate feedback from their audience.

**Professional career: Change in music technology**

The sources of learning found in the participants' descriptions of encountering changes in technology followed a similar pattern to their initial learning of music. Through their peer musician groups, relationships with record producers and sound engineers they were gradually exposed to and learnt from observing how others used the technology. It is suggested they had acquired a level of self-efficacy in respect to the ability to learn through observation and trial and error, as it had been evidenced throughout their learning biography recollections. They either acquired what they felt was enough information to understand how the technology worked, and what it was capable of doing, so they could convey ideas to adept others, or learnt it themselves. In either situation there was a commonality in attitude towards how they framed its use, it was used to enhance and explore music rather than “expecting the technology to do it for you” (Dean). Interestingly, it was noted the participants had found that through using technology in their music, and for performances, it eventually brought them “back to appreciating the basics … returning to just playing … without all that techno stuff” (Dean). Essentially, while they had expressed valuing the additional range of possibilities in musical expression, it had also taught them to value “simple playing” (Frank).

**Concluding discussion summary**

Structuring the participants’ music learning biographies into three phases was primarily to form a framework within which the findings and analysis discussion could be presented, although in the lived reality of these lives such phases were not as distinct. In the first phase prior to receiving their first instrument these participants expressed situations of learning through one or more family member’s music activities; something the family member did for their own enjoyment. It was unexpectedly characterised by a lack of intent on the part of a family member to instigate or introduce music to the participant, the choice to pursue music was their free choice. This was important; it meant the participants approached their initial relationship with music as a freedom to explore which was fun and exciting. In the presence of music activity and resources, the feeling of being drawn to music as their own interest was placed within a sense of music as a natural connection. The external learning sources were primarily the observed and shared music activities of a family member, and to a lesser extent
with peers and older peers. Internal learning presented as development of conceptual constructs about music, where their understanding was mediated by how music was expressed and valued by family members, or friends and their older siblings. The music activities, or exposure to music, were in familiar contexts such as their home, or within local community locations, which meant concepts about music were situated within everyday life.

Being given their own instrument marked a shift in their learning biography. Prior learning had been through listening, observing and talking about music, this allowed them to acquire a degree of understanding, which became a motivation to want to play an instrument. A pattern emerged where the excitement felt in figuring something out formed their motivational drive; it conveyed a sense that in learning something in their own way, ownership of the achievements and responsibility for their learning directed and further motivated their learning. Having begun to learn to play an instrument there was an increase in learning sources, and utilisation of previous sources, where trust and discernment was important. In becoming a learner musician they came into contact, through local connections, with others who were also learning which created opportunity for shared music activities, such as jamming sessions. The spheres of influence in which they were now engaging broadened to encompass family, peer and older peer musician groups, as well as people associated with their live performances. As an individual they learnt independently, forming their own understandings and ways of learning yet this was mediated and further translated through music activity interactions. Joining a band and performing live regularly during this phase was cited as their most significant learning; it was how and where they learnt about being a musician through experiencing the realities of band groups, live performance and the music business. The notion of this adolescent band phase being akin to an apprenticeship was evident and agreed by the participants; in respect to learning through direct music industry experience and the presence of experienced and more accomplished musicians. There were differences; it did not have a set structure in what they learnt rather it was on a needs basis, and acquired knowledge from experienced musicians was not through direct instruction but within observations.

In the third phase, finishing school and starting to focus on music as a potential future introduced sources of learning accessed through self-directed intent to create music playing opportunities. This was evidenced in recollections that the band they were in during high school disbanded when school finished. Having developed their music skills, including composition and song adaptation, the ability to continue relied on network connections and
openness to accepting work within different genres. It was described as being more opportunity afforded through having become known within a sphere of locally situated musicians where each prior source of learning was now drawn on. In entering into a more professional level of musicianship through extending their experience they were turning to, and further developing, their prior learning in an immediate consequence manner. The trial and error aspect remained, although it was now within groups of musicians with varying levels of experience and not continuing to accommodate new understandings impacted on their music career progress. This phase is characterised by sources of learning situated within more commercial, continuous music activity and the maturing of their relationship with music and themselves as musicians.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

If you don’t ask us now, you may never know (Marc)

