



June 8, 2021

Current status of the Sadie Dingfelder interviews

Sadie Dingfelder became interested in Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES) because she believed she was face-blind (which had been confirmed by a Harvard-based prosopagnosia study). We have completed our DES exploration of Sadie's experience, sampling with her across eight days. The complete record of our interactions is found [here](#), including YouTube links to all interactions.

Besides the face-blindness, in her first conversation with Russ (see "Interview -1") she made five additional predictions about characteristics of her inner experience. The table shows a brief accounting; more detail is found in [Results](#):

Prediction	DES results
Face-blindness	? Sadie experienced a "thinking-experience spectrum" ranging from no experience at all, to (most commonly) an experience of thinking but no awareness of the thought itself, to directly apprehended thought. We speculated that face-blindness may be a sub-category of a blindness to her own thought and emotional content.
Little or no visual imagery	✓
Frequent inner singing	? There were 2 instances in 39 samples. Those 2 were very complex.
Rare (but perhaps occasional) inner monologue	✓ There were perhaps 2 instances, but those were more likely words present without being experienced as spoken.
A lot of feelings	✗ No feelings were experienced.
Some unsymbolized thinking	? There were 2 instances in 39 samples.
<not mentioned>	✗ Very frequent sensory awareness (46% of 39 samples)

The bottom line: Sadie's sampling opened a provocative window into face-blindness, allowing us to speculate that her face-blindness was a phenomenon subordinate to a more general blindness to her own experience. As with most DES participants, Sadie was to some degree knowledgeable about, but to some degree ignorant of, the characteristics of her own inner experience. In our effort at transparency, we have posted the complete set of videos documenting our interactions, including the initial meeting, the DES instructions, the 8 DES interviews, an interview where Sadie took the role of journalist asking about the DES process, and the meetings that led to the written description of Sadie's inner experience.

Russell T. Hurlburt, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

4505 Maryland Parkway • Las Vegas, NV 89154-5030

EMAIL russ@unlv.nevada.edu • PHONE (702) 895-0194 • WEB: hurlburt.faculty.unlv.edu

May 11, 2021

Current status of the Sadie Dingfelder interviews

We have completed Sadie's eighth and last sampling day. The three salient characteristics have continued to be evident across sampling: (a) When she reads, her experience can be of one word at a time (which Caracciolo & Hurlburt (2017) called word—word—word reading) or even less than one word (a syllable, for example); (b) She experiences herself as thinking without the thought-content being experienced—the content is known retrospectively but not at the moment of the beep. Sometimes she directly experiences nothing, but retrospectively knows herself to have been thinking about some particular thing. And sometimes she experiences nothing, but retrospectively suspects that she was thinking about something, even though she doesn't know what it was; and (c) she has fairly frequent sensory awareness, usually visual or tactile.

We have posted a follow-up interview (Interview 9) where Sadie took the role of journalist and asked Russ and Alek some questions about the DES process and their involvement in it. They explored how Sadie's impressions prior to sampling were similar to or different from what she found during sampling, the status of face-blindness, the contributions of DES to idiographic science, the defensiveness of psychological science, and so on.

The bottom line: We intend to post a video of the final steps in the DES process, where we will prepare a written description of Sadie's inner experience.

April 28, 2021

Current status of the Sadie Dingfelder interviews

We have completed Sadie's eighth and last sampling day. The three salient characteristics have continued to be evident across sampling: (a) When she reads, her experience can be of one word at a time (which Caracciolo & Hurlburt (2017) called word—word—word reading) or even less than one word (a syllable, for example); (b) She experiences herself as thinking without the thought-content being experienced—the content is known retrospectively but not at the moment of the beep. Sometimes she directly experiences nothing, but retrospectively knows herself to have been thinking about some particular thing. And sometimes she experiences nothing, but retrospectively suspects that she was thinking about something, even though she doesn't know what it was; and (c) she has fairly frequent sensory awareness, usually visual or tactile.

The bottom line: We have reached the point of diminishing returns in the sense that we continue to encounter similar phenomena. We have therefore discontinued sampling. We do intend to post a video of the next step in the DES process.

April 7, 2021

Current status of the Sadie Dingfelder interviews

We have completed six sampling days. Three themes or salient characteristics seem to be emerging: (a) When she reads, her experience is of one word at a time (which Caracciolo & Hurlburt (2017) called word—word—word reading) or even less than one word (a syllable, for example); (b) She experiences herself as thinking without the thought-content being experienced—the content is known retrospectively but not at the moment of the beep. Sometimes she directly experiences nothing, but retrospectively knows herself to have been thinking about some particular thing. And sometimes she experiences nothing, but retrospectively suspects that she was thinking about something, even though she doesn't know what it was; and (c) she has fairly frequent sensory awareness, usually visual or tactile.

The bottom line: Sadie seems to be providing high fidelity descriptions. We are refining our grasp of the three characteristics.

Previously, we observed...

March 13, 2021

We have completed three sampling days. Two themes or salient characteristics seem to be emerging: (a) When she reads, her experience is of one word at a time (which Caracciolo & Hurlburt (2017) called word—word—word reading); and (b) She experiences herself as thinking without the thought-content being experienced—the content is known retrospectively but not at the moment of the beep. Both are still best considered tentative.

March 8, 2021

Sadie approached us because she is face-blind—she had written a widely circulated *Washington Post* story about her experience. We have complete two sampling days. The samples have been interesting, but it is too soon to tell (a) whether there are really trends (DES would call them “salient characteristics”) in her experience; and (b) if there are such trends, whether it seems to make sense to consider them as connected to her face-blindness. Perhaps we shall see.

March 1, 2021

We have now completed the first day of Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES) with Sadie Dingfelder. This was a pretty typical first-day interview—some combination of faithful description and the intrusion of other things. There was a fairly substantial discussion of the skills required for DES. We thank Sadie for allowing us to make her experiences freely available.