# Everyday Sexism: Evidence for Its Incidence, Nature, and Psychological Impact From Three Daily Diary Studies

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Three daily diary studies were conducted to examine the incidence, nature, and impact of everyday sexism as reported by college women and men. Women experienced about one to two impactful sexist incidents per week, consisting of traditional gender role stereotypes and prejudice, demeaning and degrading comments and behaviors, and sexual objectification. These incidents affected women's psychological well-being by decreasing their comfort, increasing their feelings of anger and depression, and decreasing their state self-esteem. Although the experiences had similar effects on men's anger, depression, and state self-esteem, men reported relatively fewer sexist incidents, suggesting less overall impact on men. The results provide evidence for the phenomena of everyday prejudice and enlighten our understanding of the experience of prejudice in interpersonal encounters from the perspective of the target.

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Where, after all, do human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood... the school or college... the factory, farm or office. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Everyday incidents make up the basic substance of people's lives, and for members of traditionally oppressed or stigmatized groups, everyday experiences with prejudice likely represent a substantial subset of these experiences. Everyday experiences with prejudice can emerge in one's home from one's family or on the street from strangers. These types of experiences have been referred to as everyday prejudice or interpersonal discrimination and represent the expression of prejudice and the display of discriminatory behavior embedded in people's daily lives (Essed, 1991; Lott, 1995; Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998). These incidents have the potential, like any type of daily hassle, to have a significant impact on people's psychological well-being. Understanding these incidents can help provide concrete information about the way that stigmatized individuals' lives differ from those of nonstigmatized individuals and increase awareness of the issues that must be addressed in order to obtain social justice. In the research presented here, we focus on everyday sexism by examining the incidence and nature of women's and men's experiences with everyday sexism on a college campus and the impact of these incidents on their psychological well-being.

Much of the existing research on people's experiences with sexism is in the form of retrospective accounts in which participants were asked to characterize what they typically experience, sometimes for more than a year's worth of experiences. For instance, investigations of women's experiences with sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) and rape (Koss & Oros, 1982) use retrospective reporting methods. These studies have been effective in assessing people's recall of relatively blatant incidents of sexism. However, they often neglect more mundane or "everyday" types of experiences and thus may provide an incomplete picture of the extent and variety of daily experiences with sexism. Even when everyday sexism has been examined, retrospective survey methods have been used (e.g., Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1993).

Retrospective surveys and interviews may not accurately reflect the extent and nature of experiences people have with prejudice for several reasons. First, uncertainty about labeling subtle and ambiguous incidents as prejudicial may decrease the likelihood that such incidents are encoded and recalled as prejudicial. Second, isolated incidents may be minimized over time or seen as insignificant and therefore forgotten, even though continual experiences with minor or isolated incidents

may ultimately have a cumulative detrimental effect. Third, the similarity and commonness of incidents that constitute everyday prejudice may make it difficult to assess the frequency with which they occur through expansive retrospection. For instance, a woman may perceive that people are more likely to attend to male partners in conversations than to female partners but, if she experiences this often, she may not keep track of individual incidents and may even come to perceive it as typical or usual, rather than discrimination. Finally, retrospective reports are subject to distortion (Reis & Wheeler, 1991) as moods dissipate and contexts change, leaving only salient incidents to take on a more central role in recall. In contrast, daily diary studies minimize many of these problems, providing a more accurate and complete report of incidents and responses to them without the distorting processing that may result in errors (e.g., Crosby, Clayton, Alskins, & Hemker, 1986).

## Purpose of Present Research

The purpose of the present research is to examine the incidence and nature of everyday sexism and the ways it affects the daily lives of those who are its targets. Over a 2-week period, participants in our first two studies were asked to describe any gender-related experiences throughout the day and to indicate the degree to which the incidents were indicative of prejudice. Participants in the third study reported their experiences on a checklist, which included examples of sexist hassles (taken from Studies 1 and 2). In addition, the first study examined the immediate effects of the sexist incidents on women's psychological well-being, and the third study examined the effects of sexist and nonsexist incidents on women's and men's psychological well-being.

Individual differences in experiences with everyday sexism. We predicted that the nature of reported incidents directed at women and men would differ such that women would experience more sexual objectification than men (e.g., Plous & Neptune, 1997). Our data also enabled us to compare gender differences in reported experiences with both sexist and nonsexist daily hassles. Previous research has indicated that women report more daily hassles than men (Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich, 1990; Osman, Barrios, Langnecker, & Osman, 1994). One possible reason for this gender difference in general hassles is that women may experience more sexist hassles. More experiences with sexist hassles can be a result of the greater stigmatization of women than men. Lastly, we predicted that those who have feminist-related beliefs (e.g., disagreements with sexist beliefs and involvement in women's issues) would be more sensitivive to sexism and thus report more sexist incidents.

Psychological well-being. We also examined the psychological effects of these incidents on individuals' mood and state self-esteem. We predicted that

experiences with everyday sexism would lead to distressed mood and lowered state self-esteem. This prediction is congruent with research on the negative effects of other daily hassles on mood (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989) and with retrospective and experimental research on the negative psychological effects of sexism (Haslett & Lipman, 1997; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997; Woodzicka & LaFrance, this issue). Moreover, everyday sexism can be threatening because it can activate feelings of stereotype threat (Quinn & Spencer, this issue) and elevate concerns about future provocation (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1993). In our third study, we tested the effects of sexist and nonsexist hassles on women's and men's experiences, which allowed us to test the unique and possibly differential contribution of these experiences to well-being.

# Study 1

#### Method

*Participants*. Participants were 40 female students enrolled in an undergraduate Psychology of Gender course whose age ranged from 19 to 26, with a median age of 22. Participants received extra credit for their participation in the study.

