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5 Exploring issues of participation, control and ethics

Introduction

This chapter focuses on issues of empowerment, control and research ethics in the context of diary keeping. At the heart of discussion is the question, To what extent can diary techniques help to nurture equitable research relations? Equitable research relations can be defined as a relationship concerned with knowledge construction in which both parties (researcher and participant) share control of the process. Developing equitable relations is becoming increasingly important in social and health-related research as more emphasis is placed on conducting research *with* rather than *on* people. Our concern in this chapter is how diary keeping can help or hinder this endeavour.

Building on the practical issues previously discussed in this book, the chapter commences by explaining what it means to use diary method in a participatory way before examining the positive effects of diary keeping and the key advantages of diary method over interviews. While recognizing some of the limitations of diary techniques, we suggest that the main strengths of diary methods (particularly exploratory and unstructured approaches) are that they provide research participants with greater control over the pace and nature of data collection compared to the more traditional techniques of interviewing. In discussing these issues, the chapter will examine how diary method can be modified and tailored for different research groups, including vulnerable populations. Hence, we suggest that diary method is a potentially useful tool for building equitable relations between researcher and participant because it affords the participant more control over data collection.

The chapter also acknowledges that there are several limitations with diary method, most notably that it relies on research participants having the motivation, skills, intellect, time and capacity to maintain a diary over a defined period of time. Additionally, the process of keeping a diary can

have negative effects, such as drawing attention to family conflicts and the repetitive nature of everyday life. These strengths and limitations will be illustrated by drawing on examples from real-world research.

Using diary method in a participatory way: Building equitable relations

In recent years, there has been a growing trend in social and health-related research to develop data collection methods which enable participants to articulate their experiences. Rather than focusing primarily on the needs of the research project, researchers are prioritizing and developing techniques which also empower participants in some way. This might mean, for example, involving research participants in the design of a study and/or using tools of data collection which enable participants to have greater control over the research process. Collectively, these approaches are known as participatory methods.

Participatory approaches involve the researcher working with participants in a respectful and engaging way. It involves a high degree of accountability and responsibility towards the research participants. The difference between participatory and non-participatory approaches is essentially one of power. For instance, historically there has been a massive imbalance of power between researchers and people with disabilities (Stone & Priestley, 1996). Such an imbalance is still evident within dementia research where researchers will use the Mini Mental State Examination or other measures to assess the ability of a person with dementia to participate in a study, even though individuals with this condition may find this a humiliating experience (Hellström, Nolan, Nordenfelt, & Lundh, 2007). The goal in participatory research, however, is to develop equitable relations between researchers and participants and to conduct research which involves and benefits participants in some way.

Several researchers seek to use diary method in a participatory way. Typically, these studies are related to health-care services or involve bringing about institutional change. For example, Elg et al. (2011) used solicited diaries to involve patients in the development of health-care services and suggest that diaries 'become a voice for patients in the health care system' (140). For this study, participants were asked to write about everyday situations based on their own health experiences and then write down ideas for improvement based on their experiences. Fourteen

diaries containing a total of 102 ideas for improvement were created (Elg et al., 2011). As such, the diaries provided a conduit for voicing discontent and empowered patients to express their opinions about how to improve services.

The channelling nature of diary method lends itself well to participatory approaches. Participants can express themselves freely and honestly in a diary, especially a video diary, which offers the opportunity to use spoken language. For example, researchers who have used video diary with younger people have found that once the children got over the initial strangeness of talking to an anonymous video camera, the process helped them to clarify their thoughts and feelings (Buchwald, 2009). As such, keeping a (video) diary becomes beneficial for the participant, as well as the researcher. We will return to this point later in this chapter.

The positive effects of diary keeping

In this section, we consider how the act of diary keeping can have a potentially positive effect on participants. The effects we identify and discuss, including affording participants choice and control, affording participants time, providing an outlet for difficult thoughts and feelings and raising awareness of positive things, might be regarded as the strengths of diary-method in respect of building equitable relations.

