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Imagination and Narrative: Young People's Experiences

Introduction

Imagery generation in dramatized audio drama is still poorly understood (Rodero, 2012a). Accumulated literature affirms that audio dramatization uses imagination, shows a large degree of listener involvement, and causes listeners to generate many and vivid images. Cognitive psychology suggests that while everyone uses imaginative mental imagery on a daily basis, no two people generate images the same way (Kosslyn, 1983). This study proposed to use the imaginations of young people to create a window into imagery generation. In fact, it contributed to the understanding of how young people listen to audio drama and suggests ways that producers can make audio drama more attractive to younger listeners.

Literature Review & Research Questions

It is the researcher's belief that a more holistic alliance of social science (cognitive psychology) and traditional literary analysis needs to take place in order for the empirical findings on radio and audio dramatization to be more widely known. Furthermore, having come from an English literature/creative writing/media studies background, the researcher intended to blend the qualitative approach by researchers like Forsslund (2014) and Balsebre et al (2011) with the varied tradition of quantitative literature, mainly that from the advertising psychology specialty. This literature review draws from a variety of disciplines and an international perspective.

Advertising the radio message

Despite the long history of radio drama, little has been empirically established about its cognitive effects. Within the industry itself and among its many devotees through the years, there is an anecdotal "common sense idea" that audio drama creates the best pictures (Douglas, 2004, p.4; Marc 1996, p.180; Shepherd, 2000, p.52.) and that it taxes the imagination, more so than television or related visual media (Forsslund, 2014). Likewise, the scholarly emphasis on imagery generation has focused mainly on visual stimuli (Bolls & Potter, 1998; Rodero, 2012a). In fact, the prior work that has been done on audio-evoked imagery focuses primarily on persuasiveness in radio dramatic

advertising (Bone and Ellen, 1992; Potter, Lang and Bolls, 1997; Lang, Potter & Bolls, 1999; Bolls, 2002; Potter and Choi, 2006; Bolls, 2006).

Establishing the “higher imagery” quality of advertisements has been formally developed using a scale refined by Babin and Burns (1998) based on work by Bone & Ellen (1992), which measures the extent to which images are vivid, the quality/ease, and the number of images generated. Previous studies have focused on the use of sound effects, level of listener involvement, and cognitive resource allocation. For example, Bolls (2002) established that non-verbal sound effects in radio dramatizations are more high-imagery than verbal cues alone. Potter and Choi (2006) found that the most aurally complex messages yielded higher listener attendance levels. Building on the previous work of Potter (1998, 2000), Potter and Choi (2006) used heart rate, skin conductance, and self-reported data to demonstrate that structurally complex audio messages (those which contained multiple voice changes, sound effects, etc.) increased arousal, improved memory, and impacted attitudes toward the advertisement’s message.

In terms of prior research more specifically attuned to the concerns of radio and audio drama as opposed to advertising, Rodero (2012a, 2012b) has presented the most comprehensive work. Rodero (2012b) built on the work of Bolls (2002) and Potter and Choi (2006). She found that an aural speech narrative offers *more* image generation, *more vivid* image generation, and the listener involvement is *stronger* as opposed to purely narrative technique. She used three types of scales based on work previously developed, including the Bone and Ellen (1992)/Babin and Burns (1998) vividness scale.

Perhaps most importantly, Potter, Lang and Bolls’ (1997) concept of the *orienting response* was taken up by Rodero (2012a) in her discussion of *sound shots* (Rodero 2012a, p.460). This research was highly pertinent to the practice of audio drama as it establishes a distinction between sound effects and sound shots, which Rodero defines as “changes in the sound intensity, established by the distance with respect to the microphone on radio” (462). She further refined this as the *what* (sound effects) and the *where* (sound shots). She suggested that listening to dramatic audio in which sound effects and sound shots are present also entails greater effort due to heightened extent of cognitive resources which are assigned throughout the processing stage (p. 461).

What makes strong imagery?

