The Personal Is Political
Using Daily Diaries to Examine Everyday Prejudice-Related Experiences

Lauri L. Hyers, Janet K. Swim, and Robyn K. Mallett

"We are trying to find ways to communicate what you know so that others may understand."

—A dedication to qualitative research participants, Morse, 1994a

Mundane experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are the essential components of our daily lives. These experiences include everyday interactions with our family members, friends, and coworkers, which then influence how we think and feel about ourselves and others as well as our behaviors in other interactions. While our everyday lives are influenced by culture, politics, and social status, our personal experiences are typically at this more immediate level. Researchers have developed a variety of methods for assessing these experiences, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and reactions to contrived situations in the laboratory setting. Daily diary research is an alternative method of getting a glimpse into people's daily life experiences. Diary studies use a participant-observation method of data collection in which the observers of the phenomena are members from the group.
of interest. On a daily basis, participants record their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and observations in both open- and closed-ended formats. There are several types of data that can be obtained from diaries, including descriptive information about people's interactions; relationships among various aspects of the entries, accounting for effects of the immediate social context; and variations in experience due to individual differences.

In our research, we have used daily diaries to understand experiences with everyday forms of discrimination. Many people from disadvantaged groups know that prejudice is a factor in their daily lives, yet when people claim "prejudice is no longer a problem," targets of discrimination may be left frustrated, not knowing where to begin to explain. When it comes to the pervasive, insidious nature of everyday prejudice, we have found the daily diary method to be a powerful tool for unmasking prejudice. Our participants' diaries have been a useful way to achieve one of the essential goals of qualitative research, communicating what some may know (about everyday prejudice) so that others may come to understand. (Morse, 1994b)

Before we begin our discussion of the daily diary method, it is useful to share examples from our own diary research on prejudice from the target's perspectives in order to get a general sense of the types of information that can be revealed in daily diaries. In our research, we wanted to know how members of stigmatized groups describe their experiences with discrimination, to contribute a different perspective on the behavioral manifestations of stereotypes and prejudice, the "insiders view" (Oyserman & Swim, 2001). We also wanted to gain insights into within-group variations in these experiences and mechanisms individuals use to cope. We first explored sexism and racism, and then expanded to other prejudices, such as heterosexism, ableism, religious-based prejudices, and sizeism. Some examples of the types of experiences our participants have reported experiencing follow:

- **Sexism:** "A guy in my class came up to me and started complaining about how white males were constantly discriminated against in today's society. When I brought up (examples of) women's issues and sexism... he dismissed them saying they were unimportant and overexaggerated."
- **Racism:** "A woman on the bus said that African American studies was a stupid and unnecessary discipline."
- **Heterosexism:** "My partner and I were walking downtown and two boys shouted from a few yards away, 'lesbians, lesbians!'"
- **Ableism:** "I was asked by a relative how I was feeling. The feeling related to the cancer. Some people ask me how I am feeling instead of how I am doing like they used to."
- **Minority group religious-based prejudice:** "I was hanging out with friends and they introduced me to a guy. Initially, we talked and interacted very positively... and I didn't know he was a Jew..." However, as soon as he found out that I was Jewish, and born in Israel, he left the room and never talked to me again."
- **Majority group religious-based prejudice:** "I mentioned going out for a drink after work, and a coworker said, 'I didn't think Christians drank beer.'"
- **Sizeism:** "I was walking past a residence hall building, and a guy shouted out, 'Hey, Fat Freddy!'"

The above quotes exemplify the sorts of routine experiences with prejudice participants encountered as part of their everyday lives interacting with friends, romantic partners, family, acquaintances, coworkers, and strangers. Participants encountered an array of prejudice, ranging from minor to extreme. Moreover, these encounters were not rare events, with most participants reporting at least one event per week. These incidents are a testament to one of the most important reasons for collecting these diary studies, to counter the belief that prejudice is exaggerated, unfamiliar, rare, or even obsolete.

