

# Tourism and spaces of anonymity: An Israeli lesbian woman's travel experience

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## SUMMARY

*This study examines an Israeli lesbian woman's travel experience based on the analysis of her published diary. The comparison of her experience and attitudes towards various spaces (e.g. her apartment, open spaces near her home, and locations in which she is involved in tourist activity) suggests that her perception of the space as 'free from people she knows' allows her and her partner to benefit from anonymity, live a lesbian lifestyle and benefit from sense of existential authenticity. The only space in which she experiences this feeling and feels freedom of self-expression is in the accommodation used during a tourist experience. It is argued that Israeli culture and social norms play a key role in understanding the tourist experience and its associated meanings. The implications, including the utilization of 'real' diaries as a source of information, are discussed.*

### Key words:

*lesbian; diary; tourist experience; Israel*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades a significant body of literature has emerged discussing gay men and lesbian women (the expression *gays and lesbians* will be used hereafter for convenience) (Russell 2001) mainly in fields such as geography, (e.g. Weightman 1980, 1981; Bell 1991; Binnie and Valentine 1999), social anthropology (e.g. Kates and Belk 2001), health (e.g. Hinchliff, Gott and Galena 2005) and psychology (e.g. Goldfried 2001).

These studies are commonly centred on issues linked with the marginalisation, identity and the social exclusion of gay and lesbian people by the heterosexual society and its effects on gay and lesbians' life.

This has resulted in the emergence of the interdisciplinary field of lesbian and gay studies, evidenced by numerous courses and journals, such as *Gay and Lesbian Psychology*; *Journal of Homosexuality* and *A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*.

Tourism studies however, have only recently begun to focus on gay and lesbian issues and mainly to emphasize the importance of tourism and leisure for the gay and lesbian populations (e.g. Pritchard and Morgan 1996; Hughes 1997; Aitchison 1999; Clift and Forrest 1999). In the studies to date, focus is commonly on the experience of spaces away from the usual places of

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residence. These studies conclude that the tourist experience provides gays and lesbians with the opportunity of feeling existential authenticity, as it provides an outlet from the heterosexual society. The existence of gay and lesbian travel agencies, advertising campaigns and specialised guidebooks, as well as concerted efforts made by cities to be perceived as gay-friendly, show the gay and lesbian community to be “on the map” as a unique market segment (Russel 2001).

In the recognition that tourism is important to gays and lesbians (Clift and Forrest 1999a; Clift and Forrest 1999b), surprisingly there are still very few studies on the subject. Pritchard (2004) reviews the existing research to be dominantly focused on experiences of gay men and commonly ignoring lesbians. The notable exceptions however base their empirical research in the context of more liberal gay cities in the UK (e.g. Bialeschki and Pearce 1997; Pritchard Morgan and Sedgley 2002).

When researching a relatively sensitive topic it is often necessary to build up an increasingly comprehensive picture through a series of small-scale studies, each extending the insight gained from previous work. Puar (2002) and Visser (2003) challenge studies conducted at ‘gay landscapes’ in North America and the United Kingdom commonly resulting in findings that represent only certain segments of the gay and lesbian population. This results in a single voice for gay men living in cities with a highly-developed gay scene.

This study aims to address this gap and to explore a lesbian woman’s tourist experience in the context of Israel. Through a comparison of her experience in different spaces, the spaces where she commonly lives (her home, open spaces near her house); and those spaces in which she is involved in tourist activity (in different contexts of her life), the paper highlights the links between issues like the concealing of (the individual) sexual identity, behaviour in those spaces, and the actual perception of the space. The analysis highlights the need for anonymity and its importance in the construction of lesbian identity and the establishment of lesbian relationship due to the social norms of Israeli society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW: GAYS AND LESBIANS IN TOURISM RESEARCH

Lesbians, and specifically gays, are subject to social disapproval, prejudice and discrimination (Bell 1991). This

leads them to feel isolated and harassed, and sometimes they become targets of violence (Weightman 1981), with feelings of insecurity when interacting with other social groups (Weightman 1980; Knopp 1990). This may explain why attempts to conceal sexual identity, known as ‘nondisclosure’, ‘stigma management’ or ‘survival strategies’, are common among gay and lesbians (Carragher and Rivers 2002). In light of these circumstances, it is assumed here that individual sexual orientation may have an effect on a person’s experience of space, and specifically her travel experience and the meanings attached to different spaces.

