

Sitting, Socializing & Drinking Exploring Foreignness

by Kristen Dara Kaefer
Tapie's Bar in Gozo, Malta
July 5 – July 24

No entity is inherently foreign; s/he who is a foreigner in one place is at home in another –
Rebecca Saunders

Introduction

I've always been attracted to historic cafes dominated by men. They are environments rich with stories of the past and thoughts of the present, where life is pondered, explained, reflected and archived. My femaleness somehow wants to understand this male world, as if men were an entirely different species with a whole set of their own social rules and norms. This affinity follows me wherever I go, and in Gozo it was the same. I quickly found the perfect place to spend my time getting to know the local community, history and culture - Tapie's Bar.

The interesting aspect of a young, foreign woman entering an environment like a local pub is obvious - she definitely does not fit in. At Tapie's this evident otherness initially caused me to reflect on what it means to be foreign in a new environment. At first it became clear that foreigners like myself did not participate in some of the social activity that the local customers partook in. In addition, it was apparent that my personal experience interacting at the bar was different from the experience of other foreigners who visited. Two questions naturally followed from these observations: what are the requirements for inclusion at Tapie's Bar? And, what determines the degree of one's foreignness? My fieldwork attempts to answer these questions and explore the concept of foreignness through my own experience as a foreign female researcher.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Definitions and concepts

Many terms could be used in place of foreigner for this research. To find a word that doesn't hold a negative connotation to describe some type of otherness is a difficult task, and foreigner is no exception. Simply browse through a dictionary to see how embedded this negativity is, or check the synonyms in a thesaurus: alien, noncitizen, immigrant, incomer, newcomer, outlander, outsider, stranger. "To be foreign is not belonging to a group, not speaking a given language, not having the same customs; it is to be unfamiliar, uncanny, unnatural, unauthorized, incomprehensible, inappropriate, improper" (Saunders, 2003). I am inclined to use a term more positively-connoted, like newcomer, but a person doesn't have to be new in order to be foreign.

Foreigner is also problematic because it is almost always connected to one's nationality in common discourse, even though it encompasses much more than that. Indeed nationality is one way of delineating foreignness, but there are many more criteria we use to differentiate between each other, such as language, skin color, clothing, hobbies, religion, etc. In an attempt to use a generic term and to avoid using politically or ideologically-charged terminology such as immigrant or refugee, I use foreigner to refer to a person at Tapie's Bar who is not a regular male Gozitan customer.

Recognizing someone as foreign or different from us is not inherently bad. In fact, some say it is part of the natural socialization process we experience as young children, and that it is one of the first things we learn to do as human beings. "The awareness of the sense of being an insider or outsider, of having different kinds of social relationships, is not only a matter of exclusive bonding but a result of observations of other people" (Cullingford, 2000).

The fascination we have, the judgements, opinions and assumptions we make of each other as foreigners is a subject of great interest and wonder. Studies on alterity (otherness) provide some insight into how we create the image of the Other. One theory is that the construction of the Other is actually a construction of some part of our estranged Selves (Balibar, 2005). To indicate why someone is different from us means we have an idea of who we are. Thus, attaching a specific identity to a foreign person enables us to hold on to our identities. Furthermore, the identities we impose on others fluctuate over time because we are constantly modifying our own identities (Saunders, 2003).

According to the theory of self-categorization, when categorizing ourselves and categorizing others we are constantly measuring the contrast between "them" and "us". Even more, this theory states that the process of

identity construction is necessary for communities to delineate boundaries, organize themselves and build solidarity (Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D. & Wetherell, M. S., 1987).

Despite the apparent negativity surrounding foreignness and otherness, being foreign does not necessarily mean one is disliked or at a disadvantage. While someone can be interesting or appealing due to his or her differences, another can be discriminated against for these differences. This depends on the opinion, mind set and identity of the individuals and how they perceive the foreigner (Saunders, p. 9). In Europe, for example, reports have found that the images given to foreigners reflect how that foreign group is stereotyped or portrayed in the wider European community. Therefore, these assigned identities are not decided by the foreigners themselves, and not always desired.