Affording participants choice and control

Several researchers report that solicited diary method affords participants greater control over the data collection process (Bijoux & Myers, 2006). There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the flexibility of the method often makes it easier for participants to fit data collection into their everyday life. For example, a study of breast-feeding difficulties amongst first-time mothers used audio diaries, as information could be provided when convenient for the participant and in their home environment (Williamson et al., 2012). Similarly, mobile audio diaries were used in a study of commuter cycling: participants provided an account of their experiences of commuting on a bicycle while actually doing it (Jones, 2012). In both cases, participants (and not the researcher) were ultimately in control over the pace and time of data collection.

Related to the above, diary method affords more choice and control to participants in terms of how much information to provide. Unlike

interview method, where researchers are typically schooled to prompt participants if the conversation dries up, diary method allows people to disclose as much, or as little as they like. For instance, it is common in paper-based diary studies for some entries to be just a few lines, whereas others run to a few pages (see, e.g., Keleher & Verrinder, 2003). Similarly, in a video-diary study involving over seventy young girls, the researchers suggested ten minutes a day, but most girls filmed less frequently and for longer (Jackson & Vares, 2013). As diary researchers note, participants will keep their diaries in their own way, and the ‘power of selection is handed over to the participant’ (Bijoux & Myers, 2006, p. 51).

Secondly, diary method affords participants greater control over how their lives and experiences are represented. Even though guidance is provided, a participant may choose to disregard this and express themselves in their own way. One diary-based study by Gibson (2002) involved young men with a physical disability keeping audio and photo diaries; four participants, however, chose to use the added function of the camera to include videos without any instruction to do so (p. 12). Similarly, in a study exploring the effect of participation in adapted cycling on quality of life for children with cerebral palsy, one of the young participants chose to draw a picture of her bike in her written diary (Pickering, Horrocks, Visser, & Todd, 2013). Both of these studies show how diary method can offer participants greater choice and control over the data they choose to give; plus, it provides further evidence of how diary method can put the researched, rather than researcher, in control of data gathering.

Thirdly, video and audio diaries provide participants with editorial control. The participant is in charge of the on/off switch and can normally delete recordings whenever he or she chooses. For instance, in Bartlett’s study one man with dementia who kept an audio diary could be heard taking his time to find the right word (he would say “worm” instead of “word”) and he switched the recorder on and off (presumably to prepare to speak) (Bartlett, 2012). In this instance, the method afforded the participant both the time and freedom to edit his own data. Having control over data production in this way is linked to more equitable research relations (Roberts, 2011). Moreover, it offers a way for individuals who may otherwise be excluded (or exclude themselves) from participating in a study without feeling pressurized or unable to contribute.

Fourthly, when diary method is used as part of a suite of data collected tools, it gives participants a flexible option as to how to relay information.

We all have preferred styles of communication, it therefore makes sense to offer participants different ways to convey information about themselves and/or the phenomenon under investigation. For example, in one investigation into risk and worry in everyday life, research participants were given the choice of keeping a diary (for one week) or taking part in an interview (Hawkes, Houghton, & Rowe, 2009). Other researchers who have used diary method regretted not giving participants more choice about being able to include pre-existing photographs in their data (Gibson, 2002). Thus, diary method affords both the researcher and participant considerable flexibility to protect the welfare of participants.

Affording participants time

Another way in which diaries can be empowering is by affording participants more time to collect their thoughts and feelings than a standard interview allows. Rather than having to respond immediately to questions or others talking (as is the case with individual and group interviews), the diary provides a mechanism for participants to prepare what they want to say at their own pace and in their own time (Gibson, 2002). For instance, focus groups and diaries were used in one study exploring South African women's experiences of violence, and at least one participant preferred the latter method. She said, 'I found it better to write than talk during the focus group because I wrote at my own pace. There was no rush. I had time to memorise' (Meth, 2003, p. 200). Having the time to compose one's response can be experienced as enabling by some people, which maybe a particularly important feature when involving people with an impairment or illness that may affect their capacity to respond straightaway to data collection questions.

The temporality of data collection is not always considered in the context of research methods, but it can be an important factor in the enabling process. Asking people to report on something as near as possible to the time that something happened is much easier for the participant; plus, it will capture more accurate data and help mitigate against recall bias. Researchers recognized this when investigating the recurrence of pain in children, sending text messages to children at fixed time intervals during the day (Alfvén, 2010). An SMS message was sent to the child six times a day with the simple question: Have you had pain? If they had, they were asked to rate the pain on a scale of 1 to 5. The researchers found this to be an effective method for investigating the recurrence of pain amongst

young children, especially as children had to remember whether they had pain only during the last three hours. In this case, the relatively short time frame enabled participants to report their experiences more accurately and placed less demands on them to recall and remember events.