Procedure. Participants completed prediary measures in class prior to the explanation of the diary portion of the study. The prediary measures assessed endorsement of traditional gender stereotypes and roles (the Old Fashioned Sexism Scale; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995), Modern Sexist beliefs (Swim et al., 1995), Benevolent and Hostile Sexist beliefs (Glick & Fiske, 1996), and self-reported personal activism against sexism (e.g., "I express my anger and frustration due to sexism"; O'Neil, Egan, Owen, & Murry, 1993). Prediary measures also included assessments of women's typical emotions when interacting with men, to be used as a baseline for comparisons with emotions reported in the diaries (see below).

In introducing the diary portion of the study, participants were told that the study was designed to gain the target's perspective on prejudice and that they would be participant-observers. The concept of a participant-observer study was explained as one in which they could serve in a dual role as participant in an interaction and an observer of that interaction, like a researcher. They were told that their role would be to record incidents they witnessed in which they, someone else, or women in general were treated differently because of their gender. They were told to note incidents that were directed toward them, someone else, or women in general. In order to obtain a manageable number of incidents to record, participants were told to exclude observations from the media, such as television programming or advertisements.

If they observed a gender-related incident, they were to complete the forms as soon as possible after the incident had occurred. If more than one incident occurred on one day they were to complete a form for each incident. If they did not observe any gender-related incidents on any particular day, they were to note this on one of the forms at the end of each day. Participants turned in their data three times over a 2-week time period rather than only at the end of the study, to encourage them to complete the measures on a daily basis.

Postdiary measures were completed after all other materials were turned in. Participants indicated whether they reported all relevant incidents in their diaries and provided their assessment of whether participating in the study increased, decreased, or did not affect their tendency to notice gender-related incidents.

*Diaries*. The diaries consisted of two pages of open- and closed-ended questions. For brevity, we will describe only the elements of the diaries directly related to understanding the characteristics of the reported incidents and the psychological effect of the incidents on participants. Participants were given a space in which to describe in their own words the gender-related incident they observed. Using a data-driven coding strategy, two female graduate assistants first read through the descriptions to determine the major categories of incidents participants tended to report. Subsequently, two female undergraduate research assistants coded the incidents according to the devised coding scheme (choosing the one best category that fit each incident). The final coding categories are reported in the Results section. The average interrater reliability for the coding of the incident descriptions was adequate (Cohen's kappa = .73).

Participants rated whether the incident was prejudiced against women by noting whether the incident was definitely not prejudiced, probably not prejudiced but could be interpreted that way, probably prejudiced but not definitely, definitely prejudiced, uncertain, or a discussion of prejudice but did not reveal prejudice itself. Participants also indicated whether the target of the incident was they themselves, another specific woman, or women in general. They could select more than one target. In the remainder of the diary, participants answered a series of multiplechoice and Likert-type questions about the incidents rated uncertain, probably, or definitely prejudiced, including their emotional response to the incidents.

Emotional responses to the incidents reported in the diaries were assessed first by an open-ended response and, second, by completing rating scales. Two female research assistants coded the open-ended descriptions of the emotions. There was little variability in the emotions listed in response to this question, thus interrater reliability was adequate for only the most common of the emotion codes (angry/upset, Cohen's kappa = .68). Hence, responses to this open-ended question are restricted to this one response. For their ratings of emotional responses, participants indicated how they felt during the incident and after the incident by rating the extent to which several positive and negative emotions

were 1 (*very unrepresentative*) to 7 (*very representative*) of how they felt. Factor analyses revealed three factors that best represented the emotions people felt. The first factor measured comfort (self-confident, self-assured, secure, competent, safe, comfortable, content, and calm). The second factor measured surprise (shocked, surprised, and startled). The third factor measured threat (inadequate, intimidated, helpless, worthless, threatened, and self-conscious). Scales computed from the comfort, surprise, and threat factors for each analysis yielded average Cronbach's alphas of .93, .93, and .86, respectively.

#### Results and Discussion

Frequency. Women reported a mean of 2.05 and a median of 1.50 incidents that they considered to be probably or definitely prejudiced, which means that they reported experiencing about one incident per week. The number of incidents ranged from 0 to 9, with 35% (n = 14) of the women reporting no incidents. Counter to our expectations, none of the scales measuring sexist beliefs or activism correlated with the number of incidents that women reported.

Characteristics of incidents. To obtain a description of the full range of sexist incidents, coders classified all incidents that participants had rated as being uncertain, probably, or definitely prejudiced. Although some incidents could potentially be classified in more than one category, we asked coders to select one category that appeared to fit the description best.

Traditional gender role prejudice and stereotyping. The first category of incidents involved comments or behaviors that reflected or enforced traditional gender role prejudice and stereotyping (e.g., endorsement of traditional gender roles or general dislike of women or subtypes of women). This included (a) comments indicating that certain roles were more appropriate for either men or women (e.g., one participant reported someone saying to her, "You're a woman, so fold my laundry," another reported that a man had said, "It's not my job to wash dishes," and a third reported that during a class exercise one of her female friends role-played a professor, and the actual male professor insisted on calling her friend "sir." When asked if she had to be a sir the professor said, "In my mind she does."); (b) comments indicating that men have greater ability in gender-stereotypic domains (e.g., a professor in one participant's class stressed that all the great scientists in the world were men, and another participant reported that her husband was discussing a bill with a receptionist and he told his wife that she should not "worry her pretty little head about these complex insurance issues"); (c) comments indicating that women possess stereotypic traits (e.g., women are more passive); (d) comments where it is assumed that women have different interests and preferences or enjoy different activities (e.g., one woman noted that a male responded to her confusion about an exam question by saying that "girls aren't into that stuff, I

guess"; others noted assumptions about women not being interested or capable in sports); (e) expressions of a double standard for men and women (e.g., one participant reported a discussion in which a man said it was all right for men to see female strippers but not for women to see male strippers); and (f) general dislike of women.