Gays and lesbians who are open about their sexuality suffer from social stigma and social risks, including violence (Weightman 1980; Lewis and Ross 1995; Kirby and Hay 1997). Those who do not reveal their sexuality are in a constant internal struggle, acting as heterosexuals even in their own homes (Kirby and Hay 1997).

For both groups, the tourist experience, a period of time in which they are far from their normal place of residence and exposed to heterosexuals (Hughes 1997; Pritchard, Morgan, Sedgley, Khan and Jenkins 2000), is an opportunity to be themselves. This claim conforms to research that suggests that tourism - specifically the distance of tourists from their regular environments - allows individuals to shed the norms that control their daily routines (Turner and Ash 1975; Shields 1992). This feeling of existential authenticity exists when tourists may feel that they can be themselves and express themselves more freely than in their daily lives (Wang 1999; Uriely 2005). This may explain the importance assigned to tourism by and for the gay and lesbian populations.

There is growing interest in gay and lesbian tourism research which has resulted in five main topics (see Poria 2006). First, studies that highlight the socio-demographic characteristics of the gay and lesbian population; second, those exploring the motivation for tourist activities; third, a group of studies exploring the co-modification of sexual orientation in tourist spaces; fourth, research examining discrimination towards gays and lesbians, mainly in the hospitality industry; and finally, there is a growing interest in the HIV epidemic in relation to gay men’s travel patterns.

Surprisingly, since the first tourism study on gay men was published research attention has not yet focused on major topics vital to the understanding of the lesbian tourist experience.

As in other research disciplines, the lesbian population still receives only minor attention (Hughes 1997; Clift and Forrest 1999b; Pritchard *et al.* 2002). Moreover, data collected commonly come from residents or tourists in cities with a highly-developed gay scene (e.g. Brighton, Manchester), resulting in a potentially significant sampling bias. In addition, almost no attention was given to specific elements of the on-site experience (i.e. the hotel room). All of the above highlights the need for further research, particularly in more geographically specific contexts.

## Gays and lesbians in Israel

Very little research has been published on gays and lesbians in Israeli society (Kama 2000). For the purpose of this study, the existing research can be divided into two groups: studies dealing with the place of gays and lesbians in society and studies dealing with gay and lesbian tourist-related activities. Kunstman's (2003) study is an example of the first group of studies. Kunstman (2003) addresses the radicalization and ethnicization of Russian lesbian immigrants in Israel. In her study, she illustrates how lesbian immigrants mark spaces as homophobic, a-sexual, liberal or queer. She argues for the perception of Israel as a liberal country in contrast to Russia.

The second group of studies on gays and lesbians focus on tourism-related activities and is significant to this paper. Poria and Taylor (2001) examined gay and lesbian use of the Internet, when purchasing a travel experience, which might reveal their sexual identity. They revealed that in Israel (in comparison to England) one of the main reasons that gays and lesbians use the Internet is because they fear that the staff at the travel agency might know them personally. Specifically, Poria and Taylor argue that in Israel gays and lesbians fear to be easily recognised due to the 'small country syndrome' where 'every one knows everyone'.

In another study, Poria (2006) explored elements, which affect gay and lesbian satisfaction of the hotel experience. Poria argues that gays and lesbians might prefer to stay at a hotel where there is less chance they will be recognised by the hotel guests. The same conclusion was reached in another study (Poria and Oppewal 2003), focusing on gay and lesbian cyber communities. Poria and Oppewal (2003) argue that given the 'invasiveness' of Israeli society, when choosing a hotel

gays and lesbians attempt to choose one with cooperative staff that will not reveal their sexual identity in public. Common to all the aforementioned studies is the fact that gay men are always more afraid to reveal their sexuality in public than lesbian women are. In addition, it was found that local culture plays an important role in the understanding of gay and lesbian life experience. An important observation for the present research is that participants refer to their private homes as spaces where they can reveal their identity and feel safe.