**Defining Diary Research**

In common usage, a "diary" is typically a private (sometimes under lock and key), unstructured narrative of the events an individual chooses as important to document at the day's end. In research, the diary may share some of these qualities (e.g., daily recording of one's actions, thoughts, and feelings), but not all. Research diaries are not usually private as they will ultimately be shared with the researcher and perhaps a research team, and potentially with an academic audience (though anonymously). Research diaries are not always in narrative form; instead, they may partially consist of responses to structured, closed-ended items. Research diaries are rarely focused on topics of the writer's choosing. Instead, diaries include predetermined categories of events, behaviors, emotional or physical states, or thoughts, all of the researchers' choosing. Finally, research diaries are not always completed at the day's end, with researchers asking the participant to document the phenomena of interest as much as several times in a day.

**Diary Research as Qualitative Research**

While we have emphasized the advantages of diary methodology for obtaining qualitative information and the connotations of the word diary imply a qualitative methodology, some diary studies may be more qualitative than others, depending on (a) the diary structure, (b) attention to context, and
(c) the event-recording schedule. First, consider the diary structure. Diaries may solicit entirely qualitative, unstructured narrative (e.g., "write about your day") or purely quantitative measures (e.g., emotions, recorded on a quantitative scale). If narrative data are collected, and the researchers refrain from using predetermined coding schemes to make sense of the data, the study would be consistent with a more qualitative approach. With our own research, we have used both qualitative and quantitative assessment, including both a priori and bottom-up coding strategies.

A second consideration is the attention to context. "Qualitative researchers study people in their own territory, within naturally occurring settings such as the home, schools, hospitals, the street" (Willig, 2001, p. 9). One of the major benefits of the diary method is that data can be collected in a more natural, day-to-day setting than laboratory studies. The study of phenomena couched in everyday experience is more holistic and contextual than the study of isolated elements of that experience we might extract in a laboratory study. The greater the attention to context, the more qualitative the study will be. In the case of everyday discrimination, the target's emotional and behavioral responses are integral to the experience itself (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Hyers, 2005; Lalonde & Cameron, 1994; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995). We have found in our research that participants often describe their own behavior in response to an incident inseparably from the incident itself (e.g., in response to "Describe the incident," one might report, "He said he wanted a girl to marry that he could take care of and protect. I was shocked and disappointed and said, 'Why wouldn't you want a strong partner who can take care of herself?'"). We have also been able to get a better sense of the incidents by examining behaviors participants may have selected in anticipation of possible prejudice (Mallett & Swim, 2005) and by allowing participants to describe their motives for the response they chose (e.g., Hyers, 2005). We have also gotten a sense of the context of incidents by comparing unique qualities of experiences of everyday discrimination with experiences of nondiscriminatory daily hassles (Mallett & Swim, 2005; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Swim, Johnston, & Pearson, 2005; Swim, Pearson, & Johnston, in press).

A third aspect of a diary study concerns the schedule for making a diary entry. A more qualitative design would allow the participant to determine when an event of significance has occurred (e.g., every time you feel threatened). However, diary studies can also incorporate more quantitative schedules, with participants reporting on the phenomena at predetermined intervals (e.g., every 8 hours).

Traditional approaches of obtaining qualitative information have participants recall experiences using focus groups, structured or unstructured interviews, or perhaps surveys. Although these methods of data collection do add depth to our understanding of numerous issues—including experiences with discrimination—the diary methodology has advantages over these other methods. For instance, with regard to everyday experiences with prejudice and discrimination, compared to reports from diaries, retrospective methodologies administered to disadvantaged group members tend to capture more troublesome (and therefore more memorable) experiences, rather than experiences characteristic of daily living (Swim, Pearson, & Johnston, in press). It is also possible that given the insidious nature of discrimination and similarities of mundane experiences, it may be difficult for individuals to accurately recall the frequency of everyday experiences. Finally, when asked to recall cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to discrimination, it is possible that coping mechanisms, including efforts at sense making, may create distortions in recall. Therefore, it could be difficult to disentangle immediate affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses from reconstructions of these responses often found in focus groups or surveys (Reis & Wheeler, 1991). By asking people from these groups to keep incident diaries as soon as they occur or as soon after they occur as possible, we obtain a different set of experiences than other methodologies, allowing us to capture characteristics and frequencies of mundane incidents and any immediate responses to those incidents, thereby better capturing some of the subtle, sometimes ambiguous, and often forgotten aspects of experience.