Imagery generation is difficult to quantify. People differ in their abilities to use mental images as well as using words differently in describing mental images (Kosslyn, 1983; Paivio, 1986). Previous studies have eliminated the latter variable by measuring physiological reactions as well as or in the

place of self-reported data. Nevertheless, as Bolls remarked of his 2006 study, such studies did not replicate the conditions under which most people listen to radio. Indeed, while the previously noted studies have demonstrated that audio drama offers *increased* imagery generation and *more vivid* imagery generation, that listener involvement is stronger, and that spatial awareness is important in listening to audio drama, how can these findings be linked to real-world practice? Indeed, how can we better understand how young people listen to audio drama, and might listen to audio drama, in real-world circumstances?

Researchers have found that in advertising, the strength of the listener's identification and the success of the imagery generation is based on the focal character (a viewpoint with which to identify) and plausibility of the imagined situation (Bone and Ellen 1992). Therefore, ordinary situations should evoke greater imagery than unique ones (Bone and Ellen 1992). However, in the same study, Bone and Ellen acknowledged that researchers have consistently found that images of the bizarre capture listeners' imaginations rather than the mundane. This tension has held true in audio drama practice. How both impulses—toward mundane images on the one hand and “bizarre” or otherworldly images on the other—can both exist in one person and to what degree has not yet been established (Rattigan, 2000).

Young people and audio drama

The art of addressing the audience through radio and the potential consequences was addressed from the 1930s onwards (Arnheim, 1936). Audience research specifically on the transporting qualities of radio drama, particularly through psychology, was initiated particularly in the wake of increased attention from radio advertisers (Cantril and Allport 1935, Cantril 1940, Lazarsfeld 1946). Based on these ground-breaking studies, researchers of audio-evoked imagery generation have tended to use college students as participants¹, mainly for reasons of expediency. Forsslund (2014) demonstrated the need for more engagement with younger listeners. Developmentally, as children get older, their ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy strengthens (Wilson, 2007), meaning that older children are better able to infer, (Lemish, 2007) which potentially means they possess adult-like tools to interpret audio drama. Conversely, older children judge a program as

¹ With a notable exception: De Boer's (1940) study (n=738) involved child listeners in the Chicago area, with a focus on emotional attachment inherent in narrative and situational elements in American network programs specifically made for children (aged 8-16) such as *The Lone Ranger* and *Little Orphan Annie*. De Boer (1940) found that different age groups responded differently to narrative/emotional elements of the dramas, with younger children engaging with stories about animals and older children interested in scenes of romantic love. De Boer's study, of course, predated the widespread use of television.

realistic if it depicts events that are possible in the real world (Arnett, 2007). Therefore, such a combination presents us again with the tension between mundane and bizarre imagery.

Young people's access to and consumption of radio and audio drama in the UK has historically been variable, and children's programming on the BBC has not been well-documented in more recent times. While the BBC's *Children's Hour* remained the dedicated slot for children's programming, including drama, from 1923 until 1964, by the last decades of the 20th century, dedicated children's programming on BBC Radio had grown less visible. More broadly speaking, though, young people in the UK seem to have been more plentifully catered for in terms of radio drama programming than their contemporaries in Europe. Balsebre et al (2011) found that dedicated programming for children was non-existent in Spain.

More recently, Forsslund's (2014) study of child listeners in Sweden demonstrated the viability of children as a radio audience, as suggested above. Her findings suggested that audio drama can soothe the savage beast, making unruly children more attentive. Teachers in her study (p.127) found "radio programme listening to be a peacemaker that provided opportunity for reflection, a kind of active rest, where listeners could enter into themselves for a while and create their own mental images." It is significant that she singles out the importance of "mental images" to young listeners. Forsslund (2014) also concludes if that Paivio's (1986) theory regarding retrieval as the basis for imagery generation were true, young people wouldn't make good test subjects as they have had fewer experiences to retrieve. We, like Forsslund, intend to challenge this view.