## THE USE OF DIARIES IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

This study makes use of a novel research source in tourism and marketing - a published diary. Diary accounts have been commonly used in tourism to investigate the links between duration of travel, travel patterns (e.g. decision-making while travelling, number of travel companions) and spending patterns (e.g. Thornton, Shaw and Williams 1997; Vogt and Andereck 2003). Occasionally, diary accounts have been used in studies with a different nature in tourism research (e.g. Markwell 1997; Laws 1998).

Important to this study are the attributes of diary accounts as a source of information. They minimize the influence of the researcher as a spectator. In addition, diaries can be perceived as self-revealing and honest (Breakwell and Wood 1995; Miller 2000). Another rationale assigned to the use of diaries is their helpfulness in exploring emotions and the private interpretations in the domain explored (Wilkins 1993). There is some criticism of the use of diaries. A diary refers to a particular individual and as such, is 'subjective' in nature. Another 'criticism' emerges from the belief that unless precise instructions are given to the informants about 'making public' their activities, the data gathered may be useless.

A published diary has several characteristics, which differentiate it from a diary account. In this study, the diary was not written at a researcher's request, but commercially published, and available to the public at large. Furthermore, in this diary, the travel experience is only one of the components of the entire picture. Such a diary is known in academic discourse as *public unsolicited personal documents* (Gibson 1995; Hodder 1998).

Such diaries have already been recognized as rich sources of information in areas such as sociology and anthropology, especially in light of the emergence of feminist research (Cotterill and Letherby 1993; Romanucci-Ross 2001).

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The diary examined in this study is entitled, *To Kiss You in a Field of Daisies*, written by architect and photographer, Aviva Evron (Evron 2000) (herewith the words diarist/writer are used). The diary is written in Hebrew and published by Yedioth Ahronot, a popular mainstream publisher with no specific ideological philosophy. The diary uses two writing styles. The first, a vague description of the diarist's actions, commonly referring to undefined time periods; the second, detailed descriptions of activities taking place on a certain date. The diarist, in a short interview with the author of this paper, confirmed that the book represents her public diary and as such can be 'used' for this study.

The first period referred to in the diary is September 1992. Entries in the diary terminate in June 1994. The diary describes a period from the moment the author renews an acquaintance with someone she knew previously until the point they decided to live together and raise children as a lesbian couple. In general, the diary describes the development of the relationship between the author and her lover, two women in their thirties. It includes the development of their friendship, their efforts to conceal the nature of their relationship, and few reasons for not wanting their relationship to be public. The writer and her partner live in the Tel Aviv area, which is characterized by several attributes of importance to this research. Firstly, Tel Aviv is recognized as gay friendly, with a rich culture scene and meeting places for the homosexual community (Cassels 2000; Hoffman 2005). Secondly, due to the nature of the study, which focuses on space experience, it is important to mention that the city also has a number of parks and beaches.

The diary was first subjected to thematic content analysis to illuminate underlying themes (Smith 1995). Specifically, the focus was on the use of the different spaces. Then, in line with the Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis, careful consideration was given to the symbolic meaning attached to objects and events to which the diarist refers. This was considered appropriate as it provided a framework through which the

writer's experience could be examined. In addition, links between themes found (e.g. the space to which the writer refers) and situational factors (e.g. the status of the diarist's relationship with her partner, companions on visits to the spaces) were investigated.

The analysis was not guided by specific prior hypotheses, but rather allowed key themes to emerge from the data. It aimed at clarifying such topics as the reasons for moving from one space to another, the meanings assigned with moving to another space, whether the diarist related to her companion in that space, her companion on the visit, etc. It was assumed that analysing these topics, particularly the comparison of the experience in different spaces, would provide insight into a lesbian woman's tourist experience. The translation of quotations was checked by an Israeli proficient in Hebrew and English, to ensure accuracy in the process. In the quotations that follow, empty square brackets indicate where material has been omitted, whereas material within square brackets indicates where material has been added for clarification, to facilitate reading.

