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THE INCLUSION OF OTHER IN THE SELF (IOS) SCALE

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Often in travel destinations residents and tourists view one another as an ‘outsider.’ Tourists can be viewed as intrusive, agents of conflict, and agents of change just as residents can be viewed as unkept, unclean, and small-minded (Mason, 2008). Such perspectives are rooted in what Wearing and Wearing (2001) refer to as the ‘self versus other dichotomy,’ where “there remains a fundamental assumption that ‘self’ and ‘other’ are separate entities and ‘self’ is at all times prioritized over ‘other’” (p. 148). This assumption negates the potential for degrees of emotional closeness to exist between residents and tourists, especially considering personal travel behavior of the former.

Harrill (2004) has pointed out that numerous variables (e.g., socioeconomic factors, spatial factors, and economic dependency) have been utilized in the literature to explain residents’ attitudes toward tourism and development. However, residents’ own personal travel has been neglected. This is arguably a function of the way in which residents and tourists are conceived of as separate from one another, whereby in a destination the focus of travel is placed solely on tourists. Zhang, Inbakaran, and Jackson (2006) and Nepal (2008) have collected data on residents’ tourism behavior (i.e., frequency of resident’ travel in given time period), however both studies focused on how such behavior can explain attitudes towards tourism, not necessarily degree of closeness with tourists. Most recently the work of Woosnam, Norman, and Ying (2009) has alluded to the idea that residents’ own travel behavior could potentially explain their perceived degree of closeness with tourists having understood what it is like to be a tourist.

Degree of emotional closeness between individuals has also received minimal attention (as conceptual work) over the last two decades in the tourism literature with the work of Reisinger (1994), Trauer and Ryan (2005) being the most notable. In social psychology, a relatively new measure of emotional closeness has been utilized called the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale. Proposed by Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992), IOS is a single-item, pictorial measure of perceived emotional closeness between individuals. Typically the scale has been used to assess closeness in romantic relationships (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Aron et al., 1992; Uleman, Rhee, Bardoliwalla, Semin, & Toyama, 2000), however recent work (Li, Zhang, Bhatt, & Yum, 2006) has been conducted using the scale to determine degree of closeness across various interpersonal relationships, including those that are not romantic in nature. Not only has IOS yet to be used in the tourism literature, but utilization of the measure may serve to transcend traditional resident attitude literature (focused on attitudes toward tourism and development) to better explain how residents feel about tourists personally.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, this work introduces a new framework for tourism scholars to utilize in measuring the degree of closeness between residents and tourists. Second, residents' previous travel behavior is used to predict the degree of emotional closeness they possess with tourists. Beaufort County, South Carolina (including Hilton Head Island) was used as the study site given three unique features: The County ranks third in the state for travel expenditures at US\$958 million (which has steadily increased over the last five years), approximately half of the permanent residents are employed in the tourism sector, and the area is one of the most sought after destinations (hosting approximately 3 million visitors annually for the last five years) on the Southeastern Atlantic Coast of the United States possessing numerous antebellum structures, ecotourism opportunities, pristine beaches (TIA, 2007). Given this information, Beaufort County could be considered to be in the 'consolidation' stage as defined by Butler's (1980) life-cycle model.

Permanent residents of Beaufort County were used as the study population. Data was collected onsite during the summer of 2007 from heads of households in the County following a multi-stage cluster sampling strategy to randomly select neighborhoods based on US Census Bureau data. During six peak-tourism weekends in June, July, and August, residents were visited at their homes, asked to participate, and handed a questionnaire as researchers returned later that day to collect the completed instrument. The overall response rate was 67.8% with 455 individuals completing the instrument. Chi-square difference tests (Sheskin, 2007) were conducted to compare the sample to the population (based on race and income) and none were significant ($p < .05$), indicating representativeness. Participants were asked about previous travel behavior through one question pertaining to the number of day trips and overnight trips they had taken in the past two years. For emotional closeness, participants responded to the IOS scale question (see Figure 1).