This quote from Marc encapsulates a sentiment that emerged from having conducted this study: to capture the learning sources and experiences of professional self-taught musicians while it is still possible. Marc’s point was to highlight that those who had learnt solely through self-taught means were “getting older now, not everyone can keep working as much as I do”. It was not inferred that self-taught music learning was no longer present, but did draw attention to the uniqueness in each participants’ learning biography as a reflection of the eras in which they were children and adolescents. It is the music learning in those previous eras, when the sources of learning were not connected to the Internet orientation of today, which the findings and discussion have presented. The detail rich descriptions of events throughout their lives, particularly early childhood and adolescence, enabled as many insights into their learning as are offered in the findings. It was in a time before much of the current technology was invented, computers and the Internet were not commonly available. The “radio was king” (Jerry), and as records gave way to cassette tapes the participants entered into their adult music careers using cassette tapes to record their ‘demos’, and learn new songs. The music learning biographies of the participants are a testament to the success possible as a professional musician through self-taught means.

The research question posed, asking what sources of learning do self-taught professional musicians utilise and are exposed to during their learning biography, is answered at its most rudimentary level by the participants’ most frequent expressions “we learnt from everything” and “by doing it”. If this was where attention to learning started it would typically place the beginning as being when participants first obtained an instrument, yet this was not where it began. Descriptions of pre-school music play activities indicated influences from early exposure to music in the family home. Starting at an early age, from six to eight years old, they recalled spending hours just listening to music available from family record collections and the radio, it is here they developed their ability to actively listen to songs. For some they were able to attend live music performances either through family entertaining or concerts in the community. Older siblings and friend’s older siblings were pivotal sources of learning within contemporary music genres, the access to and inclusion in their activities during mid primary school to early high school increased the participants’ desire to learn an
instrument. Including this earlier portion of their learning biography has enabled insight into sources that contributed to the participants’ interest and desire to pursue music. It is where the foundations of their attitudes, motivations and learning approach appear to be derived.

The secondary supporting questions sought to elicit the content and contexts of their learning, and whether specific music learning experience could be considered a source of learning. It was found in analysis that when each source of learning was considered in relation to what had been learnt, and the context, there was a cyclic cumulative progression. Referred to as learning what they needed at that time, or were capable of understanding, it was built on by their use of and continual re-translation of the same sources in repetitive experiences such as learning and practising songs and live performances. In one respect their sources of learning could be seen as limited, because they used the music and peer group musician encounters available to them at that time, as opposed to learning in a formal educational setting. Yet in analysis it became clear that it was how they used, or what they did, with the sources of learning that increased their depth of learning and developed the ability to sustain interest. This point was made by the participants as they described their first band experiences as “we sounded terrible” (Jerry), yet they carried the attitude of aiming to improve through every performance, which could mean “doing well enough to not get thrown off stage” (Frank).

The sources of learning, content and context found, as determined through participant recollections are presented in summary through their commonalities and themes and are placed in their overarching categories. Three main groupings were evident when other people were the source of learning: consisting of family members, peers and their older siblings, as well as peer and older experienced musicians. When material resources were the source of learning they utilised predominantly recorded music (records, cassette tapes, radio), music print media, song books and in later adult career from new music technology. The activities seen as sources of learning are grouped into three categories: listening to, and talking about music, being challenged through activities related to joining or playing with a band or music group, and attending live performances as audience or watching performances if they are the support band. When experience was the source of learning three main categories were noted. Emotional connection: to music, to a person they knew with musical talent or knowledge, within their performing and composing of music, to their own continual learning achievements. Cognitive experiences: their process of learning how to learn music, related musician group cultural norms, attitudinal and behavioural musicianship expectations,
transforming previous knowledge through repetitious activity of rehearsals, live performance, composing and practise. Behavioural experiences: learning through trial and error, observation of other’s behaviour, modification of own behaviour within situations, awareness and assimilation of professional musician behaviour into their own as their career progressed.

**The main content and contexts of learning from their sources are as follows:**

**Parents (family home, local community):** exposure to, and learning of, music through it being consistently present in family home, value and admiration for music and musical talent, sense of music as fun and exciting, shared moments of listening and talking about music a significant support.

**Older siblings and friends older siblings (family home, friend’s home):** initial connection to and learning of youth contemporary music, admired self-taught learning which they sought to emulate, encouraged to listen to a wider variety of non-mainstream music, seen as an authority so learnt from what they said and did, learnt musician group norms indirectly, their interest in music was valued, and they were source of inspiration and support.