Diary Research as Feminist Research

Diary research by itself is not associated with any particular epistemological orientation. Testimony to this is its use in a variety of disciplines, including the social sciences (such as our work), humanities (for biographical research), creative arts (to generate material for both fictional and nonfictional creative works), and even the natural sciences (to keep logs of physiological symptoms, natural events and phenomena, experimental treatments, agricultural patterns, and a myriad of other observations that must be kept frequently and consistently). It can also be used in a manner consistent with a variety of feminist research philosophies (Denmark, Rabinowitz, & Sechzer, 2004; Gergen, 1988, 2001; Unger & Crawford, 1992).

We believe that diary methodology is particularly consistent with the feminist standpoint position that knowing involves the sociohistorical context, or "standpoint," of the knower (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Harding, 1991, 1993; Harstock, 1983, 1985; Smith, 1987). Diary research entrusts respondents (knowers) to report their experiences within the context of their daily living.
This is much different than having observers monitor the experiences of participants in the alienating setting of the lab. For diary studies with under-voiced or disenfranchised nondominant groups, feminist standpoint theory is especially relevant because it argues that stratified societies contextualize experience within dominant and subordinate subcultures, creating "situated knowledge" (Harding, 1993). For example, the targets of prejudice can be characterized as "experts" on the phenomena of prejudice, knowing, for instance, more about characteristics of both subtle and blatant forms of discrimination (Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998). Additionally, feminist standpoint theory's rejection of nonsituated and "objective" knowledge fits well with diary designs in which participants rather than researchers decide when the phenomena of interest (e.g., sexual harassment, prejudice, positive mood) has occurred.

There are several reasons why diary methodology is consistent with feminist empiricism (Denmark et al., 2004; Worell & Etaugh, 1994). Similarly, diary methodology fits the themes of several related revisionist methodological philosophies promoted by the radical (Brown, 1973), emancipatory (Montero, 1998), participatory action research (Borda & Ralman, 1991; Reason, 1994), multicultural (Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Sue, 1999), critical (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997) and community (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997) psychology movements. First, because the qualitative nature of diary research lends itself to descriptive, inductive efforts and theory building, it is useful for informing practice and for community application. Second, diary research is ideal for providing a forum for the concerns of undervoiced subgroups. Asking targets to describe their experiences with prejudice is more empowering than the dominant, traditional method of learning about prejudice, which consists of studying those who endorse prejudiced beliefs (Oyserman & Swim, 2001; Unger, 1983). The diary method can be conducive to the study of agency in the midst of social constraints (Franz & Stewart, 1994; Wilkinson, 1986, 1988), as long as participants can report on their holistic experience including any active behaviors done in response to anticipated or experienced incidents (e.g., challenging, educating, or redirecting). Third, the often-exploitative researcher-participant relationship can be minimized as participants are empowered to share aspects of their daily experiences in their own words. Fourth, diary research enables the researcher to work as a change agent in undervoiced communities using cooperative inquiry; involving people's participation in the data collection and analysis; and encouraging increased consciousness, sharing of resources, dialogues, experiences, and strategy (Whyte, 1991). As long as the knowledge gathered from a diary study is analyzed in keeping with the original experiences, expressed in participants' original terminology, it can be returned to the relevant communities for their consideration. Fifth, the postmodern feminist emphasis on the use of text or narrative to reveal contextualized experience fits well with the qualitative-style diary. Finally, the feminist poststructuralist revision of the role of researcher (Henriques, Hollway, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984; Sciarra, 1999) from "detached experimenter" to "emotionally invested learner" can be incorporated if the participants are involved as extensions of the research staff—participant observers of the phenomena alongside a research staff who also has vested interest in the well-being of the participants' social group.