Whether someone is perceived as a foreigner because he or she is part of a large minority group, an exchange student, a traveler or a local native who just doesn't fit in, he or she will be exposed to the uncertain process of inclusion and exclusion. Being recognized in a new community is the first step, but actually being included is another level that not all foreigners readily arrive at. This usually involves being granted certain rights that allow the foreigner to be a part of the community (Balibar, 2005).

Considering that there are not many societies in the world today which are homogeneous, we are constantly faced with the differences that stand between us and forced to deal with them. Malta, and especially Gozo, is an interesting ground for research into these types of studies due to the large percentage of ethnic Maltese which makes up the population, coupled with the recent waves of migration to the island (TPPI Report, 2008). The migrants have been coming mainly from North Africa since 2002 and are raising a lot of debate in the community concerning their rights. For local residents who are used to being among fellow Maltese people, many questions about Maltese identity are also coming forth (Galea, 2008). Not only are the typical migrants from Somalia and Libya being discriminated against, but so are the organizations and individuals in the community who are working for immigrant rights or who hold a strong anti-racist stance. Polls have shown that the majority of Maltese people are less accepting of Arab and African immigrants than of fellow European immigrants (EPASI Report, 2008).

Context and methods

With this context in mind, I can now begin to describe my fieldwork in Gozo. Tapie's Bar is only one small cafe in Gozo, existing like a small world in itself, seemingly frozen in time



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

as the world around it changes rapidly. Because it is known as a “local’s bar” and has a very clear customer profile, it is an opportune place to do research on alterity and inclusion. It should be noted here that although Gozo is part of the country of Malta, Gozitans have distinct cultural characteristics that distinguish them from Maltese people on Malta.

According to local sources, Tapie’s Bar is over 100 years-old and has always been situated on St. Francis Square in the capital city Rabat (otherwise known as Victoria). The name was born years ago when the typical order was “tea and pies”. Over time, these two words fused together to become Tapie’s. Most of the regular customers know this story along with other local histories and they are proud that it is undoubtedly the cheapest place in all of Gozo and has remained so even in the face of rising tourism and greater changes in the demographics and culture. Coffee, for example, is only 40 cents, and is generally instant coffee unless you ask specifically for an espresso drink. Tapie’s opens at 5:30 and closes around 22:30, so many customers come early in the morning and again in the afternoon or evening.

The regular customer is a Gozitan man over the age of 45. However, the majority are even older, retired, and have spent many years working and living abroad in Australia, Canada or the USA. Those who are younger and still working come to Tapie’s Bar before and/or after their job, meeting with friends or coming alone for a rest and drink. Aside from these regular customers, there are occasionally foreigners who do not fit this description. As previously mentioned, this research will use the term foreigner to describe any person who does not fit the regular customer profile. Therefore, several types of foreigners who pass through Tapie’s Bar are: male expats living in Gozo, tourists stopping by for a quick drink, Maltese people coming during their weekend visits to the island, or, even more rarely, a woman (either expat or tourist). In addition, there are several local Gozitan men who possess an outsider status and are considered different by many locals. These men usually have some criminal history or are heavy drinkers or just described as having “problems”. There are also a group of regular customers from Somalia who come daily like the regular Gozitan men. These Somali men came to Malta as refugees or asylum seekers and are working or trying to find work in Gozo.

Tapie’s Bar is run by five people who are all in the same family. They are all middle-aged men, aside from one woman (a sister of the barmen) and her son who is in his early twenties. I will use the term ‘barmen’ in this research to refer to all of these employees. The barmen take turns working different shifts, but one main barman works almost around the clock and is the main face of Tapie’s Bar.

As previously mentioned, the aim of this research is to investigate the concept of foreignness through my own ethnographic field experience as a foreigner. Questions I explore are: how can a foreigner best integrate and be accepted into Tapie’s Bar? What obstacles does the foreigner face in this process? What obstacles does the local face when confronted with foreigners in their environment? How do people discriminate between different kinds of foreigners? Why are some foreigners seemingly well-integrated and others not? Furthermore, I will use photography as an explorative tool and reflect on how it has affected my fieldwork experience and influenced the knowledge I have accumulated.