Evidence for reduced attention spans

This brings us back to the concept that audio drama creates the best pictures. Conversely, another anecdotal "common sense idea" is that young people possess reduced attention spans, as both a product of televisual saturation and increased dependency on new media (including the Internet and social media). Inherent in this conception is the corollary that with shorter attention spans comes decreased use of imagination and ability to generate independent imagery. Televisual media consumption has undeniably increased longitudinally. In the 1930s, children consumed on average 10 hours per week while that increased to 11 hours per day by the 2000s (Gutnick, Robb, Takeuchi, & Kotler, 2011; Konrath et al, 2014). Konrath (2013) points out that there is a long history of older adults criticizing younger generations because they differ from themselves while acknowledging that there is some concern that the "technoself" comes at the cost of disconnection with deep and meaningful social connections. More relevantly to our "common sense idea," some studies have

also shown that the ease and speed of new technology may lead people to become more readily frustrated or bored (O'Brien, Anastasio, & Bushman, 2011; Konrath et al, 2014).

Critics have always been predicting radio's demise (Sieveking, 1934); could the current generation of young people effectively kill off audio drama by being so televisually saturated that they cannot follow an auditory narrative? Further, given the paucity of widely available research on audio drama listening and youth, what would the study say that could be of interest and use to contemporary audio drama producers? For those who produce audio drama, whether specifically for young people or not, there will always remain an interest in whether audience is genre-driven, i.e., will teenagers who are fans of certain genres (science fiction, comedy, thrillers) only show interest in audio drama of the same genre. Projected future audio drama consumption for the participants in this research is also of relevance. Silvey (1974) suggested that the inadequacy of the "cultural pyramid" created by Director-General of the BBC, William Haley—which, in the context of the reorganization of the BBC in 1946 led from "low" to "high" culture, with the populist Light Programme at the bottom, the middlebrow Home Service sandwiched, and the elitist Third Programme at the top—resulted in the aspirational current structure of BBC Radio, "four stations being four things to four sides of everyone" (D'Arcy 2007, p.27). Smirnov (2012) lamented the disappearance of speech-based programming (including drama) from Russian radio after the fall of communism, a regime which had filled the schedule with drama (Paulu, 1974). In other words, repeated exposure to audio drama, even if deemed to be "good for you," will not necessarily create legions of loyal audio drama fans.

The way we consume audio drama is changing. There is evidence that audio drama is consumed increasingly by individuals (Bull, 2013; Arbitron/Edison, 2014), increasingly in the car (Bull, 2003), and also while performing other tasks (Wade, 1981; Tacchi, 1997). Furthermore, increased use of headphone and ear-bud listening has turned audio drama listening inward, suggesting increased isolation and decreased social interaction (Bull, 2007). Rarely do audio drama listeners listen in the mode original BBC listeners were exhorted to follow in the mid-1920s, i.e. in the dark and, after the invention of valve wireless sets, in groups of two or more. The researcher was interested in modes of listening that are returning to prominence, such as listening in the dark and listening as a group. For example, *In the Dark* offers, as one of its activities, the opportunity to listen to audio storytelling by candlelight, and in Copenhagen, the recently-opened Sonic Cinema offers a cinematic experience for audio drama listening.

Therefore, If we accept the theory that teenagers' attention spans are indeed shortening, the researcher intended to examine whether this had a negative impact upon (1) auditory narrative

comprehension; (2) imagery generation. To better help us understand the results contextually and for real-world application, we intended to answer the following questions:

- 1. To what extent can teenagers follow purely auditory narrative?*
- 2. To what extent can teenagers generate unique and/or vivid images through aural dramatic stimulation?*
- 3. Is there a relationship between enjoyment of fictional print media / televisual media and aural fictional media?*
- 4. Will teenagers, once exposed to audio drama in a research setting, seek it out later of their own volition?*
- 5. What role do listening in the dark and listening as a group have for these listeners?*

Methodology

Research Design

The study was exploratory and offers qualitative conclusions. Eight short audio dramas were selected to demonstrate a wide range of stimuli, based on the researcher's knowledge of available audio drama appropriate for students aged 16-18. Nine questionnaires were designed to be completed by students having listened to each audio drama in turn. Questionnaires aimed to record attributes, beliefs, and attitudes toward prior experience with audio drama as well as that with which they were presented on the day. The pre-session questionnaire and summary questionnaire also queried participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding other fictional media such as TV, films, and novels. Consent forms guaranteeing privacy and confidentiality were created to ensure informed consent.

