

Amber's Results

Amber was a 22-year-old female college senior at the time of participation in this study. Amber participated in ten sampling interviews, each designed to discuss nominally six samples. In actuality, 60 samples were collected over 10 weeks, and the interviews discussed 59 of them. This description is based on those 59.

Creative experience

Beginning on the 5th sampling day, we discovered that some of Amber's samples involved alterations or distortions of some aspect(s) of the real world. That is, Amber experienced herself as perceiving the real world as it actually is, but careful examination showed that there were discrepancies in that perception. DES calls such experiences "creative perceptions." The first of these creative experiences that Amber noticed (there may have been others before Amber became prepared to notice them) came on Amber's 5th sampling day while watching one of her favorite episodes of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU)*. The beep (sample 5.2) came while she was watching a scene where Fin was holding a napkin to stop the bleeding on Olivia's neck. Olivia and Fin were talking, and there was other action surrounding them. However, Amber saw Olivia and Fin without movement, as if frozen, even though movement continued on the actual screen. Amber did *not* experience herself as if looking at an image—Amber experienced herself as simply watching TV where the main characters were motionless. After coming to this realization in the expositional interview, Amber was able to go back and watch the episode to confirm that she had herself frozen the main characters' action--that the scene that had actually been ongoing at the moment of the beep displayed the characters in action. Another beep on the same day (sample 5.6) was very similar to the creative seeing of 5.2. Amber had not only frozen the characters, but also had repositioned their gaze to fit her idea of what should be occurring on screen compared to what was actually happening. Similar to 5.2, at the moment of the beep Amber was watching TV where she saw the two characters, Elliot and Olivia, motionless on the screen. However, in reality they were moving on the screen as they heard their captain talking to them.

Two notes: (a) Sampling day 5 was the first time that Amber had become aware of this kind of creative distortion in her direct experience. (b) While Amber's at-the-moment experience was simply of watching TV, she somehow knew when taking notes about the just-passed experience that it did not correspond to reality in some way.

After the discussion of sample 5.2, Amber began to notice that she would also occasionally freeze what she was seeing in the real world (not just on TV). For example, in sample 9.2, she was looking at her dad while speaking to him. He was in reality moving while eating his lunch, but she saw him motionless, as if frozen. As in 5.2, she experienced herself as seeing her dad, as perceiving him being motionless, but in the retrospection *following* the beep she recognized that that motionless-ness was a distortion of reality. Beep 5.6 was another example of freezing motion that was occurring on TV. At the time of the interview, Amber described herself as

seeing TV without any realization that she had frozen the movements of the characters on screen.

Another common creative experience involved altering (eliminating, inserting) details from perceptions. For example, in sample 9.2 (same sample where she froze her dad), she also saw her ramen noodles being lifted from of her bowl toward her mouth. However, Amber did not see the chopsticks that were holding the ramen; despite the fact that the chopsticks were entirely visible from her perspective at the moment of the beep, they were completely absent in her seeing. In sample 10.3, Amber was scrolling through a Twitter post; the user had a photo of Zendaya as their profile picture. Amber saw the profile picture as a uniform gray circle instead of the gray circle with Zendaya's photo—Amber had eliminated Zendaya from the seen photograph.

In sample 9.4, Amber was walking to unplug her iPad; as she walked, she was seeing it leaning against the wall. This seemed at the moment as a real seeing, but retrospection immediately after the beep demonstrated that she had altered quite a few details from the real world. The actual iPad has two rubber grips on the bottom corners of the case (two are missing), but the iPad she *saw* had all four grips. The real iPad was leaning at an angle to the wall, but the iPad Amber *saw* was straight up and down. The real iPad was leaning out past the edge of the wall, but the iPad she *saw* leaned up against a continuous wall.



The actual scene



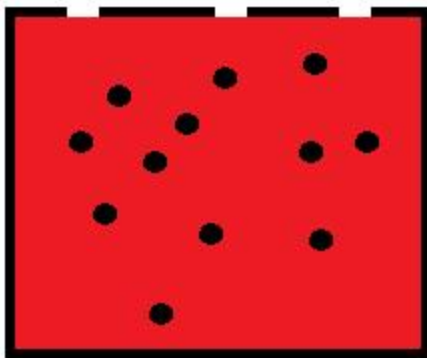
What Amber saw

Exercise for the reader:

Which is better and why? (My answer below—no peeking)

- a. This seemed at the moment as a real seeing
- b. This was a real seeing

In sample 5.4, Amber was studying PowerPoint slides, and at the moment of the beep she was cognitively contemplating the relationship between passive diffusion and concentration gradients while viewing a slide about diffusion. The real slide showed a rectangle with black dots (representing molecules); the slide Amber *saw* was blurry and had no dots.



RTH's Rendering
of the actual slide



of what Amber saw

Of the 36 samples on day 5 or later, 16 involved some sort of *creative* experience. Most of her creative experiences were creative seeings, but there were 2 examples of creative hearing. For example, at sample 10.5 Amber was working on her computer while *Family Guy* was playing on TV in the background. At the moment of the beep, Amber heard “You have a baby?!” spoken by a female *Family Guy* character. In reality, this is a delayed hearing—“You have a baby?!” had actually been spoken a second or two earlier, but Amber heard it spoken at the moment of the beep.

Seeing

Most but not all (31.5, if we count watching TV and reading, out of 59 total samples) of Amber’s experiences involved some kind of experienced seeing of the external world. For example, Amber was seeing someone she was talking to, looking at her phone, things in the environment, or what was on TV. However, the experience of seeing did not occur in every sample—the fact that Amber’s eyes were open did not necessarily imply that she was experiencing what her eyes were aimed at. For example, at sample 9.2, she felt an edge between her right thumb and index finger [in reality, this was the edge of the piece of olive, but the olive-ness is not part of Amber’s experience]. Nothing else is present in Amber’s experience, which surprised her; she did not, for instance, see the pizza that her eyes were aimed at and which contained the olive she was feeling].