Practically speaking, the types of data that can be obtained from diary studies include descriptive information about people's perceptions of their interactions, relationships among types of variables assessed such as recorded observations and resultant feelings, and the effects of individual differences and social context on everyday experiences. Ontological assumptions about the type of knowledge that can be generated using diary research will depend on the researcher's philosophy. Because diary research is often conducted with the goal of obtaining immediate and frequent measures of the phenomena of interest, there is an implication of a reality-out-there that will be better captured using this more targeted, immediate, and precise assessment tool. However, as diary research also represents an attempt to obtain information about experience confounded with context, the method may also be consistent with a more relativist stance that emphasizes uniqueness and diversity of contextualized experience. Thus, how well one captures the reality-out-there will ultimately depend on the researcher, and not just on the method itself.

Daily Diary Methodology

We will now discuss various methodological considerations when conducting diary research. For illustration, in the procedural sections that follow, we will occasionally refer to a diary study on the daily experiences with stress reported by women who are heavy (Mallett & Swim, 2005). In this study, heavy women kept a daily record for a week of situations where they anticipated that they might be a target of weight-based discrimination. We were interested in predicting the coping mechanisms these individuals use in anticipation of possible discrimination.

Participants

This section could be referred to as "Participant Observers," "Research Assistants," or "Collaborators" rather than "Participants," as their role is not
similar reasons. Asking for too much information in each diary entry can make the act of completing an entry aversive and reduce rates of participation. This may be particularly true for those who may have difficulty keeping regular records (e.g., children, people with certain communication impairments, language barriers).

Also, if possible, it is useful to collect data on participant attrition to determine what types of participants become dropouts or complete a small proportion of the diaries. It may be possible to contact dropouts and to keep an accounting of their reasons for leaving the study. Collecting individual difference measures at the beginning of the study may also allow one to compare dropouts with participants.

**Design**

Diaries are typically designed to sample either events or times. If one chooses to do a study involving time sampling, a diary entry is signaled by the passing of an interval of time. Participants may be asked what they are doing or how they are feeling at random or fixed intervals during the day. In event sampling, a diary entry is signaled by an event of interest occurring. Event sampling is useful for less frequent events that might be missed with time-based sampling. For event sampling, participants make records of the phenomena of interest every time they occur. For example, in our heavy women diary study, participants made records whenever they anticipated experiencing everyday stress or stress due to discrimination. Frequency of reporting events varied from zero to three times a day per participant. When we use event-sampling procedures, we also include a time sampling component. That is, we have participants report whether nothing occurred by the end of the day to ensure that lack of reporting events is not a function of lack of attention to the study.

Regardless of whether you choose time or event sampling, consideration as to the length of time to run a diary study needs to be made. Whether you are attempting to determine the frequency or the nature of the phenomena of interest, you need an adequate sampling of events or days. If a frequency assessment is the goal, then consider what the ultimate time unit is to which you will be generalizing your results. If the nature of the phenomena is what is of interest, you need to determine the number of days needed in order to obtain an adequate sampling of the event of interest. To inform the decision, it is helpful to run a pilot study with just a few participants to determine when an adequate set of the phenomena have been acquired. In addition, during the study, it may be useful to examine the data either daily or weekly to determine when a sufficient number of events have occurred or when themes have
begun repeating in the data set. Of course, staff resources, financial support, and commitment of participants are also a consideration in the decision. Because we were interested in both the frequency and nature of everyday and discriminatory stress in the heavy women diary study, we relied on our past research that suggested that members of stigmatized groups typically report on average about two to four discriminatory experiences per week (Swan et al., 2001; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bysma, 2003; Swim et al., 2005; Swim et al., in press). We therefore selected to sample for a week.

Diary studies can also be used to assess either momentary or longitudinal effects. If the data are collected as a single unit and a researcher wants to know how often a phenomenon occurs during a week, for instance, then the timing of an entry throughout the data collection period will not be a variable. Instead, each data item included for a given individual will not be assessed as a function of its placing in the diary-keeping timeframe. If, however, one is interested in change over time, diary data can provide ample repeated measures to allow for within-subject change to be assessed.