As Babin and Burns (1998) acknowledged, the creation of a reliable scale for measuring imagery generation has been fragmentary. In generating their own scale, subsequently widely used by Rodero (2012a, 2012b) and Potter and Choi (2006) among others, Babin and Burns (1998) emphasized practicability and feasibility. Babin and Burns' (1998) scale's three dimensions—vividness, quantity, and elaboration—were implicit in the questionnaire design. Furthermore, a questionnaire design which remained brief and easy to complete was essential due to the youth of the participants and the number of audio dramas they would listen to.

Table 1. Types of Questions Included on Questionnaires

In order to assess their responses quantitatively, values were assigned to each category of response on a Likert scale.

1 = Strongly disagree	2= Disagree	3= Neither agree nor disagree	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
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Sample and Procedure

Fifteen high school students from a school in southeast England participated in this study in exchange for online vouchers. The students were selected and briefed by a media professor who was present on the day along with the researcher, the students' teacher, a technician, and a PhD student. The research took place in a small lecture theatre on the campus of a British university. A short presentation was given to the participants including a general orientation, and they were told that the research aims to improve our understanding of audio drama. The number of participants who completed the entire day was based on 11 (6 females and 5 males). The age of these participants ranged from 16 to 18. They were instructed to complete a paper questionnaire. Upon finishing the questionnaires, participants were debriefed and thanked for their cooperation.

Stimulus Material

The eight audio drama pieces chosen were selected from the researcher's expertise and experience within the range of available audio drama in English. The rationale behind each is explained in the table below.

Table 2. Rationale for Stimulus Selection

This study used broadcast and/or Internet-streamed drama as opposed to previous studies which used drama artificially composed for the purposes of the experiment (Rodero, 2012a; Rodero, 2012b; Rodero, 2014). However, Rodero (2012a)'s assertions, that dialogue-only drama is the least attention-grabbing and imagery-creating, due to its appealing mainly to the semantic parts of the brain, were noted. All drama selected combined dialogue, music, sound effects, and sound shots for a complex aural environment that was thought to be enticing for the participants.

Results

The results suggested that the participants had little difficulty following purely auditory narrative, even if they had never heard audio drama before. The results suggest that no matter the changes in media consumption or potential shortening of attention spans, the mechanism for auditory processing remains, as suggested by Kraus and Banai (2007). The participants completed all comprehension questions satisfactorily.

The participants were able to generate both vivid and unique images. Forsslund (2014, p.129) found that her student listeners could answer questions like “what did it look like” quite naturally, as could our participants, even the ones who reported they had never listened to audio drama before. Participants rated *Moon Graffiti* as the easiest for picturing characters and settings in their minds, followed by *The Bullies* and *One by One*. *Claybourne* had the third-lowest score for ease of imagery generation, suggesting that though the students found it exciting, engaging, and they were interested in the fate of its characters, they did not consider it to have generated such vivid imagery. Some students reported extraordinarily vivid and creative imagery:

Table 3. Examples of Unique and Vivid Self-Reported Imagery

In the case of *One by One*, many of the reported images overlap, but all 11 responses reveal images from a range of sections in the narrative.

Table 4. Reported Images from *One by One*

By contrast, most participants reported more diffuse images for *You Are There* and *Red, Granny, and Wolfowitz*, or none at all. This suggests that an audio drama may not necessarily generate any images, or images that are faint or not fully formed.