Providing an outlet for difficult thoughts and feelings

Another way in which diary method can be empowering is by providing an outlet for participants to work through difficult thoughts and feelings. Several researchers highlight the potential therapeutic value of diary keeping for participants in this regard. This was exemplified in one study of midwifery practices, where the research team found that the act of keeping a written diary provided an outlet for midwives to address stressful situations and find solutions to complex problems (Bedwell, McGowan, & Lavender, 2012). In another study investigating the transition from medical student to junior doctor, one respondent reported that the process of keeping an audio diary helped him to 'unburden' himself from the stressful situations that had occurred that day (Brennan et al., 2010). Obviously other methods, such as repeated interviews, may offer a similar benefit, but diary method is arguably a more useful channel due to the immediacy of the encounter (with the diary) and the structure it provides.

The traditional mode of diary keeping (i.e. writing) provides a structured space for self-expression and reflection. Indeed, it has been found that the process of writing can be beneficial for people with health problems, for it allows individuals to 'release complex emotions by naming them ... and work their way through the many changes in their daily lives' (Ryan, 2006, p. 423). This is certainly what the following researchers found in their diary studies:

- involving family caregivers of people with dementia; participants said they found the process of writing diary entries therapeutic because it helped them to express their frustrations and think more clearly about the situation they were in Välimäki, Vehviläinen-Julkunen, and Pietilä (2007);
- about living with HIV/Aids in Namibia; participants told the researchers they found the diary-keeping process therapeutic because it made them feel their opinions were valued (Thomas, 2007);
- involving older people living with cancer; participants said they found 'keeping a diary a helpful outlet' (Richardson, 1994, p. 786).

Clearly, a diary provides a useful space for ventilating difficult thoughts and feelings, especially when that person is ill or facing adversity.

All this said, diary writing may be experienced by some as either challenging or constraining. As other researchers have pointed out, diary writing requires good literacy skills and command of the (English) language; moreover, we are schooled to write in a structured way and to produce written texts which are highly organized and linear (Roberts, 2011). For some individuals, especially children and those with lower educational abilities, this may not be easy. In this case a written diary is unlikely to provide a helpful outlet for self-expression, in fact it may even pose a risk to a participant's emotional well-being by highlighting something that they are unable to do. Fortunately, the *written* diary is not the only mode of diary available to researchers.

Visual diaries are becoming an increasingly popular method of data collection, especially in research involving children and young adults. There seems to be a growing consensus within the childhood research community that video diaries (and visual methods more generally) can enable children and young people to express themselves more honestly and spontaneously than traditional research methods (Noyes, 2009). In particular, video diaries can provide a useful outlet for young people to deal with difficult emotions and patterns of thinking. For example, in one study involving children keeping a video diary, one participant who said he usually found it difficult to talk about his feelings of anger told the researcher that the video diary had helped him to overcome the problem (Buchwald, 2009). In another study, the video camera became the only 'person' one young participant could talk to; it acted as a confidante and, as such, provided an outlet for this child to talk about the problems she was having at school (Noyes, 2004). For participants who find writing a challenge, the medium of video provides a potentially more effective mode of expression.

Raising awareness of positive things

Another way in which diary keeping can be empowering is by raising participants' awareness of positive things. Several research papers describe how the process of recording routine activities can make participants more aware of what is actually happening in their life, which they found beneficial. For example, the self-recording of daily activities related to falls and fear of falling increased participants' awareness of risky behaviours

they were previously unaware of (Bailey, Foran, Ni Scanail, & Dromey, 2011). Similarly, in a study of online privacy, which involved weekly diary entries for ten weeks, participants said that taking part had 'increased their level of awareness and sensitivity towards on-line privacy and consent issues, as well as altering the behaviour' (Bogdanovic, Dowd, Wattam, & Adam, 2012, p. 218). In another small-scale study involving two married working mothers, participants reported becoming more aware of switching from one task to another through the diary-writing process (Orban et al., 2012). Clearly, looking back over diary entries, or knowing that you need to make one later in the day, heightens a person's awareness of everyday habits.

