

## Is there any way to theorize the link between the working of ‘mindsponge’ and ‘cultural additivity’?

Ho Manh Toan

AISDL

Hanoi, January 15, 2020

Some 14 months after the official publication of our joint study on ‘cultural additivity’ [1], a question has become larger, and left unanswered. The title of this short piece reflects that question, that is, “is it possible for us to investigate a hypothetical relationship between the working of mindsponge process and the cultural additivity phenomenon?”.

To my perception, there should be, at least hypothetically. It is because a mindsponge process, as characterized by [2], deals with the capacity to unlearn some previously rigid core values in order to let the new (alien) ones percolate and become gradually more familiar. Such a link seems to be what had happened with the interactions between different religious values, according to [1].

Nonetheless, it is not easy to verify the relationship between the two concepts for several key reasons that follow:

- What types of data are relevant, and available, for establishing the hypothetical relationship and then analyzing its validity?
- What are the contexts in which social construct can facilitate both processes, i.e., the interactions of values and mindsponge ones?
- If one of the two processes stops for some historical reasons, can the other continue to function, even at a different pace?

Although these are difficult problems to tackle, carefully studying them may help to shed light on a very interesting and intriguing phenomenon in the Vietnamese culture. The more challenging the study is, the more rewarding the results will likely be.

Any answer that helps to verify the hypothetical link will prove to be useful in explaining a host of interesting socio-cultural phenomena, which have always lingered on, such as why Vietnamese have shown resilience throughout periods of economic hardship or

how the country can successfully adopt unfamiliar growth models, with higher uncertainty but more promising outcomes, and the likes.

To continue the tradition of our team [3] to start a new project on a Tet Holiday, the above big question will be what we are thinking about and what we are trying to find an appropriate approach to operationalize.

## References

- [1] Vuong QH, La VP, Vuong TT, et al. (2018). Cultural additivity: Behavioural insights from the interaction of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in folktales. *Palgrave Communications*, **4**, 143; doi:10.1057/s41599-018-0189-2.
- [2] Vuong QH, Napier NK (2015). Acculturation and global mindsponge: an emerging market perspective. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, **49**, 354-367; doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.06.003.
- [3] Ho MT, Nguyen THK, Vuong TT, Nguyen MH, Ho MT. (2019). To walk on the Penrose stairs of science. *Behavioural & Social Sciences* | NatureResearch Community. Available from: <https://socialsciences.nature.com/users/301097-ho-manh-toan/posts/54541-to-walk-on-the-penrose-stairs-of-science>.