The qualitative data presented here was collected while visiting Tapie’s Bar on a daily basis for 13 consecutive days, and taking photographs for the last five days. This is an explorative case study that employs participant observation, content analysis of field notes, informal interviews and photography. Aside from myself, the researcher, there are four types of foreigners that I refer to and use in my analysis: the regular Somali customers, women, male Gozitan outsiders and male expats. Data is organized into three categories which are notable aspects of social life in Tapie’s Bar: seating, socializing and drinking.

Seating

Although there seems to be no apparent seating order at Tapie’s Bar, there are some general patterns in seating behavior among local Gozitan customers. Generally, seating is open to everyone and anyone. Customers share tables, swap chairs or share one of the two benches on the outside patio. It is customary to ask if a chair or table is free before taking it, but there are no strict rules as to what is or isn’t allowed. Men can even take wooden stools from the inside tables if the outside is full. Every so often the barmen come around to pick up empty glasses and straighten the chairs.

Even though many men have a preferred place to sit, I observed no strong sense of seating ownership. Space is limited, and it’s understood that customers are free to sit where space is available. Some men always sit together in specific pairs or groups, while many come and sit alone until they see a friend. The one exception to this is the group of 4-10 men who sit on the left patio every day from 8:00-11:00. Although they don’t have this space reserved, most customers know that this is their preferred spot. They are characterized by their strong politically- oriented conversations and views.

Although most customers prefer to sit outside in the hot summer months, there are always a few men sitting inside,



Figure 6.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

either alone or chatting in more privacy. There is also an occasional customer who stands at the far end of the bar to drink and chat with the barmen as they work.

Despite being hesitant about where to sit during my first few visits to Tapie's Bar, I felt welcome to sit anywhere. At first I was unsure if I would be intruding on others' space and conversation if I sat at a shared table, but customers eased my discomfort by inviting me to sit with them. As I became more comfortable I began borrowing chairs to take to other tables, sat inside on a few occasions, and also sat on both sides of the patio. Diversifying my seating patterns helped familiarize others with me and helped me get to know different faces. Sitting alone set me apart from the others, but it was not a hindrance because I was eventually joined by another customer who wanted to share the table. Even though sitting at a shared table did not automatically guarantee conversation would start, it at least opened up the possibility.

Photographing revealed new challenges for me and also provided new opportunities. Due to the close proximity of the tables and small space, my camera felt like an obvious intrusion into the bar, and I noticed some customers became uncomfortable or leaned out of the way when I took a picture. I often had to get up and sit further away in order to get a photograph. Aside from these challenges, using the camera forced me to pay more observant attention to the small details in seating patterns and behaviors of the customers. Later analyzing the photographs also provided insight into details I hadn't noticed during the fieldwork.

My experience was slightly different from other foreign customers, mainly because they usually sat more secluded from the local Gozitans. For example, the regular Somali customers usually sat by themselves at particular tables on the corner of the patio. Gozitan men and Somali men almost never sat together, but would borrow chairs from each other's tables, or sat at an adjoining table when there was no other space. Women who came by themselves were generally foreign expats from Europe and tended to sit alone while reading a book or newspaper. The Gozitan outsiders mainly sat together (like the Somali men), but also intermixed with other Gozitan locals when seating was full. The expat men who frequented Tapie's Bar usually came with a Gozitan friend, another expat friend or alone. These expat men seemed to have the least separation from local Gozitan customers in their seating patterns.

Socializing

At Tapie's Bar socializing is the cornerstone of daily life and nobody is anonymous, making interaction nearly unavoidable. As with seating, there are several patterns of how social interaction occurs and many of these are

directly related to seating. Because there are no single or double tables, customers sit at four-top tables on the patio or around one of the long wooden tables inside that seat up to ten people. As mentioned in the previous section, there are no strict rules about who sits with whom, and chairs can be swapped and borrowed in any fashion and form. This intermixing and close seating proximity fosters conversation.