Some researchers consciously use diary method to raise awareness. Such an approach is perhaps most common in health-related research where a change in a person's behaviour is desired. For example, Zepeda and Deal (2008) used photographic and written food diaries in an attempt to raise awareness amongst participants about what they eat and to alter dietary attitudes. They found it an effective method as 'the immediacy of the camera forced reflection at the point of consumption' (p. 696). In another study, researchers asked eight people diagnosed with schizophrenia to keep a food diary, partly to educate this population about healthy eating (Hardy & Gray, 2012). Food diaries are a good example of how diary method might be used as an intervention to raise awareness and achieve positive outcomes.

More often than not, though, it is not the intention of the researcher to raise participants' awareness. Researchers tend to report it is an unexpected outcome resulting from using diary method. For example, in the diary-interview study involving thirteen basketball players, a few participants said in their post-diary interview how the diary-keeping process helped to raise their awareness of their most effective coping strategies (Tamminen & Holt, 2010). In this instance, diary keeping benefits the participant (as well as the researcher) by providing an opportunity for individuals to reflect on their everyday practices.

Several researchers report that the process of keeping a diary helped participants become extra mindful of the everyday things they do at work. There are numerous examples of professionals learning from the diary-writing experience. For instance, in one study, school teachers were asked to maintain a classroom diary to explore patterns of learning and teaching and found the process of diary keeping useful. As the researchers note, '[D]iary writing and the permanent process of analysis and reflection

that writing induces, causes regularities, patterns and theoretical insights to arise in the researcher's mind' (Informa et al., 2010, p. 166). Likewise, in another study involving parents and nursery staff observing and recording children's mood and play patterns, researchers reported how participants said they learnt a lot about the value of observing children at play and found the experience of diary keeping an educational and interesting one (Lämsä, Rönkä, Poikonen, & Malinen, 2012). Also, in a study exploring midwives' experiences of intrapartum care, researchers reported how the process encouraged some participants to reflect more than usual on everyday clinical practices (Bedwell et al., 2012). Clearly, diary method can benefit some participants by enhancing professional practices.

The negative effects of diary keeping

In this section, we turn to the potentially negative effects of diary keeping on participants. The effects we identify and discuss, including respondent fatigue, over-disclosure and raising awareness of negative things, might be regarded as the limitations of diary method in respect of building equitable relations.

Respondent fatigue

Respondent fatigue is a well-documented limitation of diary method, which we have referred to already in this book. Essentially this is when participants tire of keeping their diary, and entries become more sporadic or tail off completely. For example, Jacelon and Imperio (2005) invited a group of community-dwelling older adults to keep a diary about how they managed their chronic health problems for two weeks. They found that participants begun to tire of making entries during the second week. As one of the participants commented, 'keeping a diary was interesting in the beginning, then it got to be a bore' (p. 994). Similarly, in another study involving older people keeping a diary for a two-week period, the researchers noticed a decline in the detail of entries after week one (Johnson & Bytheway, 2001). However, it would be wrong to take from this that respondent fatigue is due to age or infirmity, as younger people may find diary keeping tiresome too. Respondent fatigue seems to be a potential hazard of diary method, regardless of the participant group.

Diary method is not inherently fatiguing and burdensome. It depends on how it is used, the methodological approach taken by

the researchers and to some extent the circumstances in which the participant lives and their feelings about keeping a diary. For example, people living in low-income countries may well regard diary keeping as a 'waste of time' and unnecessary distraction from essential chores (Meth, 2003, p. 203). In other situations, participants may find the process of keeping a diary more demanding than expected, as was the case with participants in a Finnish study of everyday activities in a children's nursery (Lämsä et al., 2012). Even though it was for only one week, participants complained at the end about having to complete it each morning.

The demands of diary keeping can mean that some people do not complete their diaries. For example, the researchers investigating medication use in older people estimated that between five and ten per cent of (potential) participants were put off or dropped out because of the diary method (Johnson & Bytheway, 2001). In another study on running away amongst Hmong girls, ironically one of the participants ran away before completing her diary (Edinburgh et al., 2013). As discussed in Chapter 3, where dropout becomes too large in a study, it can have some serious implications for data analysis and the veracity of the findings.