Demeaning and derogatory comments and behaviors. The second type of incident was using demeaning labels (such as "bitch" or "chick"), making sexist jokes, exclusion in conversations, exclusion through the use of sexist language, violence toward women, and negative attitudes toward equality. For example, one woman noted, "I was hanging out with some friends when one guy in the apartment said, 'Yo bitch, get me some beer!'" Another woman noted that a man she just met came up to her, put his arm around her, and called her "his woman." Another woman noted that a man had said, "Stupid women's lib shit—their plugs are crocked." Although many of these comments and behaviors reflect traditional gender roles and can be sexually objectifying, the element that ties these incidents together is that they are more obviously negative and directly degrading to women.

Sexual objectification. The final type of incident included comments and behaviors of a sexual nature. One woman reported that she was on a trip that included two male friends who were discussing women and they decided that females were okay only if they were "easy." Another woman reported that she was walking home from a party and was approached by three men. One complimented her on her Harley Davidson belt, and the other one stared at her chest and said, "Forget the belt, look at her rack." Another woman noted that she was standing at a party and a guy whom she did not know walked past her and squeezed her waist. In general, the sexual comments included offensive comments about one's body parts or clothing (e.g., "that's a nice boulder holder"), references to sexual acts, threats of sexual contact, and street remarks such as making catcalls. Behaviors in this category included unwanted flirting, staring, and touching, such as being intimately touched by men they did not know.

Likelihood of experiencing different types of incidents. To correct for overrepresentation of data from participants who reported a greater number of incidents, we randomly selected one incident that participants rated probably or definitely prejudiced from each participant's set of diaries. Excluding the uncertain incidents allowed us to assess the relative frequency of different types of incidents that participants were fairly certain were prejudicial. The pattern of findings reveals that, first, the incidents tended to fall fairly evenly across the categories noted above (see Table 1). Second, based upon participants' own ratings of incidents, just under half of incidents that women reported were those directed at women in general, whereas the remainder were directed at themselves, another specific woman, or some combination of these three targets.

	Study 1	Stud	ly 2
	Women	Women	Men
$\overline{N}$	26	17	10
Type of behavior			
Traditional gender role prejudice and stereotypes	35%	37%	80%
Demeaning or derogatory comments or behaviors	31%	32%	20%
Sexual objectification	23%	28%	0%
Other <sup>a</sup>	11%	0%	0%
Target of behavior			
Self	19%	22%	30%
Specific woman/man other than self	23%	33%	30%
Women/men in general	46%	17%	40%
Some combination of categories	11%	28%	0%

Table 1. Characteristics of Sexist Incidents

Note. Percentages represent the proportion of each type of incident, based upon one randomly selected entry from each participant.

Psychological well-being. We were interested in the emotional impact that the incidents had on participants. For the same reasons noted above, we again analyzed only the randomly selected incidents that participants rated as probably or definitely prejudiced. Coding of the open-ended responses revealed that the most commonly experienced emotional response to prejudice was being angry or upset. Women indicated that they were angry in 75% of the incidents. In addition, paired comparisons revealed significant differences between the emotions participants reported typically experiencing with men (from the premeasures) and the emotions they reported experiencing during and after the incidents (see Table 2). Specifically, the results indicate that encountering sexism decreased women's comfort relative to their typical emotions they felt and that their comfort levels returned to the level that they typically felt after the incident was over. Similarly, women reported an increase in their surprise levels during the incident and that their surprise levels returned to their baseline after the incident was over. A different pattern emerged for feelings of threat, with women reporting no change from baseline in threat during the incident and a decrease in feelings of threat compared to baseline after the incident was over.1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>In Study 1, two women reported negative attitudes about gays and lesbians and one women did not provide enough information for coding.

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  We tested whether characteristics of the incident and target affected emotions reported during and after the incident. Whether the target of the incident was the self, another specific woman, women in general, or any combination of the three targets was unrelated to whether participants reported being angry and their ratings of comfort, surprise, and threat. Similarly, there was little relationship between the different types of incidents and the emotions reported. The only effects were that compared to all other incidents, when an incident was classified in the "other" category, participants were more likely to report that they felt more threatened, r(26) = .50, p = .01. There was also one marginally significant relationship, with incidents categorized as fitting traditional gender roles being associated with greater surprise, r(25) = .37, p = .07, compared to all other incidents.

	Time felt emotion				
	During a typical interaction Mean (SD)	During incident Mean (SD)	After incident Mean (SD)	Repeated measures across all three times	
Comfort	4.92 <sup>a</sup> (1.84)	4.01 <sup>b</sup> (1.62)	4.75 <sup>a</sup> (1.78)	F(2, 38) = 6.86, p = .003	
Surprised	2.23 <sup>a</sup> (1.16)	3.40 <sup>b</sup> (1.69)	2.25 <sup>a</sup> (1.42)	F(2, 38) = 8.40, p = .001	
Threatened	2.64 <sup>b</sup> (.90)	2.32 <sup>b</sup> (1.11)	1.83 <sup>a</sup> (.87)	F(2, 38) = 7.13, p = .002	

Table 2. Effect of Incident on Emotions During and After Incident (Study 1)

*Note.* Superscripts indicate that means within a row differ at p = .05. Emotion ratings range from 1 to 7. The results presented here are for responses to incidents with only male perpetrators to match the prestudy ratings. Of the randomly selected incidents, 79% had male perpetrators. The results do not differ whether emotional reactions with only male perpetrators or with all perpetrators are examined.

