Cultural Additivity: A Mapping with Essentialism, Creolization, Hybridity, and Syncretism

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“*Cultural Additivity*” is the concept proposed by Vuong et al. to demonstrate the interactions of various cultural values in a society [1]. However, there have been multiple concepts discussing the interaction between different cultural values, such as *Hybridization/Hybridity*, *Creolization*, *Syncretism*, etc. So, how can we distinguish cultural additivity from other concepts, which may sound similar?

In this essay, we propose a diagram for doing such a task (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The mapping of *Cultural Additivity*.

First of all, we assume that *cultural additivity* is a set of interactions between various cultures, of which the additivity degree is a continuum ranging from 0 to 1. When the cultural additivity level equals zero, the culture (or set of core values) in a society is unique and has total suppression over emergent values; we call it “no additivity” (or “complete purity”).

Thus, the sub-set of *Essentialism*, which advocates the view that a group of people suppress, homogenize, and fix dissimilarities for reserving a so-called “identity” [2], takes the closest place to point zero.

In contrast, the farthest right, which we denote as one, indicates the stage of “complex additivity” (or “complete infusion”). Because the sub-set of *Hybridity* (or *Cultural Hybridity*) represents a stage of high fusion level of different cultural values [3], we position it nearest to the “complete fusion” point. The sub-set of *Creolization*, demonstrating the acquisition, convergence, acclimation, indigenization, and transformation of various cultural values in a society [4], is also placed closest to the “complete fusion” point. However, the sub-set does not overlap with the sub-set of *Essentialism* because the acquisition, convergence, acclimation, indigenization, and transformation cannot happen if the host culture’s values suppress and eliminate new cultures.

Finally, the most similar concept with *Cultural Additivity* is *Syncretism*, which reflects the interactions between indigenous religions and a missionary religion, so we consider the sub-set of *Syncretism* to overlap with all three other sub-sets [4,5]. Nevertheless, *Syncretism* has only been applied within the religious discourse, so it is plausible to put *Syncretism* as a sub-set of the set of *Cultural Additivity*.

Despite incompleteness and weaknesses, the mapping is one of the first endeavors to position *Cultural Additivity* within the tremendous volume of cultural studies' literature. Through positioning the concept, we expect it to be a useful tool, along with the Mindsponge mechanism [6,7], for interpreting and explaining economic, environmental, and social issues [8-16]. Therefore, we welcome all colleagues' comments to make the concepts more precise, solid, and easier to be operationalized.

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