BIOCULTURAL LANDMARKS MEDIATING THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS IN ROMANIAN CONTEXT[1]

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Abstract. *The acculturation process produce changes in physical health conditions and in subjects' lifestyle. The present study looked at the adaptation process of some anthropological landmarks, in the context of economic and socio-cultural transitions under Western European influence.*

Methodologically, we have applied an anthropological questionnaire and another one for the assessment of trends in personality structuring to a sample of 210 subjects (10-16yrs) in rural communities with different adaptive parenting strategies. Three samples were selected: subjects whose parents are working in Western European countries and were left in their extended family's care, the ones that were left in the care of the restrained family and subjects under parents' care.

Some results: We have adapted the classical methods of acculturation analysis by adding aspects of the sleep-wake functioning, being known that in this context significant changes of the sleep/wake pattern appear, along with consequences on physical and mental health. Our study also identified the adaptation effort in the mental balance, by accentuating tendencies in the structuring of personality or by emotionally weakening (aspects of the internal equilibrium of the targeted population) - processes usually seen in major changes, as e.g. in the acculturation process. In our culture, in the acculturation context the enlarged family is supportive especially for boys and the restrained family is supportive for girls, but many of them shift towards pathology. Boys are more resistant in the acculturation process, being more easily moldable by multiculturality

Our study identified our openness towards multiculturality (the Western European model), during the acculturation process, both boys and girls respect the pro-social norms and behavior. The anthropological frame proved its adequacy in investigating the context of multiculturality, necessary to manage the stages of the acculturation process.

Keywords: *anthropological landmarks, socio-economic transition, acculturation, multiculturality*

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Introduction

The subject of this research requires an integrative approach that puts together bio-psycho-cultural aspects, with there being little existing research literature in this endeavour. Different fields of study have a tendency to be fragmented, leading to a more difficult comprehension of the complex process of human development. Research suggests that understanding children's developmental well-being requires an integrated approach towards the way social relationships, biology and cognition interact (Bernier et al., 2014).

Also, the problem of acculturation stress has been first raised within an international congress at Jerusalem, Israel, barely in September 1995, at the World Congress of the International College of Psychosomatic Medicine.

The integrative approach could be useful in developing adequate and efficient European integration strategies, as well as in coming to terms with the integration politics, with specific cultural contexts.

In the context of opening the borders and raising the mobility of individuals, multiculturality imposes extensive anthropological researches regarding the acculturation issue. Therefore, by understanding cultural variability, one can avoid ethnocentric biases. Individuals may have different systems of understanding, values, beliefs, knowledge that are shared within the same culture (D'Andrade, 1982) , in reference to the way they define themselves and relate to each other (Kitayam et al., 1997; Rhee et al., 1995) and also regarding the way they think about the world they live in (Norenzayan and Nisbett, 2000).

These cultural understanding systems are interpretative and influence the affect, the cognition and the behaviour (Geertz, 1973; Hong et al., 1997; Kashima, 2000; Mendoza-Denton et al., 1999).

The concept of acculturation is rooted in anthropology, being used in disciplines like psychology, sociology and public health. The Webster's Unabridged Dictionary introduced the term of acculturation for the first time in 1928, as two human races or tribes getting together through contact. Acculturation configures the cultural exchange between two or more cultures in what is defining for them (Dana, 1996; Herskovits, 1958). The theory of acculturation refers to psychological acculturation in cognitive and behavioural areas, explaining cultural changes that appear within the immigrant groups (Cuéllar et al., 1995). Acculturation, which resulted following a prolonged contact between two distinct cultural groups, results in the individuals' adaptation to the new cultural situation (Berry, 2003).

The acculturation construct is applicable in public health (basic condition of individual, human species and culture survival) by understanding the health of individuals who migrate from one society to another. There are recent studies that underline the positive relation between acculturation and chronic disease prevalence, cancer screening, the use of health care and health-oriented behaviours. There are also studies concerning the association between cultural beliefs regarding lifestyle, habits and nutritional patterns (certain traditional practices can favour the development of certain

diseases). Also, the place of origin and alimentary preferences may be determinant factors for obesity and diabetes (Hazuda et al., 1998).

In the bio-cultural researches, the concept of adaptation is central and it unifies biological, psychological and cultural aspects. This requires insuring a minimal set of organic needs, which provides a normal functioning of the biological systems (Glavce and Borosanu, 2013; Glavce et al., 2014). Still, the biological finality associated with every cultural aspect is a reductionist endeavour of cultural ecology or socio-biology. One can also talk about symbolic satisfactions when it comes to human nature, which do not necessarily contribute to the biological adaptation (e.g. alimentation – both cultural and biological connotation).

In the context of migration one raises the problem of adaptation. In general, it is accomplished along phylogenesis, in the bio-psychic history (e.g. H. Erectus → H. Sapiens; the patterns of milk consumption at the yellow race) and along ontogenesis, and individual development respectively. Culture is being transferred inter and transgenerationally during ontogenesis. These two levels of adaptation make the diversity of human beings and the unity of species become possible.