Over-disclosure

Another potentially negative effect of diary keeping is that it can encourage over-disclosure. There is something about the act of diary keeping that encourages participants to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings when they might not want to or have to for the research project. As one researcher, who used audio diary with new medical students, noted, the method can create an 'intimate association; one in which participants feel comfortable to share their most difficult and intense experiences' (Monrouxe, 2009, p. 8). This is certainly what one of us found when one of the participants discussed his marital problems in the audio diary (Bartlett, 2012). Others may become extremely anxious at the prospect of having to keep a diary that other people will see (Johnson & Bytheway, 2001) – possibly because they fear over-disclosing. Over-disclosure is more likely in an unstructured (rather than structured) diary design and is a particularly important consideration with vulnerable research participants, such as young children, who may have trouble controlling their emotions when making a diary entry (Buchwald, 2009).

Raising awareness of negative things

Diary keeping can raise awareness of negative things, too. As researchers who have used diary methods to research marital relationships point out, the process of diary keeping 'may increase awareness of the strengths of a marital relationship, or it may lead to awareness and rumination about conflict or relationship weakness' (Laurenceau & Bolger, 2005, p. 95). This is what Thomas (2006) found in her research into the stigma of living with HIV/Aids in Namibia, which involved asking seven ill people and their main carer to keep a diary for between one and six months. Some participants' diary entries revealed a certain degree of conflict between family members. Thus, she noted, 'because diaries are recorded in the private sphere of the household, it is not possible to know how their recording might have impacted upon intra-household tensions' (p. 3174). It is imperative, therefore, that researchers consider the potential impact of a person keeping a diary on their family when designing and recruiting participants to a diary-based study.

Other researchers have found that the process of keeping a diary can raise awareness of the repetitive and mundane nature of a person's life. In fact, both of us found this in our respective studies involving family carers (Milligan et al., 2005) and adults with dementia (Bartlett, 2012). In Milligan's study with carers of frail older people, at least one participant found that the act of diary keeping made her aware for the first time of how repetitive and boring her life was, a factor she had not previously thought about. Similarly, one participant told Bartlett (2012), that he had not written much in his diary, and what he had recorded he thought it was 'all very boring ... I get up and clean the house, blah blah' is how he described some of his entries in his post-diary interview. While the researcher may find such minutiae useful or significant, he or she should be aware that the participant may experience the recording of it as irksome.

Researchers should also be aware that some participants may be put off taking part in a study if they are asked to keep a diary, because it raises awareness of negative things. People may not want to routinely record certain aspects of their lifestyle. For example, one team of clinical researchers reported an 'unexpectedly high rate of refusal to participate' in their study using food diaries to manage obesity (Gregory et al., 2006, p. 68). It might have been that people did not want to be reminded of their weight and/or food consumption. Similarly, in an internet-based diary study, which involved 1765 participants giving a brief description of an event and rating

its frequency and significance, 25 per cent of the sample dropped out after the first stage. Significantly, those who dropped out had on average a lower level of education than the group who completed the study (Kristo, Janssen, & Murre, 2009). In this case, keeping a diary may have reminded participants of their low expressive skills.

One aspect of diary keeping that can make it demanding for participants is a lack of control over when diary entries are made. If the researcher (rather than the participant) is in charge of this aspect of diary keeping, participants may be more likely to find the process onerous. Take, for example, the Finnish study mentioned earlier; participants were required to complete a structured diary sheet at a particular time each day (in the morning); there was no flexibility to record events in the evening, which is when participants would have preferred to have done it (the researchers discovered this at the end) (Lämsä et al., 2012). Other researchers note that diaries can become intrusive when participants are required to complete entries at random time intervals (Bolger et al., 2003). Thus, affording participants no control over the timing of diary entries can make the method more onerous.

The significance of affording participants control has been discussed previously. However, we want to return to it in the context of protecting the welfare of participants, as although participants may have control *during* the diary-keeping process, it is typically relinquished as soon as the diary is collected by the researcher. As these midwifery researchers have astutely pointed out, 'by handing over a document the writer loses control and may feel vulnerable. In addition, the participant cannot know what the researcher's reaction to it will be' (Bedwell et al., 2012, p. 153). Similarly, when it comes to data analysis, 'the choice of which data to include and the interpretation of the data is in the power of the adult researcher' (Punch, 2002, p. 329). In particular, being filmed has been associated with a loss of control, possibly because individuals fear they may be recognized or that recordings might go astray (Flewitt, 2006). Ultimately, the researcher is in control of the project.