**Their self-initiated music activity (home, school, home of friend, music venue):** responsibility for own learning, openness to learning from what was available, learning how to listen and recognise patterns, rhythms and melodies across genres, to play their instrument by ear in a trial and error method, through learning accomplishments they felt a sense of motivation, to accept their learning took time and was more significant through live performance, working with their skill level at that time; that learning does not stop it continues and can be experienced as learning if they are open to it.

**Peer and older peer musicians (School, home, rehearsal venue, music venue):** their jamming sessions taught them how to play with others, as they progressed into adult stages jamming sessions developed song composition skills and showed them if they could play with another musician, learnt more about the musician group cultural norms, began to learn how to work musically and personally with other musicians, awareness of own knowledge and skill development through shared engagements.

**First and subsequent bands (music venues):** stage craft through their translation of how to perform, song choice for different audiences, song adaption to suit skill level and to be creative, playing in different venues regarding acoustics, how to deal with sudden difficulties such as instrument failure during performance, self-management, the reality of
being a performing musician, band management, interpersonal band member relationships, accepting change as being part of the music industry, their own and shared song composition, acquired music workplace sensibilities, and how to deal with success and determine their own career path.

**Adult career stages (Music venues, music related locations):** work ethic of seeking to be continually playing within different bands to expand their experience and future work options.; they were responsible for their own work opportunities, learn from all possible opportunities including from band managers/support crew/audience response/ recording engineers, accepting to learn new music genres and different forms of music work, maintaining work relationships because word-of-mouth recommendations were how a lot of their opportunities arose, and being open to learning from older and younger musicians.

This concluding quote exemplifies a sentiment found in the participants’ recollections in regard to their attitude of embracing music learning through openness to challenges and being pragmatic in respect to skill level acquisition expectations. Sources of learning they encounter, are drawn to and instigate are imbued with the self-taught music learning characteristic as is carried in Martin’s words

*I’d say when you are really young and starting out almost never say no to any gig, even if you think it’s beyond you. Just have a go and if you are crap at it, and fall down, it doesn’t matter. You have all the time to get up, and that’s when you really learn, when you go ‘right, well I wasn’t good enough in that department so that’s what I have to work on’. Or you fly and go ‘hey this is easy, what’s the next challenge? But the main thing is to say yes to everything until you are on your feet, because you’ll learn from it* (Martin).

Conclusion: 196
Future research recommendations

The following topics were developed based on notes taken during the analysis phase, post interview discussions with some of the participants and my own reflections after completing the study. Having taken in this study a broad view of self-taught music learning within a biographical perspective these topics are focused on specific learning situations.

- The differences and similarities between pre and post Internet self-taught learning of music, focusing on the sources of learning and how they influence what is learnt.
- What is the role of live performance in self-taught music learning? An in-depth analysis of what is learnt and the value of its contribution to music careers.
- How does seeing a live performance impact the motivation, attitudes and focus of learner musicians, particularly those outside formal music education?
- What do professional musicians learn from audiences, how do they use what is learnt?
- What expectations do professional musicians bring to their performances, in regard to audience reception, their role in the music event, and their own performance?
- What do professional musicians learn from performing in different types of locations, in venues of various sizes and acoustics as well as for different types of events?
- Is the need to please audiences a factor in the learning of a musician? Does it contribute, mediate or impede a musician’s learning?
References


References: 199


References: 201


References: 202


References: 204


References: 205


Zimmerman, B., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (2010). In recent years there has been a growing interest in student’s self-regulation. *SAGE Directions in Educational Psychology, 1*(3), 231-242.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)
College of Design and Social Context NH&MRC Code: EC00237

Notice of Approval

Date: 01 December 2015
Project number: CHEAN A0000019745-10/15
Project title: Learning Sources and Learning Experiences of Self-taught Career Contemporary Musicians.
Risk classification: Low risk
Chief investigator: Professor David Forrest
Status: Approved
Approval period: From: 01 December 2015 To: 01 May 2018

The following documents have been reviewed and approved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment and Application form</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01.12.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to assist in the recruitment of participants - Email</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01.12.2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above application has been approved by the RMIT University CHEAN as it meets the requirements of the National statement on ethical conduct in human research (NH&MRC, 2007).

Terms of approval:

1. **Responsibilities of chief investigator**
   It is the responsibility of the above chief investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by CHEAN. Approval is valid only whilst the chief investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

2. **Amendments**
   Approval must be sought from CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project. To apply for an amendment use the request for amendment form, this is available on the HREC website and should be submitted to the CHEAN secretary. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. **Adverse events**
   You should notify the CHEAN immediately (within 24 hours) of any serious or unanticipated adverse effects of their research on participants, and unforeseen events that might affect the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. **Annual reports**  
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. Annual reports must be submitted by the anniversary of approval of the project for each full year of the project. If the project is of less than 12 months duration then a final report only is required.