Procedure

The diary study can be divided into three periods: the introduction, the diary-keeping phase, and the closing session.

Introduction. In this phase, participants are welcomed and introduced to the study in either a group or individual session. During this time, the role of the participant should be emphasized as equal to the experimenter running the study, because the participants are the data collectors. This can be accomplished during an introductory session in which the participant receives instructions on what to do during the diary week. In these sessions, the diary-recording instrument is explained (e.g., notebook, computer, palm device), including the mode and timing of recording. The time during the session can be used to have participants complete an example diary to ensure that they understand the forms they will be completing independently. This time may also be used to provide research staff contact numbers and to distribute and collect informed consents and any background information or pretest measures.

Participants meeting in groups may feel a sense of collaboration with other participants, and this is strongly recommended for groups who have a shared experience (e.g., group membership). For groups who may not have a sense of camaraderie (e.g., participating in a study on emotion) or who may have concerns with revealing their participation (e.g., women recording diaries of sexual harassment in the workplace) or identity (e.g., lesbians who are
disabled), one-on-one meetings may be more appropriate. In our heavy women diary study, we asked participants if they preferred an individual or group introductory session. In another with lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, although no participants took up our offer, we gave participants the opportunity to have a friend meet with researchers and convey the information to the participant in order to keep their participation anonymous (Swim, Pearson, & Johnston, in press).

Diary-Keeping Phase

During the formal part of the study, the participants may be entirely on their own or may have regular contacts with the research staff. If the participant is left unchecked during the entire study, there may be problems with correct completion of forms and, more important (for the diary methodology), there may be problems with timeliness in completing diary forms. For event sampling, we recommend dividing the diary-keeping period into segments and collecting data from participants periodically, such as every three days. For time sampling, it may be best to have participants report the time of recording on the diary sheets and to check that they are following instructions. Problems with timeliness of entries and monitoring completion of materials can be reduced if participants are asked to report their diaries via the Web or palm devices. When diaries are completed via the Web or palm devices, researchers can keep track of whether participants complete diaries on schedule. Additionally, these technologies can be used to obtain time-date stamps to ensure that participants are submitting diaries to researchers on schedule. In the heavy women diary study, participants entered diary responses using online forms. Participant awareness of the time stamp feature of the form, in combination with daily contact from their study coordinator, ensured timely diary entries.

Closing Session. Depending on the nature of the groups involved and data collected, a group or individual closing session may be used. Again, the group session can represent a time to come together, for participants to share experiences, and for the researchers to share some initial conclusions with the group. Focus groups can also be added as part of the closing session, allowing participants to further elaborate on experiences documented in the diaries. Whether group or individual, the closing session should be used to collect any additional diary forms, debrief the participants about themes of interest or patterns found in the data, administer any postdiary measures (e.g., assessing participants' feelings about the study and how it affected their behavior, suggestions to researchers, or other concerns), and
provide resources for further support. It is important to recognize that being involved in a diary study represents a large commitment from your participants, and they may need support due to often intense interpersonal surveillance to the phenomena of interest; concern about new self-knowledge gained from attending closely to their emotions, behavior, or interactions; or even attachment issues in saying farewell to the research staff or other participants. Assemble a list of resources for support and provide this to your participants at the closing. This is also a time to distribute any previously undistributed incentives to participants.

Instruments

A diary study may be conducted for purposes of description, theory building, or inferential theory testing. The goals of the research will influence the design of the diaries. Diaries can be highly structured or completely open ended or a combination of the two. We have favored the use of combining responses to be able to test a priori hypotheses as well as learn more nuanced characteristics of participants’ experiences (see Appendix for an example of an open- and closed-ended diary form used in a study on anti-Black racism). A drawback of including structured response options is that such options may alter how the participants view the phenomena of interest, giving them new dimensions or components of the phenomena to attend to that they might otherwise have overlooked. Finally, as with participant-completed surveys, attention to the format of the diary is important because participants will be completing forms independently. Depending on one’s sample, there may also be a need to make adjustments to font size or use oral forms for sight-impaired individuals or individuals who have difficulty with reading comprehension.