The results did not indicate a clear relationship between enjoyment of genre in one medium and enjoyment in another, i.e. if a participant reported enjoying science fiction films, he did not necessarily report enjoying the science fiction audio dramas the most. The majority of participants reported enjoying watching films and television and reading fictional books. Six participants reported listening to radio several times a month, and one participant reported never listening to radio at all (Figure 1). Four participants reported never having listened to radio drama before. Of those four, three said that after their experiences on the day, they would listen to audio drama again.

Figure 1.

According to the participants' preferences for genre expressed in the pre-session questionnaire, comedy was the most popular (5 participants). There did not seem to be an obvious relationship between those five students who preferred comedy and highest scores for the most comic of the audio dramas. Participant N3, for example, said comedy was his favorite genre, but rated all the comedies in the study quite low in terms of engagement and visual stimulus, except *Ten Lessons in Love*. He ranked *Moon Graffiti*, *One by One*, and *Claybourne*, all with science fiction elements, highest.

The participants considered listening in the dark to improve their concentration and to enhance their enjoyment, and generally they considered that listening as a group enhanced their enjoyment. The participants reported that *Claybourne*, *One by One*, and *Moon Graffiti* most put them on the edge of their seats in terms of engagement. They found *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* the least engaging in that respect². The students likewise reported that they most wanted to know the fate of the characters in *Claybourne*, *One by One*, and *Moon Graffiti*. They were least interested in the fate of the characters in *You Are There*.

Figure 2.

The summary questionnaire sought to understand how the participants had found the experience as a whole. Seven participants felt that the best length for an audio drama was really dependent on the type of story being told, and no participant felt that a play should be shorter than 20 minutes in length. The data gathered on how tiring listening to audio drama is compared to watching TV or film corroborated received wisdom (7 participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more tired listening to audio drama) but was not universal (2 participants neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 participants disagreed). The majority agreed that listening in the dark aided their concentration (9 participants agreed or strongly agreed). Nine participants also agreed that listening in the dark increased their enjoyment of the experience.

² This question was not included in regards to *Ten Lessons in Love* because there were two stories in that segment and the question could have been misleading.

Discussion

Theoretical implications

The tension previously discussed between the relative strength of both bizarre and mundane imagery remains, as the participants responded to and generated both in strikingly vivid terms and with high frequency. In some instances it is reasonably clear that the images, both mundane and more outlandish, come from the participants' memories of other media (such as N9, who explicitly mentioned the cartoon *Count Duckula* as an image in *One by One*). By contrast, some of the participants did not seem aware that *Claybourne* took place in New Zealand, yet they apparently had no difficulty generating vivid images based on the auditory information given (long dusty roads, woodlands, even the color of a character's bedclothes). In terms of mundane images, all students seemed to draw their imagery of Pepys from other media/previous interaction with the time period (1660s), and their reported most vivid images were somewhat generic:

- When he arrived home drunk - and collapsed on the floor.
- The chasing after the turkey and crying over it.
- 1660's attire and housing. What London used to look like
- I pictured images I had seen for TV shows and history books of medieval stock characters and scenery

Where do images like these come from? Why were certain images generated by many participants listening to the same drama? For *Ten Lessons in Love*, the participants consistently reported the same image of a man crying and standing by an open window while on the phone.

If we recognize, along with Paivio (1986, p.63), that "precisely which images or descriptions will be activated at any moment depends on the stimulus context interacting with the relative functional strength of the different referential connections," it is hard to imagine that retrieval can be the mechanism for imagery generation if we ask how the participants could visualize something they had never seen before. This resonates with Plant's (2012) recording of the sound of <<a cup clinking,>> which became the sign for a real-world cup. Sadoski and Paivio (2013) determined that neither the printed word nor the pronunciation of an object link in any meaningful way to the object itself. Plant (2012) encouraged the audience to imagine and "see" the cup that represented <<a cup clinking.>> As per Hall (2002), <<a cup clinking>> "comes loaded with associations, resonances, meanings, and metaphorical potential" (p.101).