5. **Final report**  
   A final report must be provided within six months of the end of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

6. **Monitoring**  
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by the CHEAN at any time.

7. **Retention and storage of data**  
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data according to the requirements of the Australian code for the responsible conduct of research (section 2) and relevant RMIT policies.

8. **Special conditions of approval**  
   Nil.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title above.

Professor Joseph Siracusa  
Deputy Chairperson  
RMIT DSC CHEAN A

cc: Ms Suzana Kovacevic (Ethics Officer/CHEAN secretary), Ms Leah Watson.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Learning Sources and Learning Experiences of Self-taught Career Contemporary Musicians

Investigators:
Professor David Forrest (Senior Supervisor)
Professor of Music Education
T: +61 3 9925 7807
M: +61 412553720
e: david.forrest@rmit.edu.au

Doctor Ian Rogers (Second Supervisor)
Lecturer of Music Industry, Cultural Studies
T: +61 3 9925 9838
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Ms Leah Watson (PhD Candidate)
T: 03 9327 2678
M: 0416 190 233
e: s3398194@student.rmit.edu.au

Dear (participant name),

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators listed above.

Who is involved in this research project?
Ms Leah Watson is undertaking a PhD research study at the RMIT University, in the college of Design and Social Context, within the School of Education, entitled “Learning Sources and Learning Experiences of Self-taught Career Contemporary Musicians” under Senior Supervisor, Professor David Forrest and Second Supervisor Doctor Ian Rogers. This project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.
Why have you been approached?
You have been approached with this invitation through (name) because you may be a suitable candidate owing to you being a self-taught full-time professional contemporary musician, who has been working as such for at least 10 years. This invitation will have been sent to you through email or in person, it will contain a copy of the Research Information sheet and consent form.

Why is it being conducted?
This research study is concerned with investigating the music learning biographies of musicians who have learnt independent of formal education institutions. Termed ‘self-taught’ this area of music learning has been previously under researched, with little attention paid to learning sources, learning experiences, content and contexts. Taking a life biography approach this study aims to explore the progressive learning from childhood to current times in relation to music and associated knowledge and skills required of a professional contemporary musician. The outcomes of this research may contribute to a more in-depth understanding of professional development aide for musicians and support for music learning independent of formal education systems. It may in addition be used as an aide in development of music education courses, from primary to tertiary level schooling.

Who can participate?
Ms Watson is seeking musicians who fit the following criteria:

1. That they are currently working as a full-time musician primarily in contemporary genres. Recognition is made that full-time musicians are likely to work within multiple genres and mixed genres that can include classical and jazz.
2. They have been working as a full-time musician for at least 10 years.
3. They have not entered into, whether full or partial completion of, a degree or diploma level qualification in music.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to attend an initial interview that will be audio recorded, and will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. A transcript will be sent to you for verification of your responses. A second interview will be conducted, two to four weeks later, based on responses from your initial interview, which will again be transcribed and sent to you for verification. The second interview is an opportunity to discuss in more detail recollections from initial interview. If you choose to, you are offered an opportunity to share any more learning experiences through writing them in an email or letter, or verbally through a third interview.

All interviews will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you that is quiet and affords privacy. For this purpose Ms Watson will require a phone and email contact for you, which will only be used for this reason.
What are the possible risks or disadvantages?
It is not anticipated that you will experience any risks or disadvantages associated with participation in this study.

What are the benefits associated with participation?
We cannot promise any benefits from participating in this research, although it may be helpful or interesting to you to talk about your experience of learning music and associated music knowledge and skills.

What will happen to the information I provide?
We can assure you that your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym in the transcript of the interview. Information that specifically identifies you will be edited to ensure anonymity or deleted. If you wish, you may listen to the interview audio tape, and you will be sent a copy of the transcript to read and edit or erase any part of your contribution. Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically required or allowed by law, or (3) you provide the researcher with written permission.

Information provided by the participants will be used only for the express purposes of the research and will only be seen by the three researchers nominated on this information sheet. Research data (i.e. audio tapes and transcripts) will be stored securely at RMIT for 5 years after publication before being destroyed. The final research paper will remain online.

