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Modifying the Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) Scale and comparing residents' and tourists' perceived closeness with one another

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ABSTRACT

A limitation of the IOS is that it does not account for distances individuals feel apart from one another. This work seeks to add an additional category to the traditional 7-point scale to account for no overlap between residents and tourists. The modified IOS displayed high reliability. An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference between tourists' ($M = 4.58$) and residents' ($M = 4.13$) emotional closeness with one another. Future research opportunities are offered including further modification of the IOS to provide an equal number of response categories of a negative relationship (i.e., dislike) and positive relationship (i.e., closeness).

Keywords: *IOS Scale, interaction, resident-tourist interaction, tourism planning*

INTRODUCTION

Any relationship between two or more individuals is marked by how close a person feels with the other. Ultimately the closer a person perceives to be with another, the greater likelihood for trust, communication, intimacy, etc. Unfortunately, conveying to a third party, the level of closeness felt with another is extremely difficult for many. A great deal of research pertaining to closeness (and solidarity) uses either a single-item (Sezen and Yilmaz 2007) or scale including numerous items such as the Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS) (Woosnam and Norman 2010) or the Affectual Solidarity Scale (Gronvold 1988) to measure closeness.

Arguably an easier way to capture degree of closeness is through a visual representation of the degrees of the construct. One such measure that does this is the Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) Scale (Aron, Aron and Smollan 1992), which has been utilized sparingly (see Woosnam 2010) in the literature examining the relationship between residents and tourists. The existing IOS does not account for distance individuals feel apart from one another however, instead, the 7-point Likert scale (which includes seven pairings of circles—each circle representing a person) includes only options that indicate some degree of overlap in the relationship.

This study has three purposes: (1) to modify the existing IOS Scale by adding an additional response category to account for no overlap between residents and tourists; (2) to examine reliability of the modified IOS from perspectives of residents and tourists as it relates to

the ESS indicator measuring emotional closeness; and (3) to compare residents' and tourists' emotional closeness with one another using the modified IOS Scale.

RESEARCH METHODS

Galveston County, Texas was selected as the study site for this research for its potential as a destination that provides an excellent setting to measure tourists' degree of emotional closeness with residents. In 2011, visitor spending in Galveston County was US\$745.9 million—the top coastal county in all of Texas (Texas Tourism 2012). As terms of residents, in 2011, Galveston County ranked 10th in the state (however top coastal county) for number of jobs directly created from tourism (8,610) (Texas Tourism 2012).

This study included collecting data from two samples—permanent resident heads of households (or their spouses) and tourists to Galveston County, Texas—both of which were at least 18 years of age. Using a multi-stage cluster sampling strategy (Babbie 2011), over five weekends in October and November, an onsite self-administered survey instrument was distributed door-to-door throughout the county to residents. Overall, 1364 households were visited. At approximately 49.5% of those homes, there was no answer. An additional 66 homes had a head of household that was not a permanent resident. At the remaining 623 homes, 94 declined (an 84.9% acceptance rate). Of the 529 surveys that were distributed, 446 were completed by residents (an 84.3% completion rate), which translated to a 71.6% response rate.

Data were collected from tourists during July and August at five of the most visited locations throughout the county. A systematic sampling procedure with a random starting point was used to collect data during five weekends, whereby members of the research team approached every fifth tourist they located on the beach, public street, sidewalk, or parking lot. Overall, 660 individuals were contacted and asked to participate with 61 people claiming to be residents. Of the 599 visitors approached, 142 declined to accept a survey instrument, indicating that 457 accepted (76.3% acceptance rate). From those 457, 447 completed the self-administered instrument (97.8% completion rate), yielding an overall response rate of 74.6%.

A battery of questions was asked of residents and tourists however only those applicable are mentioned here. For instance, representatives from each group responded to the 10-item ESS, including the one item, “I feel close to some tourists [residents] in Galveston County (depending on sample).” Additionally, participants responded to the visual portrayal of emotional closeness through the modified 8-point IOS Scale (see Figure 1).

Which diagram best represents how close you feel to residents [tourists] of Galveston County (Please circle one letter)

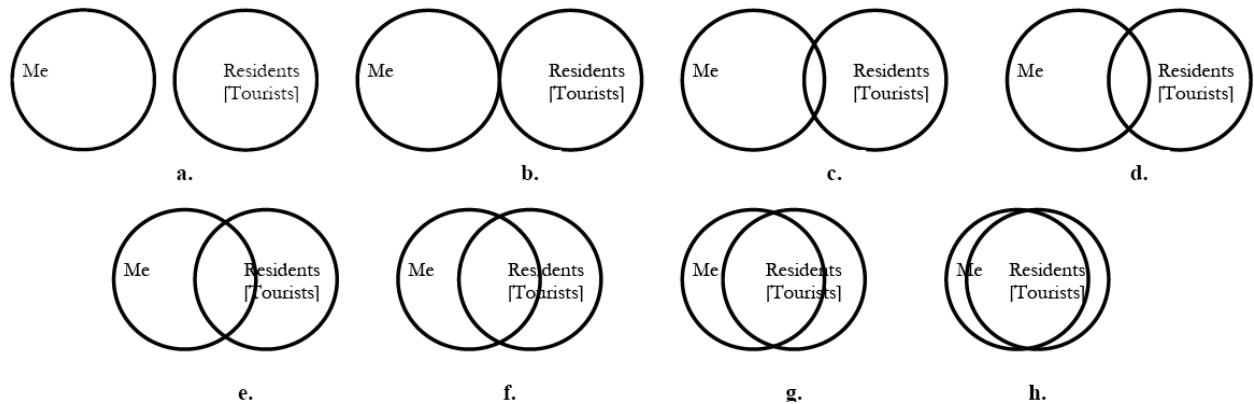


Figure 1. Modified version of Aron et al. (1992) Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) Scale

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

To examine internal consistency of the modified IOS with the single item measuring emotional closeness in the ESS, correlations were examined. Coefficients were nearly identical for both residents ($r_{(445)} = .75, p < .001$) and tourists ($r_{(445)} = .77, p < .001$). Scores on the modified IOS were slightly different ($M_{\text{resident}} = 4.13; M_{\text{tourist}} = 4.58$). An independent-samples t test was evaluated to determine if a difference existed between residents' and tourists' response to the modified IOS. The test was significant, $t_{(890)} = 3.73, p < .001$, with an eta square index (η^2) indicating that 1.5% of the variance of the modified IOS was accounted for by resident/tourist classification. Such effect size is considered small according to Green and Salkind (2011).

Findings related to perceived closeness through the modified IOS are in keeping with the work of Woosnam (2011) whereby such work found tourists felt significantly closer to residents than did residents with tourists. This could be due to tourists desire to interact more and have more in common with residents, not to mention the fact that tourists are in the destination far less than residents. Not only does this work contribute to theoretical advancement of measures in assessing the relationship between residents and tourists but practical implications exist as well. For instance, the modified IOS provides a measure that is easy to employ on a questionnaire for practitioners and is easy for participants to understand. Future work should consider further modification of the IOS to provide an equal number of response categories of a negative relationship (i.e., dislike) and positive relationship (i.e., closeness).

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