Results

Coding and analysis strategies will depend on the goals of the research. Yet if either qualitative or quantitative descriptive information is obtained about the types of experiences individuals report from event sampling procedures, consideration about the variability in the number of events each participant records needs to be made. Although the variability of events reported is information, if one wants to get a general picture of the typical event reported, specific issues around the number of events reported must be considered. For instance, so as not to overrepresent participants who may write more or to whom an event occurs more often, researchers may wish to describe the first entry in each diary or randomly select one incident from each participant's entries to analyze. Alternatively, researchers can obtain the average probability or average tendencies that individuals report for different types of incidents.

Coding

Qualitative analyses will explore patterns in the phenomena without imposing theory or making predictions about relationships in the data. Alternatively, coding can also be achieved using a priori coding categories, informed from a previous theoretical framework. However, if the diary data you are collecting is to be used for descriptive or theory-building purposes, then a qualitative coding system such as grounded theory coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) is a popular method that complements the diary methodology. As Willig argues, “Qualitative researchers . . . do not tend to work with ‘variables’ that are defined by the researcher before the research process begins. This is because qualitative researchers tend to be interested in the meanings attributed to events by the research participants themselves” (Willig, 2001, p. 9).

In order to understand the phenomena in context of the everyday, it is important to keep from imposing one’s own meaning on the data. Consistent with grounded theory coding, Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that our research participants “have perspectives on and interpretations of their own and other actors’ actions. As researchers, we are required to learn what we can of their interpretations and perspectives. Beyond that, grounded theory requires . . . that those interpretations and perspectives become incorporated into our own” (p. 280). Grounded theory coding involves a data-driven coding process of reading and rereading text, first generating themes that emerge from the data, next going over again and pulling examples of those themes, and eventually classifying selections into the developed coding scheme. We involved multiple coders in our analyses, ensuring that our coding group included marginal group representatives. The process should include staff who can engage in careful self-monitoring and have the ability to search for themes, create a coding procedure, and identify adjustments to the coding scheme as time goes on.

If a qualitative data analysis strategy is used, a “member check” can be conducted in which the conclusions from the study are shared with the participants themselves and other stakeholders, to ask for their evaluation of the conclusions. We have also involved participants in coding their own data.

Data Analyses

Attention to the nested nature of the data collected is important when considering statistical inferential analyses. That is, data from each diary is nested
within all the diaries each individual completes. Depending on goals of the research, it is also possible to consider multiple diaries reported on a single day as being nested within days, which are then nested within the diaries the individuals report. Employing multilevel modeling becomes essential and beneficial for understanding within-person and between-person variations in the data. A full description of multilevel modeling is beyond the scope of the present chapter. It is worth noting, however, the types of analyses afforded by the use of multilevel modeling. These include examining (a) basic descriptive information about types of incidents, (b) day-to-day changes in experiences, (c) relationships between characteristics within single experiences, and (d) the role that individual differences may play.

As an example of relationships between characteristics of experiences, in our study on weight-based discrimination, we tested whether there were differences in the way that heavy women coped with stress depending on the extent to which hassles were described as discriminatory. We did so by using perceived prejudice, ranging from not at all to very much, as the predictor of the extent to which the hassles were perceived as threatening (primary appraisals), the extent to which individuals believed they had resources to cope with the hassles (secondary appraisals), and the amount of effort given to coping. Perceived prejudice was significantly positively associated with primary appraisals, showing that the more hassles were identified as discriminatory, the more harmful they were perceived to be. Perceived prejudice was not associated with secondary appraisals, showing that perceived resources did not differ depending on the extent to which the stressor was perceived to be due to prejudice. However, perceived prejudice was significantly positively related to attempts to cope with the stressor; the more hassles were identified as discriminatory, the more efforts individuals used to cope with the hassle.

