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## Book review: Driving with music: cognitive behavioural implications

Warren Brodsky, Surrey, Ashgate Publishing, 2015, pp. xiv –383, ISBN 9781472411464 (hbk)

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## **Driving with music: Cognitive behavioural implications.**

Warren Brodsky

*Surrey, UK, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015, pp. xiv-383, ISBN 9781472411464 (hbk)*

*“Driving with music: Cognitive behavioural implications”* explores how music affects us while driving. The field is an important one, as findings suggest that activities accompanied by music predominantly are housework and driving. For most drivers, driving with music is a very normal and frequent situation, however, as other secondary tasks such as talking on the mobile phone or eating while driving, listening to music affects us both emotionally and physically, which means that it takes away some of our attention from the primary task, driving. Distraction while driving is an increasingly explored field; however when it comes to driving with music, as stated by the author: *“we know almost nothing about the consequences simply because little to no empirical investment has been made”*. With this book, Brodsky takes us through all aspects of driving while listening to music, in a very informative and interesting manner.

The relevance of the book is clearly stated: we live in an auto-centric culture and have been since many years. The automobile affects our whole world from the food we eat, the risks we take, the stress we endure, to the air we breathe. The car affects us more than through everyday travels and mobility; the car is a self-expression on both conscious and unconscious level. Chapter 1 includes information about car usage, production, consumption, from the cars early years to where we are today with intelligent technological smart-cars. In Chapter 2, humans as music listeners are explored, how we respond to, - and the function music has to us both psychologically and physically. These two first chapters introduces the importance of driving and of music as not merely a tool to get from A to B, or just music in our years, but more as means that form us as persons and controls our mind, behaviour and goals. Facts about music listening while driving such as preferred listening device and most frequent type of music drivers listen to from is explored in Chapter 3. The benefits and dis-benefits of driving with music are explored. Driving music playlists with specific purposes such as “calming tracks”, “dangerous driving tracks” and lists such as the “2008 Volvo summer recommendations” are presented. From a safety perspective, it seems that driving while listening to “Come away with me” (Nora Jones) should be preferred over “Ride of the Valkyries” (Wagner). In chapter 4, Brodsky goes through music as a distractor, as well as distractions while driving in a broader sense. The difference between everyday listening (hearing the sources of the events) and musical listening (sensory quality of the sounds) are also discussed. The presence of one mode of listening might impair the other, which may lead to crucial information getting lost. This might also cause “perceptual blindness, or here deafness” i.e., “I was listening but I did not hear it”. Some criticism about current driving with music research is given, so researchers that wants to, - or do study this field, can get some directions here. In chapter 5 the ill effects of in-car music listening is presented. The emotional component of music listening while driving is visited. Brodsky presents the “affective music player” (AMP) as means to get

drivers into the suitable mood for safe driving. Very interesting information about music and how we perceive time when listening to music is presented, as well as different music characteristics and their effects as in-vehicle distraction. The author also states that many researchers fail to classify music genre in a suitable way, since “*music genre may be the most elusive of all music features for traffic science to come to grips with*”, suggesting that researchers should handle the concept of music style and complexity in more diligent manners. Chapter 6 presents music choice as a measure for safe driving. Lists of recommended actions to take before driving and while listening to music and driving, developed by insurance agencies the Royal society for the prevention of accidents, are presented. The list includes actions such as “*planning music programming in advance*” to “*concentrate on driving – don’t sing to the tunes or hold a car-a-oke microphone. Don’t drum on the steering wheel or play air guitar*”. The author states that more emphasis on developing mix music specifically for driving activity is preferable. Here music complexity is should be considered as “*the higher the complexity, the greater the cost of attention and arousal*”. Such a mix music album has been developed by the author at an earlier time, and has been proved effective in mediating suitable driving behaviour. It seems that this kind of driving background music is a method that causes drivers’ to modify their behaviour in an attempt to maintain their driving performance. The music works as self-mediated intervention against reckless driving. So, it is recommended to play AMP music pieces that have the probability of modifying the listeners’ energy to a more functional level. Chapter 7 is a postscript chapter. This chapter end of the book with an “overriding conceptual message: “*It is not only the physical activity when listening to music while driving that influences driving performance, but rather it is the music – the sounds themselves – that affects drivers’ behaviour. In-car music affects driver safety to different extents and in different ways, due to the available capacity of each individual driver. Driver deficiencies are the result of selecting music’s that are highly inappropriate for driving the vehicle. The fit between driving and music accompaniment, which is essential for the improved vehicular performance and increased driver safety, is moderated by aural backgrounds structurally designed to generate moderate levels of perceptual complexity that do not express specific formulaic emotional qualities*”. In other words: we should bring music into the car that heightens performance of safe driving, here again music complexity is the important note.

By reading this book you will get a nuanced, detailed, informative picture of driving with music, both the positive and the negative sides of it, plus potential ways to bypass the negative effects of driving with music, and enhance the positive effects. The book also provides numerous good suggestions and guidelines for researchers that want to study this interesting field of both driving distraction and driving support. Brodsky states that the book is for all drivers, and not only for traffic researchers. This I agree on, as the book is very informative, easy to read and exhaustive, so if listening to music while driving interests you, you will find all the information you search for here.