Most customers greet one another as they or a new person enters the bar. Even if two customers sitting at the same table do not know one another personally, they will still greet each other with a nod or hello and may easily begin small talk. Among well-known friends and groups, lively interaction takes place: heated debates and discussions, light and friendly group conversation within or across tables, joking and laughing with one another, engaging with gestures of affection and playfulness. Conversation decreases with intermittent periods of sitting in silence while watching people passing by on the street. Some customers occasionally read newspapers which are commonly shared at the table and often serve as a point of conversation. Socializing also takes place with people walking by on the street. The patio is actually on the sidewalk, creating a constant engagement with pedestrians passing through.

A final aspect of socializing is between customers and barmen. The few customers who are in frequent communication with the barmen seem to have friendships that extend beyond the customer-employee relationship. Aside from these, most customer-barmen socializing is brief and informal. The barmen know almost all local customers by name and face and will interact as they do their work (such as when they go around to clean tables or when customers come order at the bar). Usually the barmen are busy and focused on their tasks while socializing lightly with customers.

Socializing as a foreigner at Tapie's Bar doesn't always follow these patterns. I became recognized after the first two visits, and the more I frequented the cafe, the more names and faces I began to know. Conversation was never scarce - customers frequently approached me or initiated conversation if we were sitting at the same table. Additionally, if I invited myself to a table where there were already men talking, I was greeted and included in the conversation seemingly without hesitation or discomfort. Not only did I converse and sit with regular Gozitan men, but also with foreign customers like myself, enabling me to reflect on the foreigner's experience from a different angle. The opportunity to meet someone new and socialize was available, but whether or not I took this opportunity depended on me.



Figure 9.



Figure 10.



Figure 11.

Despite the numerous contacts I established with the customers, there were only four men who I maintained a consistent relationship with. These men were my main informants and provided me with insight that superficial relationships did not offer. One point of connection we had was our common experience of living abroad. Because most men had lived and worked in Australia, Canada or the U.S.A., we often had a strong basis for discussion and it was a good starting point to become friends or acquaintances. Through these conversations I learned basic information about their lives, why they come to Tapie's and, only after some time of getting to know one another, I learned their opinion about issues such as religion, immigration, differences between Gozitan and Maltese people, or the economic situation of the country. I could see how easy it was to stay with the acquaintances I was familiar with and not branch out to meet others. For this reason I made a point to constantly diversify myself. In order to increase my understanding of the bar culture and to speak with a wide range of customers, I alternated where I sat and who I sat with as much as possible.

Conversing with the barmen, however, was a more difficult task. Although they regularly greeted me and were certainly friendly, it was difficult to go beyond small talk about Gozo or the weather. I perceived them to be busy and perhaps not interested in who I was, assuming that I was just a tourist passing through. Even after telling them about my research and asking permission to take photographs, they didn't express any special interest in me like the customers did. I sensed most distance with the barwoman and I had the easiest connection with her 20 year-old son. In all cases, I always had to initiate conversation.

Photography added a new dimension to the socializing process. In most instances it helped spark conversation and laughter. For example, when I took a picture I often asked that person to take a picture of me in return. This put me in the spotlight and helped ease some discomfort of me photographing them. It also reminded me what it's like to be behind the camera in order to not become careless or insensitive when photographing. Using the photographs later to elicit conversation and stories helped to diversify my fieldwork. There were situations when photography cut off my socializing from certain individuals. In these cases, the camera was seen as invasive and made the customers uncomfortable. In order to avoid this, I realized I needed to take time to get to know people before photographing them. My relative success with being included in everyday socializing was not the same for all other foreign customers. In fact, there appeared to be strong differences between my experience and other foreigner experiences. Most regular Somali customers had a longer history at the bar than

me, but were less engaged in socializing with the regular Gozitan customers. These men stayed in their own social circles and had only minimal contact with local Gozitans. I learned that most Gozitan locals at Tapie's Bar did not have any interest in getting to know the Somali men and assumed that the Somali men also did not have interest in getting to know them. A few Gozitans didn't think they could speak English or didn't know exactly where they were from. On one occasion I sat at a table with a Somali customer and began conversing with both him and a local Gozitan man who sat at the table next to us. This triangular conversation only lasted while I was present. Without a reason for being brought together, it seemed local Gozitans and local Somali's would not socialize at all.