## LOOKING FOR A PRIVATE SPHERE: THE DIARIST, HER LOVER AND ISRAEL

The analysis centred around three spaces: the writer and her friends' apartments, open spaces (parks and beach) near her home, and spaces in which the writer was involved in a tourist experience (away from home for more than 24 hours). Due to its importance for the understanding of the diarist's experience of spaces, information about the diarist and Israel (as presented in the diary) is highlighted.

### The diarist, her lover and Israel

The diarist assigned several attributes to Israel that are important in understanding her tourist experience. Firstly, Israel is referred to as a country 'where everyone knows everyone'. It is clear from her diary that when she is in public spaces with her friend, the writer is afraid that someone might recognize them. Secondly, the diarist, and to a greater extent, her lover, believe that lesbianism in Israel may lead to social stigma, and be a possible threat to certain elements of their lives. The diarist's lover, a child psychologist, is particularly concerned with losing clientele and possibly being

viewed as less professional by her colleagues. The following quotations taken from dialogues between the writer and her partner highlight this issue:

*“My mother would die if she knew. [ ] My sister would excommunicate me, she’d distance her children from me to avoid my sick influence. My friends would distance themselves [ ] the neighbours would point at me, turn their heads after me in the street with a knowing smile on their lips, or I’d see them in clouds of concern about the loss of value of their apartments... (p. 23)*

*I’m sure they’ll fire me [ ] my boss won’t take the risk of employing me, and rightly. Surely, parents won’t agree to bring their kids for counselling with a psychologist like that. Everyone will run away. I’m sure it’ll ruin my career. I’m convinced. (p. 23)*

The diarist also highlights norms of behaviour which are important to understanding her daily activities as well as her tourist experience. One such example is the freedom to visit a friend without prior notice. This is illustrated later as being important to the understanding of the writer’s space experience.

Two significant issues should be noted with respect to the writer and her lover. Firstly, the diarist has considered herself lesbian (“*I always preferred the wrong sex*”, p. 28) since childhood. Her lover, in contrast, argues that she wants to live with a man in a normal family, not perceiving herself as lesbian. She claims that until the current relationship with the diarist, she had never fallen in love or been sexually aroused by a woman. Secondly, the diarist suggests that she and her partner are not familiar with the lesbian scene in Israel (or outside Israel) and do not know other lesbian couples. At the beginning of their relationship, they perceived lesbians as ‘strange manly women’, as illustrated in the next quote:

*We’d only heard about lesbians, we didn’t know any, but we knew they’re different, masculine women who hadn’t found a man, so they live with women. We had nothing in common with them. We knew we were alone in the world. (p. 26)*

## The home

The home is described as a space where the writer and her partner live together as a lesbian couple. This

includes regular mundane activities such as eating, watching TV, and making love. Their home is also perceived as a space for activities that cannot be performed in public view (unlike heterosexuals), because they would be identified as lesbians.

For example, they dance together at home. It is very important to highlight that the diarist and her partner are constantly afraid of being recognized as lesbians, even in their own home. They take several steps in order to prevent this, such as leaving home separately early in the morning to avoid being seen, taking their shoes off when climbing the stairs, and unlocking the door quietly. When at home, they are afraid of the sound of the elevator, fearing that it may bring an unexpected visitor (common in Israel), who might discover their couplehood.

## Open spaces near home

Visits to public open spaces near the author’s home include parks and beaches. These visits are classified by the companion accompanying the diarist as follows: with no companion; with others (blind date, social event in the park); with her partner/lover. When visiting alone, the diarist refers to these spaces as somewhere she can relax and feel free from others, with no reference to lesbianism. The diarist visits these places when she feels pressured. She refers to the natural scenery and the fact that the spaces are peaceful and quiet, factors that add to her relaxation. She claims that some areas in these spaces allow her to isolate herself from others.