Postdiary measures. The postdiary measures indicated that about a third of the participants (36%) did not report all the incidents that they observed, thus the average number of incidents reported is likely an underestimate to some degree. Participants also indicated that participation in the study affected their responses, with 80% reporting that being in the study increased the likelihood that they noticed gender-related incidents.

# Study 2

The results for Study 1 indicated that encountering everyday sexism was not an uncommon experience for most participants. However, the women in the first sample were from a Psychology of Gender class and may have been more likely to endorse feminist belief systems than the typical student, which could increase the likelihood that they would observe and report sexist incidents. In addition, this more feminist sample might also have contributed to a restricted range of scores on the individual-difference measures, possibly explaining why the scales measuring sexist beliefs and activism did not predict the frequency of reporting sexist incidents. In Study 2, we recruited a less feminist-oriented sample from two introductory psychology classes and an advanced marketing course. Furthermore, in order to compare sexism directed at women and men, we also recruited men and asked both men and women to report on incidents of sexism directed at women and men.

## Method

Participants. Participants in the second sample were 20 women and 17 men from two introductory psychology courses and an advanced marketing course, who received extra credit for their participation in the study. Demographic

information assessed during the prediary measures indicated participants' age ranged from 18 to 44, with a median age of 22. Compared to women in Study 1, women in Study 2 had higher Modern Sexism scores, t(56) = 8.26, p < .001, but did not differ in personal activism, t(56) = 1.76, p = .80.

Procedure and materials. Participants completed prediary measures data in a separate mass screening that occurred in their class. The prediary measures assessed traditional gender stereotypes (the Attitudes Toward Women Scale; Spence & Helmreich, 1972), Modern Sexist beliefs (Swim et al., 1995), and personal activism against sexism (O'Neil et al., 1993).

The instructions for keeping the diaries were the same as those in the first study, except that participants were explicitly told in this study that incidents could represent sexism directed at either women or men. The structure of the diaries was similar to that used in Study 1. After they had completed their diaries, participants were given the coding scheme used in the first study and asked to classify their own responses. Because the first sample included only women's experiences with prejudice, we emphasized that there was an "other" category in case sexism directed at men did not fit the classification scheme; only one incident, however, was coded as such. As a double check we also read through the incidents reported to ensure that the coding scheme captured the incidents described as being prejudiced against men.

One difference between the diaries in Studies 1 and 2 is that in Study 2, participants rated separately the extent to which each of the incidents they reported was prejudiced against women and against men using the following scale ratings: definitely not prejudiced, probably not prejudiced, uncertain, probably prejudiced, definitely prejudiced, a discussion of prejudice but did not reveal prejudice itself, or not applicable. Hence, they could indicate, for example, that an incident was definitely prejudiced against women and probably prejudiced against men or they could indicate that the incident was prejudiced against women but not applicable to men.

Postdiary measures assessed whether participants reported all incidents in their diaries that they had observed, and whether participating in the study increased, decreased, or did not affect their tendency to report observing sexist incidents.

 $<sup>^2</sup>$  We used a different measure of old-fashioned sexism in Studies 1 and 2, so we could not compare participants on this measure. The second sample was also significantly older (M = 25) than the first sample (M = 21), t(56) = 3.54, p = .01, but the median ages (mdn = 22) were not different.

### Results and Discussion

Frequency.

Incidents directed at women. Women reported a mean of 3.45 and a median of 3.5 incidents directed at women, which is about one to two per week. The number ranged from 0 to 9, with 9% (n = 1) reporting no incidents. Men reported significantly fewer events directed at women than women reported, t(35) = 2.35, p = .02. More specifically, men observed a mean of 2.06 and a median of 2.00 incidents, which is about one incident per week. The number ranged from 1 to 5, with none reporting no incidents.

It is interesting to note that women in Study 2 actually reported *more* incidents than women in Study 1, t(58) = 2.44, p = .02, and all men in Study 2 reported at least one incident, even though participants in Study 2 were less feminist and thus likely to be less generally sensitive to gender prejudice (Pinel, 1999). It is possible that women from the Psychology of Gender class experienced fewer incidents because feminist women may self-select into situations in which they are less likely to encounter gender prejudice. Additionally, the acquaintances of more feminist women may refrain from expressing sexist prejudice in their presence.

Incidents directed at men. There were no significant differences between the number of events men and women reported as being directed at men, such that they both tended to perceive that men experienced one event about every other week, t(36) = .65, p = .52. Men reported a mean of 1.35 and a median of 1.00 incidents directed at men, with a range of 0 to 5. Similarly, women reported a mean of 1.05 and a median of 1.0 incidents directed at men, with a range of 0 to 4. Thirty five percent of men and 40% of women reported no incidents. A 2 (target gender)  $\times$  2 (participant gender) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on the first variable revealed that participants reported significantly fewer incidents directed at men than directed at women, F(1, 35) = 27.84, p < .001. There was also a significant two-way interaction, however, F(1, 35) = 7.55, p = .01, such that women reported more events directed at women than at men, t(21) = 5.41, p < .001, but there was no difference for men, t(15) = 1.69, p = .11.

Feminist beliefs. Despite a wider range of feminist beliefs among the participants in Study 2 than those in Study 1, our individual-difference measures did not predict the number of incidents reported. Age of the respondent also did not predict the number of incidents reported. Thus, the lack of correlations between feminist-related beliefs and numbers of incidents reported in the first study is not likely a result of the restricted range of attitudes expressed by those in Study 1.