Many expat women have been living in Gozo for several years and therefore knew many of the local Gozitan men. Although it was common for them to briefly greet each other, little socializing occurred past this. It seemed the women came to Tapie's for reasons other than socializing, such as to relax and read a book, or were in the area and stopped briefly along their way. I was told by Gozitan men that women simply don't come to Tapie's, but that there's no reason for it. One woman even told me she was told by her female Gozitan friend to not frequent Tapie's Bar because it's a dirty bar and "not for nice women". Women were much more vocal and open about their opinions of being a foreigner in Gozo. They pointed out some facts that many others were not so open to discuss, such as racism and discrimination against foreigners in general.

Local Gozitan outsiders socialized mainly amongst themselves even though they knew all the other Gozitan customers. The regular Gozitan men knew the outsiders as well, by name and story, and I was told to "be careful" about certain men I talked with. Although the Gozitan outsiders were described as being "harmless," it was still apparent that their credibility as a respected customer in this community was not high. And as a foreign female customer, perhaps I threatened my own reputation at the bar by socializing too much with them. Although everyone got along peaceably, there seemed to be unspoken rules about who talks with whom, who is accepted and who isn't. Expat men who frequented Tapie's Bar were highly included in socializing patterns and also seemed to be most similar to the local Gozitan men. Because many expat men were from England and Australia, they shared a connection with the local Gozitan men who had lived and worked in their home countries. Most expats seemed to have regular Gozitan friends who they spent their time with and also spoke regularly with the barmen. One male expat in particular was on close terms with the barmen.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.

When I got to know this man I was also slowly included into his greater social circle.

Drinking

Customers at Tapie's Bar can order drinks in three ways. The most common is at the ordering window which is accessed from the outside patio. The second option is, of course, inside the cafe itself. Since table service is not customary, customers order, wait for the drink to be ready and pay before taking it to sit down. Finally, the third way to order a drink is by waving down a barman who is passing by the table and requesting another round of drinks for the table. In addition, the barmen often notice who needs another drink and will offer another on the house. However, this is only done with customers that the barmen seem to know quite well.

Coffee and tea are served in small, narrow glass cups. Espresso drinks such as a cappuccino are served in a ceramic cup with a saucer. Beer is served with or without a glass, depending on what the customer prefers, and all other alcoholic drinks are served in small glasses. Although men drink an array of drinks throughout the day, coffee and tea is the norm for the morning hours, and alcoholic beverages are ordered mostly in the afternoon. However, there are always exceptions to this, such as customers who drink whisky or beer from late morning onward.

Buying drinks for friends at Tapie's Bar is customary. When a customer arrives and greets a friend, he will ask him if he wants something to drink, and once seated, men will usually alternate between buying drinks for one another. Even though many customers know each other at Tapie's very well, it is also common to buy drinks among acquaintances, perhaps because of their mutual friends or familiarity with one another. People are very attentive to when the glass is approaching empty and sometimes customers are very adamant about bringing their friends a drink, even if they decline.

Although reciprocal drink buying is an integral part of cultural life at Tapie's Bar, foreign customers are not always included into this process. Despite my status as a foreigner at Tapie's, my experience was quite similar to that of a regular customer. From the first to the last day of researching, I was always offered a drink. First it occurred with the main barman who never accepted my money, and there were occasions when he brought me another drink without even asking me. If sitting with one local Gozitan who was part of a larger circle of friends, I was automatically included in their second round, even though they didn't personally know me. However, I was unable to buy drinks for Gozitan men who became my acquaintances because

they always refused my offer. Another way I was treated differently was that I was always served coffee in ceramic cup and saucer, while everyone else received hot beverages in a tall glass. When I asked my fellow acquaintances, I was told this was because I am a tourist.