An example that illustrates the diarist’s experience of open spaces and of importance to understanding the meaning assigned to her tourist experience is her visit to the beach. During one visit she met a man she did not know, and they discussed very personal issues. He told her about his divorce and she spoke frankly about her relationship with her lover, which at that moment was in a critical situation. It is interesting to note that in this environment (located very close to her home), she felt like a tourist and safe enough to share her sexuality with someone.

The two people did not ask about each other’s names. This suggests that although they exposed themselves, this was done safely by keeping their identities concealed.

The next quotation emphasizes this point:

*Wednesday afternoon – I went to mess around in the sea, find peace. I wandered around like a tourist, no car, no bags, no camera – great. A man sat next to me on rocks of the marina wave breaker and started a conversation. He told me he’s going through a painful divorce, and I told him in the openness between strangers that I’m finishing a romance with a woman, and it’s hard for me. [ ] We parted even without knowing each other’s names. (p. 150)*

Another use of the open space is when the diarist was accompanied by people other than her lover. On these occasions, the open space is described by the writer as one in which she feels relatively safe and at ease. The third use of the park is when the author is accompanied by her lover. While there, they show physical affection in a way that reveals the nature of their lesbian relationship. They consider the open space a place in which they are isolated from a heterosexual environment, yet act differently, although aware they are in a public domain. The next quotation - in which the diarist describes a visit to the park next to their home - illustrates this:

*We sat on the green, cold rug overlooking the pools of water that reflect the trees and palms, and glittering street lights. I knew we were very close to the busy Tayasim Road [i.e. name of a famous road in Israel] and to hundreds of living rooms where people sit in the pale television light watching the world’s bad news: and here, on the grass, under the old rubber tree, none of that exists. Everything is quiet, cut off, you and me. I put my arm around your shoulder.*

*“Are you crazy, in a public place?” you warned me. Stop it, nobody cares. Besides, what public place? Feel this place... (p. 86),*

On other occasions in which the diarist and her partner visit open spaces, the same pattern emerges. Although aware that the space is public, they act as if they were in a semi-protected space, where they do not have to hide their relationship. In this context, it is interesting to compare the diarist’s behaviour when she purchased a book on homosexual love in a regular bookstore. When making the purchase, although an act that does not reveal sexual orientation, she did not buy the book at her usual bookstore. Even then, she checked several times to ensure there was nobody present who knew her.

This clearly illustrates her perception of the open ‘anonymous spaces’ where she is not known as being more safe and somehow ‘semi-protected’..

### The tourist experience

The diarist and her partner participated in several tourist experiences in Israel. The diary clearly links important meanings to the tourist experience, derived from the diarist’s involvement in a lesbian relationship. Her tourist experience can be divided into two geographical spaces: inside and outside the hotel room.

The diary begins with the first tourist experience. The writer describes a vacation with her partner and some friends in the city of Eilat, a popular resort in the south of Israel. She refers to the vacation generally as “a chance to escape.” As a period of time, it allows her to escape from her daily routine. Their room, in contrast, is a very specific location, and is in a different hotel than where their friends are staying. It serves as the ultimate space in which they feel completely isolated and free to be a lesbian couple. The diarist specifically described the move to the room during the vacation as “an escape to a protected environment.”

*When we escaped back to the air-conditioned room that was just ours, all the fears and concerns vanished. (p. 19)*

In another case, the same pattern emerges. The author is involved in another tourist experience in the north of Israel. Again, she describes this time period as freedom from the daily routine and from social norms. Also in this case, as previously mentioned, the temporary accommodation used during the vacation allows them to be themselves.

The writer specifically describes the accommodation as a space to avoid the ‘hysteria of her normal life’. It is clear that the hotel accommodation provided the diarist with the opportunity to feel safe and protected and as such it allowed her to behave in a way she was not able to, even at her own home.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that the tourist experience, especially the use of accommodation as part of the writer’s temporary mobility (Hall 2004), lets her feel

free of social pressures and permits her to experience her lesbian relationship in a way she cannot in other places. The findings clearly indicate, in line with Hughes' suggestion that tourism helps to "facilitate(s) the construction of a homosexual identity" (1997: 3). Moreover, the accommodation used during travel affirms and constructs the writer's lesbian relationship by providing an escape from heterosexual spaces in which the diarist and her partner cannot show physical affection (Valentine 1996). This finding contradicts Lytle's claim "go where you like, there is no holiday from sexuality" (1996: 5), suggesting that the accommodation used during the tourist experience provides a safe shelter to celebrate their couplehood.