Characteristics of incidents. In order to assess the characteristics of the incidents and to compare the results with those in Study 1, we examined, for each female participant in the sample, a randomly selected incident that was rated as

probably or definitely prejudiced directed at women, and for each male participant, an incident that was rated as probably or definitely prejudiced directed at men. A comparison of the incidents reported by women and men indicates that men's experiences are most likely to consist of traditional gender role prejudice, whereas, as in Study 1, women's responses are more evenly distributed across the three categories of prejudice (see Table 1). Men's experiences included people calling men "jerks," "pigs," or "worthless," characterizing men as attending too much to women's appearances, or noting that certain groups of men are unsafe for women because of sex crimes. The likelihood that the target of the incident was the self versus another specific person was about the same in Study 1, among women in Study 2, and among men in Study 2. However, women in Study 2 were less likely than women in Study 1 and men in Study 2 to note that the incidents they observed were directed at their own gender group in general. Women in Study 2 were more likely than women in Study 1 and men in Study 2 to say that the events they observed were directed at some combination of the self, another person, or their gender group in general.

Postdiary measures. As in Study 1, some participants reported that they did not record all incidents. Fewer women (14%) did this in Study 2, however, than in Study 1. This could also explain the greater number of incidents women recorded in Study 2 than Study 1. Similar to the women in Study 1, about 37% of the men reported not recording all incidents. Participants again indicated that participation in the study affected their responses. Seventy-three percent of women and 81% of men reported that being in the study increased the likelihood that they noticed gender-related incidents.

## Study 3

In Study 3, we further explored the frequency of everyday sexist incidents that women and men experience. Participants in this study used a checklist method to record their experiences with a range of incidents, including both sexist and nonsexist incidents. The sexist incidents in the checklist were based upon the incidents reported in Study 1. We also expanded our set of prediary measures to test whether other individual differences might predict reported experiences with sexism. For one, we included a measure of endorsement of feminist-related beliefs, rather than only measures of endorsement of sexist beliefs, and a measure that assessed the extent to which one perceives that one is typically a target of gender stereotypes. We also included a measure of neuroticism, because neurotic individuals may have heightened sensitivity to negative incidents. Thus, we predicted that more-neurotic individuals would report more sexist incidents than less-neurotic individuals.

The checklist methodology allowed us to make connections to other research on daily hassles and stress (e.g., Bolger et al., 1989). This methodology allowed us to compare relatively easily the frequency of people's experiences with sexist and nonsexist hassles and to test the relationship of these experiences to everyday psychological well-being. We examined psychological well-being in terms of the distress that people might experience in their daily moods and their state self-esteem.

#### Method

Participants. Participants were students enrolled in a Psychology of Gender class and their male friends. Students in the class obtained extra credit for participation. Because the Psychology of Gender class was composed primarily of women, students in this class received an additional extra credit point if they recruited a male to participate in the study. After excluding 2 women and 2 men who had less than 1 week's worth of data, there were 53 women and 37 men participants. Additionally, 10 men and 6 women did not complete premeasure data, and 1 man had less than 7 days' worth of data after matching his daily records of hassles and psychological well-being measures. This left 47 women and 26 men for analyses that required data from the premeasures (see below).

Procedure. Students in the Psychology of Gender class were given oral and written instructions in class. Students in the class then gave the materials to their male friends, who were told to follow the procedures outlined in class. Participants completed prediary measures prior to the explanation of the diary portion of the study. As in Study 1 and 2, the prediary measures assessed endorsement of traditional gender stereotypes and roles (the Attitudes Toward Women Scale; Spence & Helmreich, 1972), Modern Sexist beliefs (Swim et al., 1995) and self-reported personal activism against sexism (O'Neil et al., 1993; Trapnell, Suedfeld, and Paulhus, 1995). Additionally, participants in Study 3 also completed the Gender Feminism Scale, a scale that focuses on beliefs that are likely associated with feminism (e.g., "I believe this society is still completely patriarchal—it is still deliberately designed to preserve men's privileged access to power and keep women subservient and oppressed"), a measure of the tendency to feel threatened by the possibility that one might be stereotyped (Spencer, 1994; e.g., "I often feel that people's evaluations of my behavior are affected by my gender"), and the personality attribute of neuroticism taken from the NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In addition, the prediary measures also included the psychological well-being measures described below.

Participants were again instructed as to their participant-observer role in the research. However, instead of using an incident-sampling procedure as was done in the first two studies, participants in the third study completed two types of diary forms at the end of each day. The diary form to be completed first each day was a

report of their psychological well-being. The next form to be completed each day was a checklist of possible hassles they might have experienced over the course of the day. Participants were asked to turn in their forms three times over the 2-week course of the study to encourage timely completion of the forms. Postdiary measures, completed at the end of the 2-week period, assessed the extent to which the participants perceived that the study increased, decreased, or did not affect their reporting of incidents.

Diaries. At the end of every day, participants reported how they currently felt on 18 different mood states on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). Half of the moods were positive and half were negative. The positive moods were used as filler items. The negative mood items derived from Lorr and McNair's (1971) Profile of Mood States, measuring anger (annoyed, peeved, resentful), anxiety (on edge, uneasy, nervous), and depression (sad, hopeless, discouraged). Participants also noted their state self-esteem based on Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) measures of appearance, social, and performance state self-esteem.

After completing the psychological well-being measures, participants noted whether they had experienced any of 14 possible incidents presented in a checklist. Brief descriptions of sexist and nonsexist incidents were alternated in the checklist. Six of the items on the checklist were sexist incidents drawn from the descriptions of experiences in the first two studies (treated stereotypically, comments reflecting dislike or stereotypes of people of one's own gender, unwanted sexual attention, demeaning or degrading labels, threat or experience of sexual or physical violence, words that exclude people of your gender, and negative attitudes about gender equality). A seventh sexist incident in the checklist involved sexism in the media, but it was not included in the analyses presented below. Seven of the incidents in the checklist represented typical daily hassles that college students report having (academic challenges, time pressure, feeling alienated, assorted annoyances, general social mistreatment, and friendship or romantic relationship problems; Kohn et al., 1990; Osman et al., 1994). An "other" category allowed participants to check off and describe an incident not captured in the other 14 categories.

