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Exploring everyday musical imagery : an experience-sampling study.

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ABSTRACT

Psychological research regarding mental imagery is heterogeneous in nature owing to its internal nature. Mental imagery involving music is most simply defined as *hearing music in the mind's ear.* Musical imagery (MI) is an understudied phenomenon particularly by means of non-experimental methods. This study investigated four dimensions of everyday MI: namely it's content, nature, constancy and associated corporeal manifestations (for instance, foot-tapping, humming and so forth), via experience-sampling methods. Stage one of data collection involved a cross-sectional survey (n = 87) whereby participants provided retrospective self-reports concerning MI, pertinent demographic information, and particulars concerning their musical history. Stage two – implemented subsequent to piloting – utilised iterative sampling to illuminate the dimensions and descriptive facets of MI during everyday activities. Each participant (n = 16; 8 musicians; 8 non-musicians) was selected based on specific inclusion criteria, following stage one participation, and were invited to complete 21 questionnaires over seven days, receiving three SMS prompts per day. In terms of prevalence, MI was consistently experienced by participants, regardless of their musical background although musicians reported higher rates of MI occurrences. There was a statistically significant association between MI and musical training/experience ($\chi^2 = 6.35$; *d.f.* = 1; p = .012). Furthermore, odds ratios suggested that the musicians demonstrated an 85% likelihood of experiencing MI as compared to the non-musicians (OR 1.85; CI 1.14 – 2.99). Daily exposure to music appeared to be an equally significant factor relating to every day MI incidences, particularly given the finding that the majority of participant's MI episodes were familiar and recently heard.

Keywords: auditory imagery; corporeal manifestations; experience-sampling; musical imagery; musical imagery dimensions; musicians; non-musicians