Using diary method cautiously and flexibly with 'vulnerable' populations

Traditionally, researchers have sought to comply with rigid methodological procedures. This has meant adhering to standard scientific practices rather than using methods flexibly to suit the needs and interests of participants. In

researching this book, we noticed that research papers dated pre-1990 were more likely to use expressions like 'standard day diary' and be concerned with adhering to positivist principles (e.g. Lawson, Robinson, & Bakes, 1985). There was very little, if any, emphasis on flexibility to enable research participation or concern for taking a participatory approach. While rigid adherence to standard methodological principles may be unproblematic in some research contexts, it is rarely appropriate when conducting research with 'vulnerable' people and/or in vulnerable research environments.

The term 'vulnerable' is often used in an uncritical way by policymakers and the research community to refer to specific individuals, groups or settings, as outlined below. Research ethics committee members and research funders use official understandings of vulnerability like this to guide their decision-making and protocols, which in turn determines the way researchers can recruit and involve people in their studies. A researcher may find it particularly hard to get ethical permission to recruit people with dementia to their study, for example, because people with this condition have been classified as 'vulnerable'. However, official definitions of vulnerability are problematic and while they might seem 'value-free on closer inspection they are value-laden' (Brown, 2011, p. 318).

The term 'vulnerable' is generally held to refer to those individuals or groups who, due to age, ill-health, disability or minority status, may be open to exploitation (whether physical, emotional or psychological). This would include, for example, children, adults with learning disabilities and progressive health conditions such as dementia and Parkinson's disease and people with physical disabilities. People can also be vulnerable simply by virtue of the group they belong to (or to which others consider them to belong) especially if that group is stigmatized or marginalized. Examples include asylum seekers, Romany travellers and ethnic and religious minorities. Individuals may also be vulnerable through being part of an institution. This is complex. Institutional membership may carry social stigma; moreover being institutionalized can diminish autonomy, thereby making people vulnerable; and both these aspects can interact with personal 'vulnerabilities' that brought the individual into the institution in the first place.

Quoted from Social Science Research Ethics page <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/researchethics/4-2-understandings.html>

From a methodological perspective, official constructions of vulnerability are problematic on several counts. First, those classified as vulnerable might not be exploited, stigmatized or marginalized, and may even take offence to the idea that others think they have 'special needs' and require extra protection. As Brown (2012) notes, this is certainly one of the objections disability rights activists have about the blanket use of 'vulnerability' in relation to people with a disability. Second, it is assumed that vulnerability is an inherently negative position or weakness; it could, however, be conceptualized as 'openness, susceptibility, and receptiveness' (Wiles, 2011, p. 573). Third, by naming certain individuals and settings as vulnerable, there is a danger that other people and situations (not named) are also vulnerable but not seen as such. It is therefore important that the term 'vulnerability' is used with caution, as it may not adequately capture a person's experience or situation.

Flexibility is increasingly seen as an essential aspect of qualitative research within the health field where participants are often ill, impaired or in pain (Thorne, 2011). Typically, this means adapting a method to enable a group of participants to use it and/or ensuring it is appropriate for a particular setting. For instance, in one study, primary school children were asked to complete a 'picture-based symptom diary' because some participants had yet to learn to read (Lundqvist, Rugland, Clench-Aas, Bartonova, & Hofoss, 2010). Similarly, pictorial diaries were used in a Gambian-based study because researchers knew participants would have low literacy skills (Wiseman et al., 2005). These examples show how researchers need to be flexible and creative if they want to maximize the variety of individuals and settings in their research.

Finally, it is important to highlight the 'situated ethics' that surround diary method, particularly photo and video diaries, which can be more public in process and form than written or audio diaries. Situated ethics are those which are contextual and cannot be foreseen by the researcher (Wiles, 2012). For instance, in a small-scale study exploring the meaning of a 'welcoming community' to adults with learning disability, one male participant told researchers in a follow-up interview that he was questioned about what he was doing by a passer-by while standing in a street taking photographs of the house he used to live in as a child (Power & Bartlett, 2015). Participants may want to take photographs or make video recordings of other people or meaningful places; this process can place them in a potentially vulnerable or even dangerous situation.

