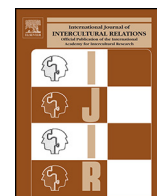




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel



Acculturation and global mindsponge: An emerging market perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Mindsponge process
Cultural values
Multi-filtering information process
Inductive attitude

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we conceptually develop a mindsponge mechanism of absorbing and ejecting cultural values. The mindsponge, with its underlying themes of multi-filtering information process and inductive attitude, offers explanation of why and how mindset could replace waning values by those absorbed following education and work in “foreign” settings. Also the mindsponge suggests the definition of acculturation might possibly be enlarged beyond adaption to cultural novelties resulted from geographical relocation. As a disciplinary process of evaluating values the mindsponge provides people facing acculturation challenges with proactive and gradual solving approach.

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1. Introduction

No matter whether the world is flat or spiky, its globalizing process has passed the point of no return. Nowadays, it is hard to find an economy operating only domestically. Overseas experience, cross-cultural issues, and even clashes of civilizations are no longer topics for textbooks or academic papers, but increasingly practical and actual challenges that managers face daily.

Much of the international recognition for an emerging economy rests with its cultural relevance to its economic partners worldwide. The more open and integrated an emerging economy is the more recognized it becomes by the international community, exemplified by increasing cross-border trade and investment. Active participation by emerging markets into the global world has made acculturation more apparent and faster, especially for managers working in global environments (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). In other words, managers who seek or have global mindsets presumably are more open in their thinking (Taylor, 1991). To this end, constructing a global mindset is likely a prerequisite for successful individual careers, innovative performance of organizations and corporations, and sustainable development of nations. A mechanism that explains how mindset integrates emerging values and ejects less useful values, therefore, is of interest to a great many of people.

Globalization produces not only global products (e.g., iPhones designed in California and assembled in China) but also global citizens. The fact that people with acculturation experiences likely behave differently from those who have ever perceived cultural novelty – e.g., after decades teaching in Vietnam, an American professor may respect the country's unequal

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relationship between student and teacher (Napier & Vuong, 2013a, pp. 32–34) – and even from what they did before exposing to the world – e.g., managers who used to perform well in their home countries may face significant stress and potential failure when they are inpatriated to headquarters (Harvey, Reiche, & Moeller, 2011) – raises the question of how those globalized people change their minds.

With the concept of “mindsponge,” we seek to offer an explanation of why and how professionals and managers could replace the cultural values they have grown up with by those they have absorbed following education and work in “foreign” settings. We attempt to explore what attributes and ways of thinking one may need to become better as a global business citizen. In light of this, we also suggest that the so-called “global mindset” can be changed, adjusted, or developed in a positive manner by a well-functioning “mindsponge process,” in which the question is less one of “Who am I?” than “How can I become better?”

This paper consists of five main sections. First, we offer a review of related literature on cultural values and acculturation, mindset and global mindset, and the development and improvement of global mindset. Second, we present our methodology of conceptually developing a mechanism of absorbing and ejecting cultural values and exploring the mechanism's applications including implications for acculturation. Third, we propose a conceptual development of mindsponge with its working mechanism and underlying theme of a multiple-filter process. Forth, we discuss three key elements of the mindsponge that make it useful for improving a global mindset. Last but not least, we conclude the paper with remarks on the mindsponge's implications for acculturation.

2. Literature review

The following discussion of literature focuses on the connections between cultural values, acculturation, and development of mindset. It will also identify gaps in the literature that open the way for another approach to becoming a “global citizen.”

2.1. Cultural values and acculturation

Acculturation has long received attention across academic disciplines. The range spans from Hall (1904) at the beginning of the 20th century, to Nahavandi and Malekzadeh (1988) in 1980s, to more recent publications of Juang, Syed, Cookston, Wang, and Kim (2012). The topics have also been broad, including such issues as cultural effects on expatriates and immigrants to explanations of how acculturation works.

To explore factors that enhance success and the process of acculturation, Nahavandi and Malekzadeh (1988) propose a model of acculturation in mergers and acquisitions that suggests acculturative stress is affected by the congruence between the acquirer and acquiree's preferred acculturation modes, which are identified by Berry (1983). The authors claim that the two sides may differ in their approaches to acculturation and that the greater level of the congruence, the less stress and resistance in the process. On the other hand, the process is dynamic and over time, the partners may shift from one mode to the other. Thus, the congruence itself is subject to change. The changing process of the congruence is, however, still covered.

Berry (1983, 1997) focuses on the stages of acculturation. Berry's model consists of four modes: (i) *Assimilation*, when individuals feel no compunction to retain solely their own cultural identity but rather are willing to seek interaction with other cultures; (ii) *Separation*, when individuals do seek a high value on holding fast to their own culture and in so doing tend to avoid interaction with others; (iii) *Integration*, when individual retain some level of cultural integrity while interacting with others; and (iv) *Deculturation or Marginalization*, when neither pursuing interaction nor holding fast to one's own culture is dominant. Noting that “acculturation has been the subject of numerous conceptual frameworks” (Berry, 1997: p. 14) Berry leaves the shift from one mode to the others implicit. This implication suggests an effort to investigate how individuals, groups, and organizations gradually change their mode may be of help.

Despite the appealing concept of four modes of acculturation, some researchers suggest it is more complex. Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) and Rudmin (2003) note earlier scholars suggested multi-stage acculturation typologies. Rudmin (2003) however uses Euler and Boolean logics to suggest that two cultures in contact define four logical spaces so that there are 16 possible combinations of these spaces, including the null condition.

Berry's model of four acculturation strategies is, nevertheless, appealing to many. For instance, Ryder, Alden, and Paulbus (2000) explore acculturation by comparing a uni-dimensional model (which posits that heritage and mainstream culture identifications have a strong inverse relation) and a bi-dimensional model (which posits that the two are independent) in the contexts of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. The authors uncover the drawback of a uni-dimensional approach in its inability to distinguish a bi-cultural individual who strongly identifies with by both reference groups from one who does not strongly identify with either group; thus, both of them will fall at the midpoint of a uni-dimensional scale. Ryder et al. (2000) also suggest that the bi-dimensional model constitutes a broader and more valid framework for understanding acculturation. The results are consistent with Berry's two underlying dimensions of acculturation.

More recently, a large body of acculturation research focuses on the impact of acculturation attitudes on the well-being of people in minority groups, such as immigrants. For example, Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) corroborate Berry's (1997) contention that integration is associated with low levels of acculturative stress. Arends-Toth and Van De Vijver (2003) explore different views of Dutch and Turkish-Dutch on the most preferred acculturation strategy of Turkish migrants. Juang et al. (2012) study acculturation-based and everyday conflicts in Chinese American families over both minor and major issues as

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