The diarist's tourist experience can be explained in light of the literature dealing with authenticity. The concept of authenticity is central to tourism studies and the understanding of tourist behaviour (Reisinger and Steiner 2006). The evolution of the understanding of the term 'authentic' shifted from the objective to constructive perspective, which highlights the role of the individual in the construction of attributes associated with the object or presentation displayed (Uriely 2005). Wang (1999) identified two kinds of authenticity: the authenticity of toured objects and existential authenticity. Specifically, he highlights the latter (the second) as relevant in understanding tourist experiences which are not based on the authenticity of the object (Reisinger and Steiner 2006). Wang argues that "people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the tour objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in nonordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily life" (1999: 3). It is argued that while being a tourist the diarist is involved in an existential authentic experience. Moreover, her tourist experiences as a lesbian can serve as a textbook example for existential authenticity. It is revealed that the diarist is subjected for too many constraints even in her own home and only feels free to be herself when in a hotel room.

The literature emphasizes that gays and lesbians want to be among people like themselves while involved in tourist experiences (Pritchard *et al.* 2000; Pritchard *et al.* 2002). In the diary however the writer showed almost no interest in meeting other lesbians (also they may be able to recognise her). Note, most studies have been conducted with participants living in cities with a developed gay and lesbian scene. Furthermore, studies are commonly concerned with gays and

lesbians who are open about their sexuality. The aforementioned may explain the difference in behaviour reported in this study.

The tourist experience explored in this study revealed more about the understanding of lesbian women's life and tourist experiences in Israel. The findings support further literature in which it is suggested that the tourist experience is important to the construction of lesbian relationships (Poria and Oppewal 2003). However, in contrast to most studies in which with participants had already revealed their sexuality and identified themselves as lesbians, this study centres on a lesbian woman who is involved in the long-term relationship. The study reveals that the argument of the individual's home serving as a shelter from everyday heterosexualized society is not always relevant for the diarist. It is obvious that due to the social norm, the diarist does not feel safe enough to be lesbian even in her own apartment. This finding is supported by a study with gay men during their military service (Kaplan and Ben-Ari 2000). Some of the soldiers suggested that the army provided them with an environment safer than home in terms of their homosexuality. However, the gay men interviewed did not live alone in their own homes, while the diarist did. The findings clearly demonstrate that the deeply embedded power of heterosexualised gaze even permeates individuals' homes.

The tourism studies and human geography literature emphasise the fact that gay and lesbian areas provide gays and lesbians with a safe environment to be themselves, as well as the opportunity to socialise with others like them (Rushbrook 2002). The literature particularly emphasises the importance of those spaces during the coming out process (Ivy 2001). For example, Weightman (1980) suggests that gay bars have the attributes of a private place due to the secrecy they provide. She highlights the importance of this space in the self-identification process. Pritchard *et al.* (2002) highlight the importance of those spaces for the sense of community. It is argued here however, based on the diarist's experience, that those gay and lesbian areas which are popular with gays and lesbians, as well with others who may recognise them will not provide a safe environment for individuals such as the diarist (being involved in the long-term relationship and having the fear of being 'seen and recognised').