A common ethical dilemma in diary-based studies, especially those involving visual methods, is protecting the identity of participants, as well as others who are included in diaries. As Nicholl (2010, p. 20) points out, 'when designing a diary study, it is important to plan for confidentiality, not only for the participant but for others who may be included in recordings'. This might mean, for example, obscuring the faces of individuals in photographs or instructing participants not to take images of certain people or places. However, this in itself raises ethical issues; as such practices and directives may affront and/or place undue demands on the participant (Wiles, 2013).

Several researchers have modified the diary method to make it more suitable for young children, older adults or people with disabilities. Modifications might be made to a particular form of diary keeping or to standard conventions associated with diary keeping. For example, Lillegaard, Løken, and Andersen (2007) designed a pre-coded food diary to help children complete their diary sheets. In another study on the use of medication in later life involving older people, most of whom were aged seventy-five years and over, the researchers told participants to invite someone else to scribe if they felt unable to write their own diary (Johnson & Bytheway, 2001). Other researchers have suggested that separate diary designs are a good idea for younger children and adolescents (O'Donnell, Marshman, & Zaitoun, 2013). Sensitivity to a person's situation, age and abilities is key here; simple changes to standard methodological practices and procedures can mean a wider range of people can participate. In addition, such changes can help to protect the autonomy and dignity of participants.

Individuals have different educational backgrounds and priorities; it is perhaps inevitable, then, that some people will feel more comfortable than others sharing information about themselves with a researcher via a written diary. Thus, even though modifications might be made to the diary method, 'the voices of all participants may not be heard equally' if due consideration is not given to a person's educational background or situation (Koopman-Boyden & Richardson, 2013, p. 398).

Ethical considerations with diary method

As with all research methods, there are ethical issues to consider when designing a study and collecting data. It is beyond the scope of this short text to discuss research ethics in any substantial detail, besides which, one of the books published in this series is concerned with ethical issues in

research, and we would direct the reader to this text for a more detailed account (Wiles, 2013). Our intention in this section is to identify and briefly discuss the most salient ethical issues around using diary methods, especially video diaries and photo diaries, which raise particularly challenging issues related to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

Ensuring privacy

The issue of privacy is a particularly salient one in relation to diary method, especially video diaries. Participants will want to know that what they say on camera cannot be overheard by other people in another room. In one video-diary study involving year 6 school children, the young participants wanted to know exactly where the video camera was going to be set up in the school as they did not want anything they said on camera to be overheard by other pupils or teachers (Noyes, 2004). Other researchers have given participants the choice of where to keep their video diary in an effort to promote a sense of privacy (Edinburgh et al., 2013).

Privacy is an issue with written diaries, too. Participants may be concerned about where to store their diary during the diary-keeping phase so that others do not read it. This might be a real concern in diary studies about sensitive topics such as sexual behaviour. In fact, Minnis and Padian (2001) asked young participants in their study of adolescent sexual behaviour where they kept their written diaries and found the commonly cited location for storing the diary calendars was a “secret” bedroom drawer (39 per cent). Privacy may be a particular issue, then, in an institutional setting, such as a care home, hospital or prison, where others may have easy access to a person’s belongings and/or personal spaces may be limited. It may also be an issue for people with a visual or cognitive impairment or other disability (such as a learning disability), who may require some assistance when making diary entries. In such circumstances, it would be important for the researcher to discuss and record where the participant would like to store their diary during the consent process, so this information can be relayed to the person’s assistant if they have one.

Providing financial incentives

The use of financial incentives can be a contentious topic in research. Offering people money to participate in a study raises several resource and

methodological issues. Not least of these is that it may induce someone to take part, especially if payment is offered to those who might be considered economically vulnerable (Tishler & Bartholomae, 2002). However, as nurse researchers have pointed out, 'providing financial incentives is not morally problematic. Simply based on respect, it seems fair that participants receive some compensation in exchange for their time and associated burden' (Ulrich & Grady, 2004, p. 73). Clearly, financial incentives have a role to play in encouraging people to take part in research and there is an increasing recognition, certainly amongst research funders and within the diary methods community more specifically, that some compensation should be offered, especially where considerable time and effort is required of the participant.

