

Cultural Additivity: A Conceptual Mapping

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January 15, 2021

Last update: May 19, 2024

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“Birds of all sizes and kinds come and chime in. Some say Hawk must have followed certain rules. There got to be a time and place for catching chickens, so that anger and resentment would not escalate. [...]. Others even encourage Hawk to try worms and bugs or possibly go vegan all the way, etc.”

In “Rules”; [The Kingfisher Story Collection](#) [1]

“Cultural Additivity” is the concept proposed by Vuong et al. to demonstrate the interactions of various cultural values in a society [2]. 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).

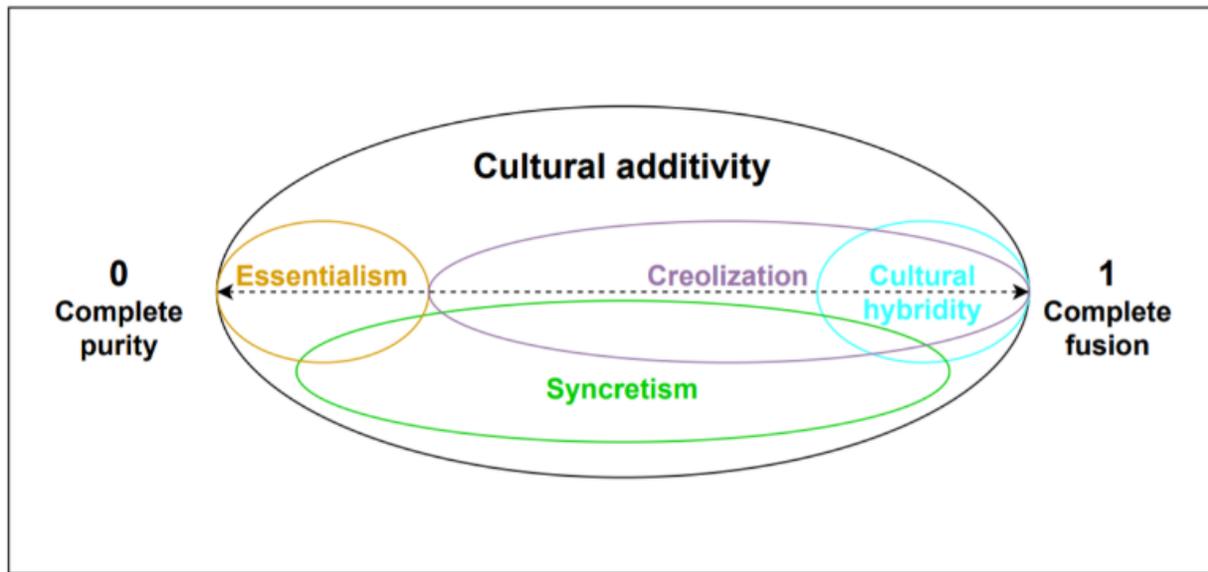


Figure 1: The mapping of Cultural Additivity.

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” [3], 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 [4], 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 [5,6]. 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 [7,8], for interpreting and explaining economic, environmental, and social issues [9-18]. Therefore, we welcome all colleagues' comments to make the concepts more precise, solid, and easier to be operationalized.

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