Like with socializing, the regular Somali customers partook in their own drink buying habits that were separate from the Gozitan locals. Because they did not socialize together, the reciprocal drink buying was not practiced between these two groups. I never observed the barmen offering a Somali customer a drink on the house, but it could have occurred without my knowing. On one occasion I was having a conversation with a Somali man and the owner offered me another coffee as he came by, without asking the Somali man if he would like one as well. Yet, on another occasion I was seated with a female colleague and we were both brought another drink by the barman.

Expat women were treated similarly to me except that they usually didn't socialize or sit with other customers, so it was difficult to see if they would have been included in the drink buying practice. Like the Somali customers, the Gozitan outsiders had their own reciprocal drink buying habits amongst themselves, but did not partake so often in the drink buying activities with other local Gozitans. This was in part due to the fact that these men sat and socialized separately. Expat males were included in the drinking practices as long as they came to socialize and not sit apart for a quick visit. They also had quite close relations with the barmen and were given drinks on the house as I was.

Analysis

The aim of the field work was to observe and analyze the experience of foreigners (including myself) inside a host community (Tapie's Bar). Differences between my experience and other foreigner experiences immediately emerged, which shows that not all foreigners are perceived, treated or act equally. In Tapie's Bar, the degree of foreignness influenced the experience the foreigner had as well as the success of inclusion. However, this degree of "otherness" was not the sole influential factor; the foreigner's efforts to participate were also important in this process. First I will analyze my experience and discuss the other foreign groups, drawing probable conclusions as to why these differences emerged.

As a young American woman in Tapie's Bar, I managed to include myself and be invited to partake in many of the normal activities and traditions. My foreignness was partly an advantage in this community and helped me get to know the local customers and participate in daily life. Some main characteristics that set me apart and made



Figure 14.



Figure 15.



Figure 16.

me foreign were: gender (I am female, locals are male), nationality (I am American, they are Gozitan), and age (I am 29, they are 45+). The men at Tapie's Bar were curious about me. They invited me to sit with them, offered me drinks, included me in their conversations, allowed me to take photographs of them and shared their stories with me. The barmen remembered my favorite beverage, brought me drinks on the house and allowed me to photograph them, even though I was not able to get to know them well. Photography proved to build relationships with most customers and it also caused me to critically think about my own perceptions, assumptions and observations. I didn't bring out the camera until relationships with specific informants were established and my presence was well-known. When I finally did start to photograph, I was more attune to several things such as the caution one must employ when photographing and physical characteristics of the bar and social arrangement. Asking the customers to photograph me brought about a fun atmosphere and also established some degree of trust. When my research ended, I gave copies of the photos to the barmen as well, for memory and an expression of gratitude. However, I still had the impression that the barmen were uninterested in what I was doing and also a bit perplexed as to why I gave the photographs.

These perceived advantages must be analyzed from a gender perspective. Much of my special treatment could be explained by me being female and the customers being male. Although in my case gender was an advantageous difference, it also caused some limitations to the research. For example, I wasn't able to buy drinks for others and I always was served coffee in a ceramic cup instead of a normal glass cup like all other customers. On another occasion I was told by one close informant that the main barman had told him to "keep an eye on me" because he was concerned that I was coming alone and talking with certain customers, some of whom had bad reputations. Perhaps I was treated nicely out of politeness and empathy. Although these limitations may not be harmful or seem negative, they did prevent me from being treated like an equal. As a female surrounded by older males, I probably contributed to this differential treatment by behaving in ways that tolerated and even invited special treatment. This reveals my own biases and tensions I have about abiding by certain gender roles. The difficulty I had with starting conversation with the barmen did not get easier over time. This might be a reflection of how tourists are limited in building relationships.

Based on my observations, the Somali men were the least included in the local bar community. The reasons for this are unknown, but it could be partly due to judgmental

stereotypes and a lack of effort from the local Gozitan customers. In addition, the efforts Somali men made to become a part of the Tapie's community appeared weak. One Somali man had a predominantly positive opinion and impression of Gozo. He had a good job, was educated, spoke excellent English, had traveled and lived in different parts of the world, likes talking with local Gozitans and even has some Gozitan or Maltese friends. Despite coming to Gozo as a refugee like most other Somali men at Tapie's Bar, this man was an exception and he is a good example of how much the inclusion process also depends on the foreigner and his or her ability and desire to be a part of the community.