Judgements about whether or not it is a good or bad idea to use financial incentives are complex and beyond the scope of this short text. So, rather than discussing the pros and cons of providing financial incentives, we thought it more helpful to outline a selection of diary-based studies that have used monetary incentives (see Table 5.1). In this way, it becomes possible to see how financial incentives have been used in diary studies, the different amounts that people have been paid and the effects of using financial incentives. With this information, the reader can form his or her own opinion about the merits of providing financial incentives to participants involved in a diary-based study.

Table 5.1 Using financial incentives in diary studies

Study	Amount	Response rate
Fifty-four respondents directly affected by the 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic in rural Cumbria maintained a weekly diary for eighteen months (Mort et al., 2005)	Each diarist received £10 per week every four weeks on collection of their diaries (£40 per visit)	Diary writing began in the week of 21 December and continued over the next eighteen months, during which time just three respondents chose to discontinue. Periods of "holiday" from diary writing were negotiated, and the total number of weekly diaries collected (at monthly visits to the diarists) was 3071

(Continued)

Table 5.1 Continued

Study	Amount	Response rate
Forty-six non-professional dual-earner couples made diary entries every evening using a personal digital assistant (electronic diary) for a two-week period (Bass, Linney, Butler, & Grzywacz, 2007)	Each couple received \$100 for their time	Fifty-three participants had records for all fourteen days and eighty-two participants had ten or more observations. Due to missing evaluation data, three couples were dropped from the study
Seventy-five heterosexual students (forty-four women, thirty-one men) made daily recordings of sexual behaviour, condom use and alcohol or substance use for one month (Graham, Catania, Brand, Duong, & Canchola, 2003)	Compensation for the diary phase was paid at a follow-up visit, as follows: \$1.00 for each diary completed and mailed back on a daily basis, for a total of \$28.00 at the end of four weeks	Sixty-nine participants (forty-one females, twenty-eight males) completed the study
Participants completed an internet-based structured weekly sex diary for six weeks. The men were asked to complete a survey each week on the same day, with a grace period of three days (Boone et al., 2013)	Each participant was paid \$20 for baseline measure, and between \$5 and \$15 for each subsequent online survey completed. The incentive structure was a progressive one, with participants earning larger amounts the longer they stayed in the study (p. 1884)	There was a 78 per cent response rate across the six weeks of the structured diary, with response rates for individual weeks ranging from 77 to 88 per cent
This randomized controlled study included 105 sexually active female adolescents aged 15–19 years, recruited from amongst teens seeking reproductive health-care services at a family planning clinic in the San Francisco Bay Area.	All study participants received \$35 reimbursement for interviews and for completing the diary compared with the requirements of the written diary; additional opportunities to earn small incentives for completing the diary daily were integrated into the telephone protocol.	Fifty-two per cent of participants completed twenty-one or more days of the 28-day diary period, with over one-third of those completing the diary every day

Table 5.1 Continued

Study	Amount	Response rate
Participants completed a standardized sexual behaviour diary questionnaire each day for four weeks (Minnis & Padian, 2001)	As an incentive to complete the diary, participants received one ticket into a monthly gift certificate drawing for each diary calendar they returned or each telephone call they made. In addition, small prizes were given to respondents who either phoned the diary on two randomly selected incentive days each week or returned their written diary calendar for a randomly selected week each month	The most important reason for diary completion was the opportunity to earn the incentives disbursed for randomly selected days on which diary data were reported

Conclusion

In this penultimate chapter, we have considered the extent to which diary method can help to nurture equitable research relations between researchers and participants. We have explored the drawbacks of this method as well as its strengths and discussed the extent to which it affords participants choice and control over the reporting of their lives. On balance we would argue that if diary method is used flexibly, with care and according to high ethical standards, it can certainly help to nurture equitable relations, especially with participants deemed to be vulnerable such as children and people with disabilities. However, as the discussion has shown, the decision to conduct a diary-based study should not be taken lightly, as it requires resourcing and poses a wide range of ethical and methodological dilemmas. Not least of these is balancing the needs and preferences of the participant with those of the research study and researcher. Last of all, it is important to note that there is a 'stark silence' by researchers around ethical issues and the use of social media (Henderson, Johnson, & Auld, 2013). Thus, all of the dilemmas and challenges discussed in this chapter are likely to become increasingly complex, as electronic forms of communication evolve and digital technologies become more advanced.