The interviews will be analysed and quotes may be presented in papers for publication or presentation at conferences and in a thesis submitted for Ms Watson’s Doctorate degree and held in the RMIT Repository which is a publicly accessible online library of research papers. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports arising from this project.

Security of the data
The data gathered in this study will be contained in both interview audio recordings and transcripts. All audio recordings and a copy of de-identified transcripts will be stored on a secure server site at RMIT, accessed only by the three researchers indicated above. This data will be securely stored for five (5) years. Once transcribed the audio recordings will be held only on RMIT secure server site, and not kept in the possession of Ms Watson (on her computers, or in digital files on removable storage devices). The original copy will be erased. While completing data analysis Ms Watson will store all digital files containing de-identified transcripts on a password protected computer, and paper copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in her home office.
What are my rights as a participant?
Should you consent to participate in this research you will have:

- The right to withdraw from the project at any time and to not have to give any explanation for withdrawing.
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to participate?
You should be aware that this study will contribute to academic research in Australia. The purpose of the study is primarily to investigate learning sources and learning experiences of self-taught musicians to aide in future music education courses, professional development support for musicians and aide in support of learning independent of formal education institutions.

What do you need to do to participate?
Please read this invitation and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, please contact the researcher, Ms Watson.

If you would like to participate, please complete the attached Consent Form and return it to Ms Watson at email address provided above.

Yours sincerely

Dr David Forrest (Senior Supervisor)
Dr Ian Rogers (Associate Supervisor)
Leah Watson, PhD Student

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
Appendix 3: Participant consent form

CONSENT FORM (Adult/Over 18)

1. The project has been explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described.
3. I agree to participate in (please circle your answer of choice):
   Interviews ………………Yes/No
4. I acknowledge that:
   (a) I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
   (b) The study is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
   (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to RMIT. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant Consent

Participant: ____________________________  Date: ______________

(Signature)_____________________________

Witness: _______________________________  Date: ______________

(Signature)_____________________________
Appendix 4: Interview questions divided into eight topic areas.

**Topic Area 1**

**Rationale:** This is to identify early sources of learning such as listening to recorded music, live music played in the home, or attending performances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you recall about music in your earliest childhood memories?</td>
<td>• Can you tell me more about the types of music?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What stands out from that time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Who chose that music or that activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can you recall who was involved</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Was there music in the community, cultural or social?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How did you begin to learn music itself?</td>
<td>• Whose idea was it to start to learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Did your parents have anything to do with it?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can you describe a bit more about how you went about learning at this age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What inspired you to learn music?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What kept you interested?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Did you learn music at school at all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What instrument did you learn?</td>
<td>• Why that instrument?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Did anyone teach you to play, or guide you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Did anyone else play that instrument that you knew, or knew of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What amount of time was devoted to it?</td>
<td>• Did you set the amount of time you would practice for or did someone else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Where did you go to practice, was it at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you think your interest in music interfered with your school studies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Apart from practising on your instrument what else did you do in your learning, like reading about it?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can you describe for me what a typical practice session entailed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you practice alone, and did you join with others?</td>
<td>• For how long did you practice alone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How did you come to 'jam' with others, did you instigate it or did someone else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would you describe the experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What could you say you learnt from it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Topic Area 2: Rationale:** This is to uncover any emerging learning in terms of networking, developing relationship skills with other musicians both personally and musically, as well as resourcefulness in finding opportunities to progress musically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Your music interest started when you were in primary school, did anyone at your school also learn to play music? | • Did any of your friends join in with your interest in music?  
  • What sorts of things would you do?  
  • Did your school have any music events? |
| You are now in high school can you tell me about your learning at that age?             | • Did your school have any music classes?  
  • What kinds of things did you do at this age in terms of music?  
  • What continued to interest you at this age in terms of playing music? |
| At this age, how did you go from the simpler learning on your own to then playing with others? | • You are playing in a band, how often were you doing live performances?  
  • How were they arranged, who instigated them?  
  • What was the experience like?  
  • What kinds of things were you learning about music, performing live, being in a band.  
  • Did your parents or family help in any way? |
| Your engagement with music is increasing: rehearsals, band meetings and performances: what can you tell me about that time? | • How would you describe the experience of playing live at that time?  
  • Can you tell me more about learning to play with others both musically and on a personal level? |
| At this time did you turn to anyone for advice, or did you have someone who mentored you in any way? | • When you did talk to other people about music, or being a musician, can you recall what you might have spoken about?  
  • Can you tell me anything more about ways in which you would have sought out help or advice? |