Applications

Research Application. One can also consider other possible uses of daily diary methodology, including testing quasi-experimental relationships, testing the impact of experimentally manipulated experiences on daily experiences, or using the diary itself as a manipulation. One alternative use of the diary methodology involved the examination of whether participants perceived intergroup encounters differently when they anticipated these encounters verses after having actually experienced the encounters (Mallett, 2003). One group of respondents was randomly assigned to predict how they would feel and behave in upcoming intergroup interactions, whereas the other group of respondents was randomly assigned to report their actual experience. Those who predicted their intergroup experience anticipated experiencing more stress and negative emotions than those who actually experienced the encounters reported.

Diary methodology can be combined with other data collection methods. For example, other techniques such as focus group interviews or one-on-one interviews can add useful information to complement what is gathered from the diaries. Diary studies can also be used in combination with experiments in order to build or test theory. For example, we conducted an experimental counterpart of the heavy women diary study in order to ensure that all participants were thinking of the same situation when evaluating potentially threatening situations. Similar results were found across the experimental and diary study, giving us a good balance of internal and external validity in our research.

Community Application. Participants and members of their communities can benefit from knowledge gained from research. This can include consciousness raising. For instance, we have had students in classes complete daily diaries of experiences with discrimination as a teaching tool. We have also shared our findings with campus organizations. For instance, results from the heavy women diary study, along with a diary study of anti-Black racism, were shared with campus administration and were later used to aid incoming students by providing them with information on stress and coping in daily college life.

Ethical Issues

When conducting diary research, it is important to keep in mind the confidentiality of data collected across all members of the research team, both in terms of who is participating in the study and the data collected. One must also consider safekeeping of diaries and data. This includes both paper-and-pencil forms and data collected via, for instance, online Web forms. When using the Web, it is important to structure the data collection so as to maintain anonymity of participants’ responses as they are sent via the Internet, such as through the use of encryption, and to utilize secure servers for data storage.

Ethical issues must also be considered when reporting results of the research. For instance, when describing information, it is important to remove names and contextual information. One should obtain participants’ permissions to report about specific incidents, even when presented in this anonymous form. There is also a risk from speaking for the disadvantaged groups you study on their behalf, as if their voices are not to be viewed as credible
until the diary researchers come in and validate them. Worse, some refer to this as "appropriating their stories" (Haraway, 1988; Maher & Tetreault, 1996). At the same time, the risk of underanalyzing (what Fine calls "romanticizing" the narrative) their experiences in a "retreat from analysis" and withdrawing from interpretation (Fine, 1994) is also of concern. Alcoff (1991) refers to "responsible speaking" as examining the reasons for speaking, recognizing how our personal context affects what we say, being accountable for claims, and evaluating the potential and actual effects of our speaking on the social world—to avoid objectifying, misrepresenting, or exploiting.

**Limitations**

There are limitations to consider if one is to conduct diary studies, including self-selection of individuals into circumstances, the effect of diaries on people's experiences, dependence on participants' commitment to the research to complete materials, and the complexity of the data analyses.

Additionally, the description of incidents reported represents the participant's view of reality. Although this view of reality can be the desired type of data obtained, it is also the case that participants may vary in their ability to communicate their perceptions and their own knowledge base for understanding their experiences. For instance, we found few reports of benevolent sexism such as paternalistic behavior (i.e., behavior that appears on the surface to be favorable to women but supports hostile sexism, Glick & Fiske, 1996). Yet, the lack of reporting may be a function of participants' lack of knowledge about this type of sexism, the difficulty in detecting it as it is masked by positivity (Swim, Mallett, Russo-DeVosa, & Stangor, in press), or the tendency for some sexist behavior to be perceived as normative and therefore to be undetected (Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004).

Tennen, Suls, and Affleck (1991) point out three methodological hurdles in their diary study of personality: "the exceptional burden placed on both participants and investigator, the potential for systemic bias in how experiences are recalled, and the real possibility that our very methods influence the character of everyday life" (p. 319). Participating in a diary study has the potential to alter attention to the phenomena of interest in one's environment, making participants attend to their social interactions with more vigilance. Thus, any diary study, in part, reflects the experiences under scrutiny. You also have little control over confounds with experiences reported. For instance, some individuals may only report blatant forms of discrimination whereas others report both blatant and subtle forms of discrimination.