The incidents listed in the checklist were described in terms of the participant's own gender. Thus, women reported incidents directed at themselves or other women, and men reported incidents directed at themselves or other men. For each incident they reported, participants were asked to note the time the incident occurred, rate the impact it had on them on a scale ranging from -2 (*very negative*) to 0 (*no impact*) to +2 (*very positive*), and rate the extent to which the incident was sexist from -2 (*definitely not sexist*) to 0 (*uncertain*) to +2 (*definitely sexist*). Only

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Reports of this type of incident were excluded because they do not represent interpersonal encounters with sexism and, therefore, were qualitatively different from the other incidents.

incidents reported as having a negative impact on participants were included in the analyses, because we wanted to ensure that we were studying incidents that were perceived as hassles.<sup>4</sup> Participants could check off more than one category to describe each of the incidents they experienced. However, we counted these multiply classified incidents (which we could identify based upon the times participants reported the incidents as having occurred) as occurring only once so as not to overestimate the number incidents reported. After they completed these ratings, participants indicated which incident each day had had the most impact on them.

#### Results and Discussion

Frequency. The average number of days' worth of data completed (M = 13.19, SD = 1.70) did not differ for women and men. However, about one third of the participants provided between 7 and 13 days' worth of data. Thus, we used the first 7 complete days' worth of data for our frequency estimates in order to represent a week's worth of experiences, to make the results more easily comparable to those in Studies 1 and 2, and to be assured that participants had an equal number of diaries within the analyses.

Both women and men in Study 3 reported many more sexist incidents than those in Studies 1 and 2 reported (see Table 3). On average women reported observing 6.11 incidents that they rated as probably or definitely sexist, which is about one per day. It is possible that demand characteristics increased the reporting of sexist incidents or that providing participants with a list of possible incidents made them more likely to notice or think about certain incidents as being sexist. It is also possible that participants included reports of more trivial incidents when using the checklist method than when using the open-ended reporting method because it took less effort to check them off than to describe them using the structured diaries of Studies 1 and 2. For instance, some participants in the first two studies had mentioned in the postdiary measures that they did not report some incidents because they did not think they were very important. Thus, a more conservative estimate of everyday sexism from the checklists would be to examine only those sexist incidents that participants indicated had the most impact. Women reported that 1.38 of these incidents with the greatest impact were sexist, which is comparable to the frequencies reported in Studies 1 and 2.

Consistent with findings from Study 2, men reported fewer incidents directed at men than women had reported directed at women. Men reported observing on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For the first 7 days' worth of data, on average 80% of the incidents women reported and 67% of incidents men reported were rated as having a negative impact on them. This difference is a result of women experiencing more sexist incidents than men. The average number of neutral and positive incidents reported did not significantly differ for women (M = 7.43) and men (M = 8.67).

average 2.86 sexist incidents directed toward men per week. Considering only the sexist incidents with the greatest impact, men reported observing less than one incident per week (M = .61), which is also comparable to the frequencies reported in Study 2.

We tested whether the inclusion of sexist hassles might be able to account for the general tendency for women to report more daily hassles than men (Kohn et al., 1990; Osman et. al., 1994). Consistent with past research, women reported a higher total number of hassles than men (see Table 3). There was no difference, however, in women's and men's tendency to report incidents that they labeled as nonsexist, and no difference in their tendency to report incidents that they labeled as being uncertain as to whether or not they were sexist. The gender difference emerged only in their reports of experiences they had labeled as sexist. Similarly, gender differences emerged for the number of sexist hassles but not for other types of hassles when examining only those incidents reported as having the greatest impact on them each day.

As in Studies 1 and 2, Modern Sexism, traditional gender role beliefs, and feminist activism did not predict the number of sexist incidents reported (with one exception: The more men endorsed Modern Sexist beliefs, the fewer sexist hassles they reported, r(26) = -.39, p = .05). There was also no tendency for neuroticism to predict number of incidents reported. However, the feminist-related measures included in Study 3 that had not been included in Studies 1 and 2 did predict the

<b>Table 3.</b> Comparison of Frequency	of Sexist and Nonsexist D	ily Hassles (Study 3)
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	Number of incidents Mean (SD)	Number of incidents with greatest impact Mean (SD)			
Total					
Women	23.21 <sup>a</sup> (12.62)	$5.15^{a}(1.42)$			
Men	17.81 <sup>b</sup> (10.54)	4.36 <sup>a</sup> (1.54)			
Nonsexist					
Women	14.34 <sup>a</sup> (9.94)	$3.16^{a}(2.03)$			
Men	12.97 <sup>a</sup> (8.97)	3.39 <sup>a</sup> (1.73)			
Uncertain					
Women	$2.29^{a}(2.58)$	$.66^{a}(1.17)$			
Men	$2.11^{a}(2.58)$	.36 <sup>a</sup> (.87)			
Sexist					
Women	$6.11^a$ (5.52)	$1.38^{a}(1.47)$			
Men	2.86 <sup>b</sup> (3.14)	.61 <sup>b</sup> (.92)			

Note. N = 53 women and 37 men for the all incidents reported, and N = 50 and 28, respectively, for the incidents with the greatest impact. Participants should have reported seven incidents with the greatest impact for the first 7 days of the study. Some participants, however, did not do this correctly. Hence the total means differ from seven, and the sample size decreases for this data set. Means with different superscripts indicate significant differences between women's and men's reported experiences at p < .05.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> One participant reported 41 uncertain incidents. This was an outlier, so this score was eliminated from all analyses.

total number of sexist incidents reported. More specifically, the more women, r(47) = .39, p < .01, and men, r(26) = .38, p = .06, endorsed more gender-feminist beliefs and the more women felt threatened by the possibility of being stereotyped, r(47) = .32, p = .01, the more incidents they reported.