On the other hand, if we imagine that Paivio's (1986) theory of retrieval as the basis of image generation is true, it would be unsurprising that *Moon Graffiti* scored the highest in imagery, given the fact that all the students seem to have been familiar with the moon landing in 1969 and, more importantly, with *images* of the moon landing. *Moon Graffiti* was effective at accessing these images and adapting them for the purposes of the narrative. *Ten Lessons in Love* scored fairly high in imagery generation and was notable for having been set in contemporary Britain, an everyday world that the students would have been familiar with (which was not the case with any of the other dramas). *Ten Lessons* hinges on mundane rather than bizarre imagery and proved undeniably effective in creating vivid pictures in the listeners' minds. It is not so easy to account for the ease of imagery generation in *The Bullies*. Rodero (2012a) suggests that listeners adopt a viewpoint around which they organize their perceptive experience. Furthermore, she argues that "the what" is generated almost automatically, whereas "the where" takes longer and is more difficult to establish but is potentially more engaging. As one participant wrote, "I could [sic] imagine the dogs and people, however I didn't at first imagine the 'Bullies' as bulldogs" (N9).

Notably, the participants displayed engagement despite knowing the outcome of a drama, specifically *Moon Graffiti*. The participants knew from the beginning that the story was fictional and that the real story, that of the Apollo 11 astronauts successfully landing on the moon, would only end one way. Similar forces seemed to be at work with *You Are There* and *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. Even the students who reported not having heard of Samuel Pepys before the play extrapolated from the drama that it was set in the 17th century, and they could call up images of that era.

Perhaps most relevantly for compiling observations that will assist audio drama makers reach younger audiences, it seemed there is no "one size fits all" blueprint for creating the perfect audio drama for teenagers. The majority of the students found *The Bullies* and *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* easy to understand, reasonably imagery-inducing, and generally they reported that they found both these dramas funny. It could be argued that it would be difficult to find two audio dramas more unlike than these two.

Practical implications

It is perhaps facile, but comprehension is essential in audio drama listening for narrative and imagery purposes, as Forsslund (2014) noted. This was practically determined by *You Are There*, which was selected for its older style, which might deter participant engagement. However, it is not obvious if the older style of *You Are There* was problematic. Bad recording quality (it was recorded off air in

the 1940s) could have also played a part. Eight students said that *You Are There* was more difficult to listen to than the other plays. Beyond these two qualities—older style and poor quality—there was a third variable in *You Are There* that could have played a part. Due to the way radio drama was recorded live in the 1940s, it was difficult to create the kinds of *sound shots* as described by Rodero (2012a). However, the lack of *sound shots* was not unique to *You Are There*; there were limited sound shots in *Red, Granny, and Wolfowitz*, again, due to the way the drama was produced (via *satellite* audio drama³ rather than on-location or in studio recording).

However, ease/difficulty of following was not always a clear indication as to whether the participants cared about the fate of the characters and/or were on the edge of their seats. For example, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* had a relatively low score for “I found this drama difficult to follow,” meaning the majority of participants did not find *Pepys* difficult to follow. Nevertheless, *Pepys* also scored low in terms of keeping the students on the edge of their seats and engagement with characters. As another example, *Ten Lessons in Love* scored very low in terms of difficulty in following, but higher in terms of engagement with characters.

Seriality retains a strong pull. One of the participants, when asked to define audio drama, described it as “An audio series with characters and intriguing plot. Like *Eastenders* without the visual aid” (N9). This is an interesting definition on a number of levels. This student has highlighted the importance of characters and plot to the audio drama, maintained that it is a series rather than a standalone story, and compared it to *Eastenders*, the British TV soap opera, highlighting its everydayness, populism, and serial-like quality. We noted above that *Ten Lessons in Love* was unique among the audio dramas included in this experiment given it was set in a recognizable, contemporary Britain. N9 wrote of *Ten Lessons*, “I could imagine the characters and their homes in pretty good detail.” *Ten Lessons* also had the highest score in terms of evoking laughter.

