Glasser, S., Krause, A.E., & Osborne, M. (2020). Exploring the contemporary listening experiences of synesthetes. In Jörg Jewanski, Sean A. Day, Saleh Siddiq, Michael Haverkamp, and Christoph Reuter (Eds.), *Music and Synesthesia. Abstracts from a Conference in Vienna, scheduled for July 3–5, 2020* (pp. 104-105). Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität. ISBN-13: 978-3840502279

Exploring the Contemporary Listening Experiences of Synesthetes

Dr Solange Glasser, The University of Melbourne, solange.glasser@unimelb.edu.au
Dr Amanda E. Krause, The University of Melbourne
Dr Margaret Osborne, The University of Melbourne

The purpose of this research was to investigate the contemporary listening experiences of synesthetes. In particular, we were interested in finding out how synesthetes access and experience music, and whether their listening practices are related to their synesthetic experiences. Music listening engenders a variety of individual experiences that are based on the interaction of both emotional and cognitive processes. The experience of listening to music, therefore, depends not only on the situation and context within which the listening occurs, but also on the specific cognitive style of the listener. Two general cognitive styles have been identified by Baron-Cohen (2009) in his Empathizing-Systemizing Theory. This study, therefore, investigates the impact of cognitive style on music listening practices, and considers the potential multimodal experiences that are linked to these practices. Participants recruited for this study (n= 319, including synesthetes and a non-synesthete comparison group) comprise young adults aged 18-35. Participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire, and respond to questions including: demographics (e.g., age, gender, personality), musical background, preferences, cognitive style, and synaesthesia. Cognitive style was measured using the short version of the Music-Empathizing-Music-Systemizing Inventory (MEMS Inventory; Kreutz, Schubert, & Mitchell, 2008), while synaesthesia was tested using items from the Synesthesia Battery (Eagleman et al., 2007; Glasser, 2018). In this presentation, we will discuss the findings of the study and their implications for synesthetes, as well as offer suggestions for future directions in music psychology and synaesthesia research. This study is the first of its kind to collect data from synesthetes concerning their music listening cognitive style and their contemporary listening experiences. In so doing, it furthers our theoretical understanding of the relationship between cognitive styles and synaesthesia, as well as broadening our understanding of the effect of synaesthesia on musical choices and preferences.

Baron-Cohen, S. (2009). Autism: The empathizing-systemizing (E-S) theory. *Annals Of The New York Academy Of Sciences, 1156*, 68-80. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.04467

Eagleman, D. M., Kagan, A. D., Nelson, S. S., Sagaram, D., & Sarma, A. K. (2007). A standardized test battery for the study of synesthesia. *Journal of Neuroscience Methods, 159*(1), 139-145.

Glasser, S. (2018). *The Impact of Synaesthesia and Absolute Pitch on Musical Development.* PhD Dissertation, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Kreutz, G., Schubert, E., & Mitchell, L. A. (2008). Cognitive styles of music listening. *Music Perception, 26*(1), 57-73. doi:10.1525/mp.2008.26.1.57