**Topic Area 3: Topic area rationale:** This is to identify early concepts of self as a musician, what they saw as being possible for themselves and any social or cultural influence sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What were your understandings of ‘being a musician’ in the earlier stages of your learning? | • Where did you get that idea from?  
  • What do you recall what people generally thought about musicians? Family, local people in the community? |
| Did you think of becoming a musician, as a future for yourself?                         | • Did that change how you approached music, the learning of it? |
| Did you know anyone who was a performing musician? | • How did you get to meet them?  
• How did your (parent/friend) know them?  
• Was this helpful in any way? |
| What kinds of things do you recall that might have been in media about musicians? | • Do you see it as having had an impact on you in your music career?  
• Did you learn anything in particular from it? |

**Topic 4: Rationale:** This is to identify any mentoring, seeking out opportunities to observe musicians rehearsing, recording, performing or composing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| You are in the high school bands, and you are developing your skills, can you tell me about learning for a more professional level? | • How did you get to play/talk with the professional musicians?  
• How did you hear about what they were doing, so you could sit in on rehearsals?  
• How did they treat you? |
| Did your parents, family or friends have an active role in anything at this stage, regarding your music interest? | • Was this something offered as help, or did you ask for the help?  
• Do you recall anyone taking a particular interest in your music activities?  
• Did you learn anything in particular from this? |
| Apart from playing your instrument, rehearsals and your gigs, did you do anything else related to learning music? | • How did you find out about it?  
• Did anyone else you knew also do that?  
• Was there anything in connection, for example, record shops, or music associations?  
• Did musicians organise anything at that time? |
| What can you say now, looking back you learnt at this time? | • Did you set out to learn that? Was it intentional?  
• How did/have you used that learning? |

**Topic 5: Topic area rationale:** What skills and knowledge were required such as networking for work or business skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How did you go from initial paid work to becoming full-time? | • Did anyone specifically help you in this?  
• Did you instigate this, how did you know to do that? |
| How did you learn about the business side? | • Was there any direct ‘teaching’ of this?  
• Did you learn from experiences, success or failures? |
Did you look for opportunities to play music (work)

- How did you learn about getting work?
- Is there anything about that you had to learn through experience?
- What was your experience of this?

**Topic 6: Rationale:** This is to identify sources of learning, or methods of learning in relation to practical aspects of musicianship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| You are now working as a musician full time; can you tell me what sorts of things made up your week? | • Has that changed over time, with different work?  
• What can you say you learnt about this?                                                  |
| What would your learning sources have been in terms of how to organise yourself?        | • Can you tell me anything more about this?  
• Did you experience a ‘trial and error’ phase in this?  
• What kinds of things did you have to consider, did this change over time?  
• What could you say you learnt from this?                                                 |

**Topic 7: Rationale:** This is to capture any sources of learning that may not have been mentioned previously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What would you say you learnt from your parents?                                      | • How did you apply that, or work with it in your life?  
• (or) do you recall anything now you have had time to think about it |
| Thinking back over your life can you recall anyone who might not have been in music but taught you something that impacted on your music career? | • How did you meet this person?  
• Do you recall anyone else?  
• Is there anything you would like to add?                                              |
| Have there been any musicians in particular that you learnt something significant from? | • How did this come about?  
• Where did this happen?  
• What did you take from that?                                                             |
| If you had to say what has been the most consistent source of your music learning, what would it be? | • Could you say the way in which you have learnt, and still learn, changed over time or is it constant?  
• Did you ever want to learn in a formal way, through a school or take a course?          |
**Topic 8: Rationale:** This is to uncover what they learnt from various types of changes, which may have taught them ways of coping or self-management skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1: Questions</th>
<th>Interview 2: Types of follow up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| In relation to music, can you think of any changes in your life that taught you something? | • Can you tell me anything more about this?  
• How did you apply/work with this new understanding? |
| Changes occur often, I expect, when working with different bands, or musicians. Can you tell me anything about that? | • You mentioned …… can you tell me anything more about that?  
• Do you have anything more to add about this? |
| You would have needed to manage or cope with change; can you tell me how you approach/work with change? | • Was there anyone who gave you advice about this?  
• Did you learn about this through a family member, or a friend?  
• Could you say this was a 'trial and error' style of learning to manage change? |