Individual differences in the affective consequences of experiencing discrimination may be a function of individual differences in the types of experiences people report. We also do not know the extent to which participants over-reported or under-reported the number of incidents they encountered during the diary-keeping phase of the study. Participants may have under-reported because the diary keeping was somewhat labor intensive. On the other hand, experimenter demand may have made participants feel compelled to write about incidents (even when assured that there will be no penalty if they do not experience anything to report).

**Conclusion**

Mundane experiences, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are the essential components of our daily lives. These experiences include sometimes fleeting interactions with those in our social environment, which, although brief, can influence how we think and feel about ourselves and others. As diary researchers Reis and Wheeler (1991) would concur, experience at this most basic level occupies most of our conscious attention and may be difficult to capture in lab studies or retrospective reports. The minutia of everyday experience is not easily recalled due to transience, singular insignificance, and forgetting. This is not to say that these experiences are not important. The patterned accumulation of these localized events may have global effects on mental health, personality, mood, and group identity.

Daily diary research is a useful methodological tool that is well suited to studying the minutiae of life and allows researchers to study topics of interest to feminists. Although our emphasis has been on understanding everyday forms of discrimination, other feminist research philosophies can also incorporate the diary method. Daily diaries allow researchers to examine many topic areas of particular interest to feminist researchers, including (a) gender differences in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; (b) descriptions of how gender is acted out in everyday lives; and (c) topics of special interest to women and to members of other stigmatized groups. The use of daily diaries opens possibilities in terms of access to information about people's daily lives and the ability to combine advantages of qualitative research with survey research within diary studies.
Sample Open- and Closed-Ended Diary Form Used in a Study of Anti-Black Racism

Please briefly describe the stressful event:

Please explain what, if anything, you did to prepare for the event:

How far in advance did you recognize the potential for this event to become stressful?

____ weeks ___ days ___ hours ___ minutes ___ I recognized it during the event

How stressful did you anticipate this experience would be?

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please use the following scale to answer these questions: 0 = not at all, 6 = very much

1. Did you think you would lose something because of this event?
2. Did you think you would become angry because of this event?
3. Did you think you would become anxious because of this event?
4. Did you anticipate that this event would keep you from reaching an important goal?

1. How confident were you that you had enough skills to overcome the potentially negative outcome?
2. How confident were you that you had enough resources to overcome the potentially negative outcome?
3. How confident were you that you could overcome a potentially negative outcome?

1. When I was not around other African Americans, I tried to change the way I normally communicated to fit what seemed to be appropriate in a particular situation (e.g., using more formal language around faculty).
2. When I was speaking to someone who was not African American, I paid close attention to what the other person was doing (e.g., eye contact, body position) because it told me more about how she or he felt than what was said.
3. When I sensed that another person did not like people like me because I am African American, I tried to educate that person about my group.
4. When I sensed that another person did not like African Americans, I tried to emphasize parts of myself that were not being called into question, but were positive (e.g., if intelligence is insulted, emphasize appearance).
Please use the following scale to answer these questions: 0 = not at all, 6 = very much

1. I monitored my own thoughts in a stressful situation.
2. I relied on my faith in God or a higher power in a stressful situation.
3. I tried to maintain self-control in a stressful situation.
4. I tried to remember that I was a good person in a stressful situation.
5. I paid close attention to elements of the environment when I interacted with people that were not African American (e.g., decorations, exits).
6. I paid close attention to my own behavior or performance in a stressful situation.
7. I tried to regulate my emotions when I was in a stressful situation.
8. I tried to avoid an interaction to minimize the amount of stress I might experience.
9. I tried to leave the interaction as soon as possible in order to minimize the amount of stress I might experience.

To what extent did you anticipate that it would be stressful because of possible expressions of prejudice or discrimination against a social group you belong to?

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Definitely</td>
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What social group did this prejudice or discrimination target (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, gender, weight)?