Sensory awareness

Of Amber’s 59 total experiences, 10.5 involved sensory awareness. Half of them involved the experience of physical bodily sensations such as stretches in her neck, itches in her eye, or feeling her shoulders slump in relaxation. Two were tactile sensory awareness: the olive edge of sample 9.2 and feeling the weight of her iPad. [Prior to her DES participant, Amber had not really considered that or how such qualities could be present to her.

Watching TV

Amber had a relatively large number of samples where she was watching TV (8.5 samples out of 59 total). It was interesting to Amber that sampling while watching TV proved to be useful in the sense that it demonstrated the existence of Amber's creative seeing: Amber was able to go back and compare the actually presented TV scene and identify how much and where she had distorted her experiences while she had originally watched. This became particularly useful as Amber became more aware of creative experiences. After Amber had written her notes, she would go back and see exactly what she had distorted to provide a higher fidelity description of what in her experience had been distorted at the moment of the beep.

Feelings

Seven of Amber's 59 experiences included feelings, experienced in a variety of ways, including bodily (feeling stressed in sample 7.4 involved a tightness in her chest) and "mental" (the discomfort/awkwardness/confusion in sample 3.3 was a clear, specific feeling—one feeling with those three aspects—but it did not involve any bodily experiential manifestation) One feeling was experienced as taking place both within and outside her body: the feeling of surprise in sample 2.5 was experienced as an external sensation a few inches outside and above the back left side of her head [approximately at the 7 o'clock position] that also physically lifted up her face and neck.

Amber had one experience where she was unable to disentangle feeling from thinking. In sample 7.6, Amber was watching TV where a *Top Gun: Maverick* co-star was saying that Tom Cruise can hold his breath for 8 minutes and 40 seconds. Amber could not nail down exactly whether this was experienced as cognitive, where she was *thinking* about how long holding your breath for 8 minutes and 40 seconds truly is, or whether it was a genuine feeling of surprise that Tom Cruise (who is an actor) could hold his breath for that length of time. Feelings were particularly difficult and sometimes made describing her experience difficult.

Experiencing time between samples

In most DES sampling, it is relatively rare that DES beeps land between experiences. Instead, most DES participants report that the beep comes in the middle of an experience or at the very end of an experience; the transition between experiences is generally effortless and not part of the experience itself—the experience is simply there. Amber had two samples (perhaps more) where it seemed that she experienced the time between experiences. Sample 9.3 (the sample where Amber saw her dad frozen), the appearing of the ramen noodles rising into Amber's visual field felt like a disruption of her visual experience, as if the noodles were an unwelcome transition that disrupted the seeing of her dad. The seen appearance of the noodles was experienced as interrupting or bringing on the transition of experience.

The other transitioning experience was sample 9.6, where Amber was on a FaceTime call. Amber felt herself in the midst of a long transition where she did not know what the next figure

of her experience would be. Instead of simply “snapping to” the next experience, Amber was actively, intentionally blocking out potential aspects until the figure (unknown to her at the time of the beep) would be left as the only remaining experiential aspect.

Inner speaking was rare

Amber was innerly speaking in only one sample: in sample 4.2, she was watching *Law and Order, SVU*. In the show, the main character (Olivia) was interviewing a young victim, who had asked a question about Olivia’s personal life and Olivia deflected it to the investigation at hand.] At the moment of the beep, Amber innerly said, “that was a good left turn.” [“Left turn” was a reference to a line spoken in a previous episode of the show.] There was one additional example that might be called inner speaking, but is quite different from sample 4.2 and from most other DES inner speaking instances. In sample 10.1 Amber was in a conversation waiting her turn to speak. Amber was silently saying “Sometimes,” which was the beginning of a sentence that she intended to say aloud (“Sometimes my genius is frightening,” a reference to a video she had watched a few minutes earlier). Amber was saying “Sometimes,” not the rest of the sentence, and although this was said silently, Amber did not experience it as being innerly said. Instead, Amber experienced it as said aloud but silently, as an anticipated part of the external conversation that she would say at the next opportunity. It was as if there was a script and this was her next line when the opportunity arose. By contrast, “that was a good left turn” was experienced as innerly spoken. [Prior to sampling Amber thought she would find frequent inner speech; that turned out not to be the case.]

Overall

Amber was quite surprised by her experiences. The creative experiences surprised her the most because she did not realize how much she wasn’t experiencing the world as it should be. Amber had sampled toward the end of the school year and into summer break; and it was interesting for Amber to see that experience was *not* particularly different between the two environments. Her ability to identify experiences more clearly became more apparent to her across sampling.

Exercise for the reader answers (question was on page 2):

Which is better and why?

- a. This seemed at the moment as a real seeing
- b. This was a real seeing

RTH's answer:

One would say "it seemed like" when the central understanding is a seeming: when you go to an iMAX theater, you say "It seemed like I was flying." Of course you know you weren't flying.

Amber' experience is not of seeming to see; her experience is of seeing. It happens, retrospectively, that she noticed that her seeing did not correspond to reality, but that does not affect the fact that at the moment of the beep, she experienced seeing. Therefore I think (b) is a better answer.

Amber's answer:

I think (b) is better because it is a real seeing without creative distortions retrospectively. To say it seemed as a real seeing implies that the experience was something other than a real seeing.