The findings indicate that elements of Israeli culture should be considered in interpreting the writer's tourist

experience. The diary suggests that the invasiveness of Israeli society causes the diarist to feel unsafe and in a constant struggle to remain unexposed, even in her (as well as her partner's) own home. This may explain why only accommodation other than her normal abode allows her to be herself. Moreover, the findings also highlight the importance of the individual subjective sense of freedom during a tourist experience (Moore, Gushman and Simmons 1995; Uriely 2005). This conforms with the theoretical framework suggested by Poria, Butler and Airey (2003) for the understanding of tourism, in which the individual's perception of time as "free" is important to a person's tourist experience. In their study, they argue that a person may feel like a tourist even when s/he is located close to home, or distant from home but for less than 24 hours. They specifically emphasized the individual perception of the time frame as 'free' as important for understanding tourist experience. The findings indicate that the diarist feels and acts like a tourist in open spaces close to her home or when using the accommodation during her tourist experience. This supports the notion that a sense of freedom is crucial to the understanding of tourist behaviour. The fact that the writer explicitly uses the word 'tourist' in describing her behaviour in open spaces located near her home, adds to the credibility of this finding.

The findings also highlight the presence of others as important to the individual tourist experience in general and the feeling of security in particular. The issue of crowdedness (its density as well as personal characteristics) has been virtually ignored in tourism research. It is argued that the presence of others is important in understanding the tourist experience of lesbians. Poria (2006), for example, suggested that gay men's behaviour is influenced by the presence of children in a hotel, preventing them from open displays of affection. In this study, the presence of others, or more accurately, the presence of others who might recognize the writer, is a factor that prevents her from showing physical affection to her partner. This finding supports literature that suggests the individual's sense of safety is very important in their travel experience. It is clear that the writer and her partner feel safe when they are not afraid of being recognized. It is suggested here that if women fear a man's lustful gaze (Pritchard *et al.* 2002), lesbian couples are afraid of every gaze.

The findings also support literature suggesting that lesbians have almost no fear of being the targets of physical violence (Harper and Schneider 2003). The

diarist's fear was of being recognized and identified as a lesbian. No mention was made of fear of physical violence. It is important to note that although society is becoming more tolerant of homosexuality, the diarist suggests that even mundane activities are a struggle. Today, the writer and her partner are well known in Israel (and according to gay and lesbian media are respected for their decision to raise children in a lesbian family), due to the exposure of their relationship in a published diary. This could suggest a similar struggle is common to lesbian women who have not revealed their relationship. Another issue open to exploration is that the struggle described in the diary is only an assumption of how heterosexual society would regard the diarist if her lesbian identity was revealed. No indication is given as to how heterosexual people relate to gays and lesbians in Israel, and the author is not aware of other lesbian experiences.

Finally, to comment on the methodological choice of this study to use 'a real diary' as a source of information. It is suggested based on this study that the use of a diary allows researchers to study a person's behaviour in a natural setting (Phillimore and Goodson 2004). Reference to a diary, however, also has limitations. Firstly, representativeness of the findings cannot be gauged, and secondly, scholars may only obtain a partial description of the travel experience. Yet the most fundamental issue is associated with the nature of the study being based on an Israeli heterosexual man's interpretation of the diarist's experience. The researcher does not deny that his own interpretation may have influenced his understanding while interpreting the actions and diarist wording. It could be argued that this could only be prevented if an Israeli lesbian were to conduct the research. However, such an argument would result in the devastating conclusion that researchers can only examine their own social group (reproducing its power to be able to speak) while leaving many 'marginalized' voices to be unspoken. Instead, I would argue that those who are not part of the social group at the core of the study could bridge the gap between majority and minority groups, bringing findings to different audiences. Based on the researcher's experience of gay and lesbian participants (and working with gay researchers), being an "outsider" has certain advantages. An "outsider" researcher (in this case, part of the majority group) who builds trust (and works) with her/his research participants may highlight what may be considered trivial and unimportant to those belonging to the group, thus providing a better understanding of behaviour and the meanings attached



to it. So, it can be argued that studying solely one's 'own' social group would result in a partial and homogenous understanding of society. Yet, in stating so the paradox of 'Othering' is inevitably produced, contributing further to tourism studies as an 'Otherness machine' (Aitchison, 2001). In an attempt to give a voice to 'the marginalized', the statement 'I belong to the majority group' further perpetuates dominant discourses underpinned by the existing power relations of inequity and inequality (Wearing 1996).

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