Just as the gender issue must be brought up in analyzing my experience as a foreigner at Tapie's, racial tolerance and discrimination must be mentioned here. In contrast to my foreignness being an advantage, the Somali foreignness was more of a disadvantage. Gozo is a small island with very few foreign-born nationals living there and discrimination against "black-skinned" people has increased since 2002 (ENR Report, 2008). Although there was no blatant racist remarks made by the local Gozitans about the Somali men, there were many indirect expressions of this discrimination. On several occasions I was asked if I "knew them" or "like those guys," and I often felt like I was being critically watched whenever I changed seats to talk to a Somali acquaintance.

It became clear that there were many misconceptions on both sides, rather than strong dislike or racist sentiment. The Gozitan's comments revealed uncertainty about who the Somali men are, where they are from, what language they speak and what their intentions are in Gozo. Many of their impressions were shaped by the local media which hasn't always portrayed the refugees in the best light. The Somali men seemed to be more preoccupied with managing their personal lives, such as finding a decent job, making enough money to feed their families and sorting out the next steps to leave Gozo. Therefore, integrating into society and making new Gozitan friends wasn't their biggest priority and can help explain why their efforts to get to know locals or learn about the customs were slim. Whether or not the local Gozitan men would accept the Somali customers into Tapie's if they did make earnest efforts is unknown.

Expat women at Tapie's had the "advantage" of being female like me, which could have facilitated being accepted as a foreign customer. Women in general were given special treatment, such as the barmen offering drinks or serving coffee in nicer cups (tourists were also treated similarly by the barmen). However, the women who have been frequenting Tapie's longer than me and who are more



Figure 17.

familiar with local Gozitan culture seemed to understand the social divisions and follow the general rules of conduct. For example, it's possible for a woman to sit and socialize amongst the men like I did, but perhaps she who knows the bar better will keep more to herself because it isn't customary for a woman to do so. Also, these expat women might not have had reason to socialize with the local men because they are not temporary visitors and going to Tapie's was not a special experience for them. On the other hand, I intentionally made more contact with local Gozitan men because of my research and short time period I was there. The Gozitan outsiders were in a very different category than the other foreign customers discussed in this research because they share the same nationality as other local Gozitan customers. The apparent segregation in Tapie's and their anti-social mannerisms were explained by their negligent behavior, criminal background or inexplicable "strangeness". Although these men often drank a lot and made no strong attempts to interact with customers, the local Gozitan customers also did not appear to have any interest in interacting with them. Like with the Somali customers, there was no obvious discrimination, but there was also no obvious affinity or interest for one another. In fact, this separation might be deeper than with other foreign customers because of the shared national identity. The local Gozitans knew the histories and personal details of some of the Gozitan outsider's lives, justifying why they didn't like them or why they preferred not to socialize too much with them. Attempting to treat everyone like an equal proved to be challenging for me when it came to the Gozitan outsiders. Not only was I being watched by everyone else at the bar when talking with these men, but I also felt encroached upon at times, especially when they were intoxicated. I found myself also distancing and treating them differently like the local Gozitans did. Thus, I could see why or how some differential treatment develops and how easily certain people are branded as "too different".

Out of all foreigners at Tapie's it seems that expat men had the easiest time being accepted and accessing the local bar community. Perhaps the main reason is that they share the most similarities with the local Gozitan men: gender (male), age (45+), profession (retired), language (English) and familiarity with each others' cultures (many Gozitans have lived the expats' homelands). Therefore, these foreign customers were different but not "too different" to the point that their otherness was perplexing or threatening. They came to Tapie's to socialize and participate, not to be by themselves or to stay only amongst other expat customers. Thus, from both sides (the foreigner and the local Gozitan) there was interest and incentive for interacting and

accepting one another. Male expats also did not physically stick out like women or the Somali customers, enabling them to blend in with the locals.