Additional measures of closeness such as the Relational Closeness Inventory (RCI) and Subjective Closeness Index (SCI) were not used in this study due to the extensive time required to complete the former measure, the empirical distinction between the latter and IOS (Aron et al., 1992), and the fact that additional relationships (outside those pertaining to tourists) were not the focus, which SCI measures. (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989). However, as a reliability check for IOS, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement (on a scale of 1–7, from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with the following item: "I feel close to Beaufort County tourists." The measures were significantly correlated ($r = .71$). In addition, test-retest reliability checks of the IOS scale were conducted through two pilot studies of county residents. Correlations were computed between the initial data and the data collected three weeks later, yielding an $r = .87$ ($n = 75$),

Which diagram best represents how close you feel to Beaufort County visitors? (Please circle one letter)

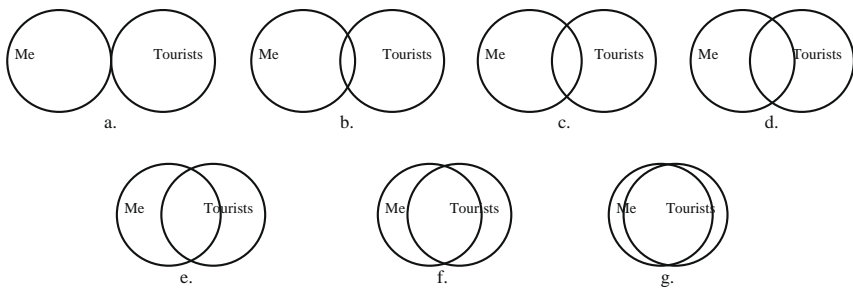


Figure 1. Modified Version of the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale

which is comparable to what Aron et al. (1992) found. Beaufort County residents on average took 14.71 trips ($n = 437$; $SD = 6.76$) over the two year period. On a scale of 1–7 (with 1 representing no overlap and 7 indicating almost complete overlap), residents indicated nearly a 50% overlap ($n = 443$; $M = 4.61$; $SD = 1.43$) in their degree of emotional closeness on the IOS scale. A simple linear regression was calculated predicting residents' degree of emotional closeness with tourists based on number of trips taken in the past two years. The test was significant ($F = 4.811$, $p < .05$) with an R^2 of .118, indicating roughly 12% of the variance in emotional closeness is explained through previous travel behavior.

Results of this study indicate the utility of the IOS scale in tourism studies. Further, the degree of emotional closeness residents felt with tourists was actually higher than that found in other studies examining relationships that are perceived to be less intimate (Li et al., 2006). In fact, it was comparable to what Aron et al. (1992) found in more intimate relationships (i.e., family, friendship, and romantic relationships). This work supports the deconstruction of the 'self versus other dichotomy,' showing residents can conceive of themselves in positive relation to tourists through their own travels. In addition, a closer relationship may exist between residents and tourists by examining one's own behavior, instead of the relationships being more superficial as social exchange theory and intimacy theory has indicated (Trauer & Ryan, 2005).

While this work is in its early stages, the R^2 value was modest, indicating that many other variables exist in explaining the variance in degree of emotional closeness. Future research across multiple sites should examine the relationship between variables such as location along Butler's (1980) life-cycle and tourism dependence, as well as socio-cultural, economic, and ethnic differences among residents and tourists and emotional closeness. In using the IOS scale, at least one potential measurement error could occur, which relates to numerous response categories. Providing fewer, more distinct choices could remedy this. In addition, if time allows, using IOS in conjunction with RCI may provide a more robust measure (i.e., affective, cognitive, and conative) of closeness. Ultimately, this work begs the question, 'What role does empathy play in the way one negotiates relations as a resident with tourists or vice versa?' Perhaps understanding level of empathy as well as how and why such empathy occurs could go far in explaining existing relations among residents and tourists in destinations. **A**

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