Host-guest encounters and mental borders: 
The case of mainland Chinese tourists in Hong Kong

Paradox of host-guest encounters
Does tourism bring better relationship?
- Social exchange theory: if benefits outweigh costs, then yes.
- Social representation theory: it depends on the shared group/culture characteristics.
- Contact hypothesis: it depends on the contact's nature.

What is missing: impact of social-political context on host-guest encounters
The higher permeability of borders increases cross-border mobility, and mobility brings contacts. But the ‘sticky’ mental border creates an even-stronger barrier for communication and mutual understanding.

Conceptualize mental border
1. Cognitive mental border
   - Cognitive distance (Van Houtum, 1998)
   - Border Formalities (Timothy, 2003)
   - Cultural difference (Timothy, 2003; Moufakkir, 2011; Reisinger & Turner, 2003)
   - Economic difference (Timothy, 2003)

2. Affection mental border
   - Identity distance (Matthews, Ma and Lui, 2007)
   - Sense of place: otherness/foreignness/feeling at home (Van Houtum, 1998)
   - Perceived hospitality/closeness/discrimination
   - Perceived difficulty level of crossing the border

3. Mental border in action
   - Cross-border travel times/frequency/length/contact level
   - Cross-border travel intentions in future
   - Initiatives in communication

Methods
Focus-Group Interviews: the shared perceptions and general issues
Semi-structured Interviews: the particular individual experience of host-guest encounters that influenced their mental border

References

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