Although my experience was positive, perhaps it was temporary? Inclusion can be mistaken for politeness and customary hospitality. Although there's nothing wrong with hospitality, this may pose barriers to long-lasting inclusion. All the local customers knew I was a temporary visitor like many of the other foreign tourists. It may be much easier to accept another, give your time and be friendly when interaction is temporary or infrequent, but when the foreigner stays over time and really attempts to get more deeply involved in the community, it might not be so easy. Two expat women brought this point up to me, voicing their disappointment and frustration with Gozitan discrimination of foreigners who live in Gozo and saying that it isn't obvious at first but it will definitely become clear over time.

If I decided to continue coming to Tapie's on a regular basis it would change the character and tradition of the bar. Perhaps I would have found my own group to socialize with whom I shared more commonalities. This is what the Somali men and local Gozitan outsiders appeared to have done. Despite my efforts to not stay with one group, there was a sense of solidarity that I developed with the other foreign customers. For example, it was sometimes easier for me and the Somali men or me and the Gozitan outsiders to socialize and sit with one another than with the local Gozitans. Even though we were very different from each other I could relate to them because we were both foreign and somehow outsiders at Tapie's Bar. I could talk objectively about the culture and people at Tapie's Bar, as if we were not a part of it. Additionally, the women and expat men were more open-minded about different immigrants living in Gozo. Some women in particular felt very strongly about racism against Africans and we were able to discuss this very openly.

Conclusion

From these accounts it can be seen that foreign customers' experiences of inclusiveness and participation at Tapie's Bar vary greatly. They cannot be rigidly categorized because so much depends on the individual motivations and personalities. Rather, these experiences move on a continuum from low to high. This is a project done over a short period of time and many new insights could have been gained with more time. Foreigner's experience at Tapie's Bar appears to be a two-way process, influenced by both the local and the foreigner. Locals must have an interest and make an effort to include the foreigner so that

it's easier and more welcoming for him or her. Likewise, the foreigner must also make effort to socialize and learn about the people at Tapie's Bar. Although there are examples in this research about successful foreign inclusion, it is interesting to critically analyze the results of this fieldwork and ask oneself how far this inclusion really went, or how sustainable it is over time. Furthermore, what does this mean about how and why we construct images of the Other? It appears that there are no rules as to what or who a foreigner is or how different he or she is from the others. The individual decides who is different, and how different he or she is, but these decisions are also influenced by the society around us. If our inclination is to always develop these binaries of us and them, the researcher is also constantly doing this. The point I take from this research then is not to do away with stereotyping, judging or categorizing each other, or to judge others for doing this. Rather, it is more important to understand why we stereotype, judge and categorize. In turn, this helps us better understand ourselves.

References

- Balibar, Etinne (2005). *Difference, Otherness, Exclusion*. Parallax, 11(1), 19-34.
- Cullingford, Cedric (2000). *Citizenship and Nationality: How Young People Develop Prejudice*, University of Huddersfield, European Congress on Educational Research.
- Galea, Simone (2008). *Can the Migrant Speak? Voicing Myself, Voicing the Other*. Malta Review of Educational Research, 6(1).
- Saunders, Rebecca (2003). *The Concept of the Foreign: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*; USA: Lexington Books.
- Turner, J.C., Hogg, M.A., Oakes, P.J., Reicher, S.D. & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- European Commission, Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality (EPASI), Country Report: Malta (November 2008), <http://pagines.uab.cat/melindadooly/sites/pagines.uab.cat/melindadooly/files/CountryReportMalta.pdf>
- European Network Against Racism, Shadow Report 2008: Racism In Malta, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/national/Malta%20-%20SR%202008.pdf>
- Projet d'Action de Recherche Concertee, Outsiders in Europe, The Foreigner and the 'Other' in Changing Rules and Identities (project proposal), Universite Libre de Bruxelles.
- The Today Public Policy Institute (TPPI), *Managing the Challenges of Irregular Immigration in Malta* (November 2008), <http://www.tppi.org.mt/cms/reports/Irregular-Migration/Report.pdf>