Characteristics of incidents. The methodology used in Study 3 allowed us to assess the number of times in one week that participants experienced different types of everyday sexist incidents. As presented in Table 4, an examination of the effect sizes indicated a substantial difference in women's and men's experiences with sexism directed at their own gender group, with women reporting more of these experiences than men. The largest differences occurred for sexual objectification, all incidents: t(88) = 3.52, p = .01; incidents with greatest impact: t(76) = 3.92, p < .01. Relatively large gender differences were also found for experiences with traditional gender role prejudice, all incidents: t(88) = 2.52, p = .01; incidents with greatest impact: t(76) = 2.02, p = .05. Finally, gender differences were also found for reported experiences with demeaning comments, t(88) = 1.99, p = .05, for all incidents, and incidents from the nonsexist hassle portion of the checklist that participants labeled as being sexist, t(88) = 2.02, p = .05, for all incidents.

Psychological well-being. We used hierarchical linear modeling to test the impact of sexist and nonsexist incidents on participants' psychological well-being. In addition to taking into account dependencies among daily reports of events, these analyses enabled us to use all of the participants' data rather than just the first 7 days' worth of data. The outcome variables were psychological well-being at the

**Table 4.** Number of Times Different Types of Everyday Sexist Incidents Were Experienced in One Week (Study 3)

	All incidents Women Men			Incidents Women	•	
	Mean (SD) $n = 53$	Mean ( $SD$ ) $n = 37$	Effect size	Mean (SD) $n = 50$	Mean $(SD)$ n = 28	Effect size
Traditional gender role prejudice and stereotypes	2.07 (2.14)	1.11 (1.50)	.50	.40 (.67)	.14 (.44)	.43
Demeaning or derogatory comments or behaviors	1.53 (1.92)	.89 (1.10)	.39	.14 (.40)	.14 (.36)	0
Sexual objectification	1.38 (1.64)	.35 (1.16)	.70	.42 (.75)	0 (0)	.92
Other <sup>a</sup>	1.87 (2.96)	.97 (1.09)	.38	.42 (.95)	.32 (.61)	.12

*Note.* Totaling across each type of incident results in larger total number of sexist incidents than those reported in Table 3, because participants sometimes classified incidents as fitting more than one classification.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>These represent incidents from the nonsexist events in the checklists that participants checked as having experienced and rated as being sexist.

end of each day, and the level 1 predictors were the number of sexist and nonsexist incidents participants reported each day. We included pretest measures of psychological well-being, endorsement of gender-feminist beliefs, and feeling threatened by the possibility of being stereotyped as level 2 predictors of the intercept in our level 1 model to control for the possible effects of these variables on psychological well-being.

As can be seen in Table 5, the more participants reported experiencing either nonsexist or sexist incidents, the more likely they were to report that they were angry, anxious, and depressed. With regard to state self-esteem, sexist and nonsexist incidents had different effects. The more people reported experiencing sexist incidents, the lower their social state self-esteem. Sexist incidents did not influence their appearance or performance state self-esteem. In contrast, the more people reported experiencing nonsexist incidents, the lower their appearance and performance state self-esteem. Nonsexist incidents did not influence their social state self-esteem. The findings confirm the results from retrospective studies illustrating the relationship between women's experiences with everyday sexist incidents and psychological well-being (Landrine et al., 1995) and from laboratory studies illustrating that attributions to discrimination can lower one's social state self-esteem (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997).

In order to test whether individual differences would moderate any of the effects of number of sexist incidents on psychological well-being, we added the individual difference measures, one at a time, as a level 2 predictor of the relationship between the number of sexist incidents and psychological well-being. We did this for each of our measures of individual difference and of psychological well-being. There was only one marginally significant effect for participant gender. The tendency for more sexist incidents to be related to higher anxiety levels was stronger for women than for men (intercept = .09, p < .05, participant gender = -.13, p = .10, with women coded as 0 and men coded as 1). There were no other significant effects of participants' gender or any of the other individual-difference measures.<sup>7</sup>

Postdiary measures. Like the previous studies, many participants reported that the study affected their perceptions of incidents. Seventy-two percent of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Three women and four men were excluded from the analyses presented here because of lack of variability in their measures. Specifically, two women reported no nonsexist incidents, one woman reported no nonsexist or sexist incidents, instead calling them all uncertain, one man reported no nonsexist incidents, and three men reported no sexist incidents. We excluded the uncertain incidents from the analyses because 12 additional people were removed from the analyses. These 12 reported no uncertain incidents on any of the days of the study.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> We were unable to test the effects of specific types of sexist incidents on end-of-day psychological well-being, since many participants were excluded from the analyses because, although they reported some incidents, they did not report a particular type of incident on any of the days.

**Table 5.** Relationship Between Number of Hassles and End-of-Day Mood and State Self-Esteem (Study 3)

	Psychological well-being at end of day  Mood State self-esteem					
	Angry	Anxious	Depressed	Social		Performance
G00: Intercept	.08	.85	62	1.87	1.36*	1.28
G01: Psychological well-being at time 1	.23*	.27*	.27*	.51*	.70*	.64*
G02: Participant gender	.21	.11	.09	32	.26	15
G03: Stereotype threat	.34*	.18	.31*	43*	11	13
G04: Feminist beliefs	07	07	.003	.21	10	.01
G05: Modern Sexism	12	24	.08	.18	07	.06
G10: Number of nonsexist hassles	.08*	.08*	*80.	.002	03*	06*
G20: Number of sexist hassles	.10*	.06*	.05 <sup>a</sup>	07*	.10	01

*Note.* The Gs can be interpreted in a manner similar to Betas in linear regressions. The first number following the G refers to level 1 predictors, and the second number refers to level 2 predictors.

women and 43% of men reported that participating in the study made them more aware of daily hassles in general, and 64% of women and 47% of men reported that participating in the study made them more aware of sexist hassles.