The Bullies scored highly in terms of “I found it easy to picture the characters and setting in my mind” as did *One by One*. *One by One* invoked specific scenes. It could be argued, of course, that given *One by One*’s genre (zombie apocalypse) the participants simply called up prior images of zombie films/comics/video games; yet for this to be completely true, all students would have reported images like the heads exploding. *The Bullies* evidently generated unique images, given that the students were quickly engaged with the image of talking bulldogs. However, it seems apparent

³ Audio drama that is recorded by actors not necessarily in geographical proximity to each other. A writer/director in this method uses computer to record and edit vocal performances, sound effects, music, and other audio tracks and then export into downloadable data files such as MP3 and OggVortis.

that the images generated during *The Bullies* were somewhat dependent on prior associations with mainstream television-based Americana (the predominance of images of Frank's restaurant and the picket white fence image). Similarly, the participants themselves recognized that the strong association of the Red Riding Hood story in *Red, Granny and Wolfowitz* made it "easy" to picture certain aspects of that drama: "I could picture the scene because of all the takes on this story I had seen, heard or read before it" (N10).

Limitations and directions for future research

There were a number of limitations in this exploratory study, as it is the only known study of its kind. Firstly, the selection of audio dramas was subjective, based on the researcher's personal experience and predicated on what was available at the time. If access had been given to the entire BBC Radio 4 Extra archive plus all independent audio drama available online, the sample stimulus could have been more finely tuned and more representative.

Furthermore, Babin and Burns (1998) reported that the limitations of previous studies into imagery scales were that they verified only that mental imagery took place and did not investigate the nature, duration, and dimensions. The present study was similarly limited in this way, though it is hoped it could be the basis for investigating these features in more detail in future studies.

Intriguingly, one participant twice reported that he most enjoyed dramas that, in his conception, actually *lacked* imagery. This is a puzzling comment, and it would be valuable to try to discover what he meant by this.

The research described here could have been refined and expanded for a much larger cohort of students for testing. In future, a focus group method with more rigorous qualitative analysis and a second round of data collection would bring more robust data to a study of this kind. Furthermore, a number of other theoretical areas suggest themselves based on the work of Potter and Choi (2006). Their (2006) study found that participants reported putting more effort into completing secondary tasks while listening to high-imagery ads. A future study could test how much effort the participants felt they had expended for each play, rather than one question at the end of the session measuring effort expended. Potter and Choi (2006) also found that listeners' attention slacked off at 30 seconds, speculating that listeners had been trained that radio ads in the US were usually 30 seconds or 60 seconds and that the study participants perceived they could let their processing relax a bit more if they knew they were in for a "long" sequence (p. 414). This could be tested by using the entire *Ten Lessons in Love* sequence.

If we accept Paivio's (1986, p.53) dual-code theory, that "human cognition is unique in that it has become specialized for dealing simultaneously with language and with nonverbal objects and events" and that two classes of phenomena are handled cognitively by separate subsystems, one for nonverbal and one for language, is it possible to explore such a disjoint empirically? Is it possible to use audio drama without words (such as *The Revenge* and *A Pot Calling the Kettle Black*) to test this?

Conclusion

So much mystery still remains in individual imagery generation—do we look to the minds of the young for the future of the field? We have proven that younger listeners can successfully and easily follow auditory-driven narratives even if they have never listened to audio drama before, and that they are able to generate unique and vivid imagery, whether it is of the mundane or the bizarre. Fundamentally, the study results suggest there is no "one-size-fits-all" blueprint for the perfect audio drama for young people. What the study suggests is that, just as young people enjoy experiencing a range of genres in a range of media (film, television, novels), they have the potential to enjoy a range of genres in audio drama. What seems to attract them is easily understandable, vivid, high-imagery stories with identifiable characters, intriguing or familiar narratives, and the potential for seriality. Though most young people today still consume audio drama within their own private iPod kingdoms, the results of this study suggest that group listening and listening in the dark may be enjoyable and aids in concentration.

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