#### General Discussion

Across all three studies, it is clear that experiences with sexist hassles are a common occurrence, especially for women, who experience incidents with a personal impact an average of once or twice a week. The qualitative information about women's and men's experiences obtained in the studies gives insight into modern forms of sexism. Traditional gender role beliefs and prejudices, demeaning comments and behaviors, and sexual objectification characterized these incidents. Although women are more likely to experience all of these types of prejudice than men, the greatest difference occurs in their experience with sexual objectification, with men rarely, if ever, reporting these experiences. This may be one reason women objectify their own bodies, internalizing an observer's perspective on their own appearance, which has the potential of threatening women's psychological well-being, including increasing their levels of depression (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

 $<sup>^{</sup>a}p = .07$ 

<sup>\*</sup>p < .05.

It has been argued that modern forms of sexism include both overt displays of inequality and subtle and covert forms of sexism as well (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). The presence of traditional forms of sexism in our results is consistent with the argument that overt forms of prejudice still exist. If one focused only on these traditional forms of sexism, however, one would miss other forms of sexism. Subtle sexism consists of displays of inequality that might typically go unnoticed or might not be specifically remembered because they are considered normal parts of our lives. The tendency for many participants to indicate that the study made them more aware of sexist incidents suggests that incidents are occurring but can go unnoticed. The tendency of relatively strong feminist beliefs and perceptions of stereotype threat to predict reporting of sexist incidents, more than endorsement of sexist beliefs, suggests that a more defensive and perhaps self-protective reaction to sexism increases one's sensitivity to sexism. The lack of effect of the other forms of sexist beliefs may be a result of the instructions making the less feminist participants more similar to the feminist participants in sensitivity. Yet even controlling for the effect of relatively strong feminist beliefs and feelings of stereotype threat, sexists incidents affected psychological well-being.

Everyday sexist incidents have important psychological ramifications, especially for women. Women's greater experience with sexist hassles compared to men accounts for the total difference in experiences with daily hassles. Everyday sexist incidents are a significant source of anger, with about 75% of the sexist incidents reported in Study 1 resulting in anger, and the more experiences women (and men) had with sexist incidents, the more angry they felt in Study 3. These incidents are likely to affect other aspects of women's psychological well-being. Study 1 indicates that encounters with sexism affected women's comfort, and there was a trend in Study 3 for women and not men to experience more anxiety the more incidents they reported in a day. Further, even though reporting more sexist incidents was associated with more anger, more depression, and lower social state self-esteem for both women and men, the tendency for women to report more sexist incidents than men suggests a greater impact on women than men because women will experience these effects more frequently than men.

There are some limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from the present research. First, the sample for Study 1 and 3 consisted of students drawn from a Psychology of Gender class, who likely represent a more feminist group than the student population at large. Despite this possible bias, however, the frequencies and qualitative characteristics of the incidents did not differ much from sample to sample, and there was even a tendency for women in Study 2, which was from a less feminist sample, to report more incidents than women in Study 1. Further, potential effects of feminist beliefs were controlled for in Study 3 when testing the effects of the incidents on psychological well-being. Yet the results are restricted to undergraduate college students and may not apply to other women.

A second possible limitation of the study is that a large percentage of participants in all three studies reported that their participation in the study increased their tendency to notice sexist incidents (and nonsexist hassles in Study 3). This is one of the costs of using a diary study and should be weighed against the possible costs associated with other methodologies. For instance, recall measures are subject to memory distortion and may be strongly influenced by general beliefs about prejudice and feminist beliefs (e.g., Kobrynowicz & Branscombe, 1997). A related limitation is that the data are correlational. Even though participants were reporting about specific experiences with events soon after the events occurred, suggesting greater validity than that found from retrospective reports, their end-of-day mood may have affected their perceptions of the events. Thus, the results from the present study should be considered in combination with reports found in studies using other methodologies. For example, the results from the present study are consistent with findings from retrospective studies and lab studies, which suggests that the different methodologies are converging on similar results.

A final possible issue that might be raised is that the incidents reported in the diaries reflect perceptions of incidents without any objective data to support whether the incidents should be considered sexist. We would argue, however, that even if they reflect subjective perceptions, they are important to consider for many reasons (see Swim et al., 1998), including the fact that they have a meaningful impact on psychological well-being. Furthermore, one might not ever be able to say definitively whether or not everyday incidents are objectively sexist. For instance, men and women will look at the same everyday sexist incident and disagree as to the likelihood that an actor or an action is prejudiced (Swim, Scott, Campbell, & Stangor, 2000), but one cannot necessarily determine who is more accurate.

In sum, the present study illustrates the importance of considering a wide range of types of behaviors as being sexist. One should not necessarily restrict the conceptualization of sexism to, for instance, traditional beliefs and prejudices or to discrimination in the workplace (see also Swim & Campbell, in press). Sexist incidents, particularly for women, emerge in a variety of forms and occur within a variety of interpersonal settings. Furthermore, the mundane nature of these incidents does not mean that they are inconsequential. The present studies have shown them to have measurable, detrimental impact on women's and men's psychological well-being. Moreover, the cumulative impact of about one to two incidents of sexism per week may be far from trivial.

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