The acculturation process of migrants' children at a micro level is mediated by the family and group of friends (Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver, 2006, 2008). The host society offers a particular social context, with migrants having a certain statue that needs to be taken into consideration when one interprets the patterns of the acculturation process (Schchner et al., 2014; Van De Vijer, 2011).

In the current context, one requires education in forming intercultural competencies and communication, based on cultural identity (norms, values, attitudes) (Schein, 2010) and taking into consideration the responses towards the environment (Hofstede, 2011). The integration process implies the development of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2009), so that redefining values and identities and respecting human variability and cultural specific from a multiple cultural perspective become possible.

In the Western European culture, a dynamic of adaptive orientations for containing within borders or expanding and rearranging, along with assimilation or transcendence has been shaped evolutionally (Rădulescu-Motru, 1999). Noica stated the perennial value of the European culture, capable of regeneration, which freely realizes its model. Through its philosophical reason, its scientific methods, through its moral and political values (human dignity, freedom, equity ideal – United Nations Millenium Declaration, 2000), the European culture is a culture that runs by the "one in multiplicity" model and is "equal" with nature in speech, being also able to provide the archetype for any other culture while showing their partiality (Noica, 1993).

The present study looked at the adaptation process of some anthropological landmarks, in the context of economic and socio-cultural transitions under Western European influence. I will present the general scheme of Acculturation and the internal processes, in regards to which the research is barely at the beginning.

Materials and methods

We used a sample of 200 subjects (12-16yrs) from two rural communities with different adaptive parenting strategies (parent-child relationship).In the selected localities, there are a high percentage of parents who migrated to Western Europe, more than 30%, who work there since several years, or are seasonal workers or parents who did not migrate. The children who are left at home are either taken care of by the extended family, or taken care of by the restrained family or Children whose parents did not migrate to Western Europe. The sample's distribution, according to place of origin, of 1:1, Gender (54%B 46%G), Migrating/ non-migrating parents criteria of 33%-67%, in the first locality and 50%-50% in the second locality).

We have applied an anthropological questionnaire and another one for the assessment of trends in personality structuring to a sample of 210 subjects (10-16yrs) in rural communities with different adaptive parenting strategies.

We used an anthropologic questionnaire with 87 items that comprises a set of items gathering information regarding personal identity and biological and cultural characteristics that are culturally mouldable: means of contact and maintaining the parent-child relationship, sleep parameters, sexual maturation, health condition, nutrition, corpulence (BMI), physical activity, tradition and urbanism elements and educational investment. We also added two open questions regarding: their troubles and what they want in the future. The second questionnaire we used is a standardized questionnaire, the Woodworth-Mathews personality inventory, which contains8 scales (simple emotivity, obsessive-psychasthenic, schizoid, paranoid, depressive-hypochondriac, aggressive, instability, antisocial tendencies). These assess tendencies in personality structuring and the level of their intensity.

For the statistical analysis of the data were used were adequate for the research (quantitative and categorical data). For the computation we used data analysis packages implemented in SPSS Statistics (SPSS 20.0 version) as well as the ones from Microsoft EXCEL (Microsoft Office 2010).

Results

In the adaptation context, one raises the problem of the biological adaptation – the physiological and genetic transformations that are necessary for environment adaptation, the internal psychological adaptation (the meaning of personal and cultural identity, personal satisfaction, mental balance) as well the socio-cultural adaptation, with external psychological consequences (connecting the individual to the new context, allowing him to cope with daily problems regarding family, school and career). The adaptation variables that are subjected to the acculturation process appear as observable behaviours of internal individual characteristics, each of them being assessable with specific research instruments (Figure 1).

According to the acculturation research paradigm of John Berry, 1997, Arends-Tóth, Van de Vijver, 2006 and Rudmin, 2009, although there is a situational diversity, the

essential internal psychological processes are similar, therefore allowing a universal approach.

Moreover, the brain is busy even when we are asleep, and it establishes metabolic and hormonal regulations, so that poor or insufficient sleep can impair certain vital processes. Also, during sleep, informational processing of data that has been stocked during wakefulness takes place, therefore we are dealing with a continuous cognition process. In the processes of major changes, like the acculturation process, sleep disturbances take place, in what concerns both its duration and quality. (Borosanu, PhD diss., 2013; Borosanu et al., 2014, paper presented at the XXVth edition of the international Symposium "Nature et l'homme" on "Provocations contemporaines dans la relation homme-nature", Sinaia, Romania). Sleep-wake functioning, although it is powerfully rooted in biology (genetic clock), it has a cultural imprinting, which allows us to talk about a cultural typology of sleep Borosanu, PhD diss., 2013).

That is why, for the schemes that are usually used in researching acculturation, we added characteristics of the sleep-wake functioning, sleep disturbances being frequent when one raises the issue of adapting to a different culture. Therefore, we adapted the classic schemes of the acculturation research, and at the contact between the two cultural contexts we added the Sleep/Wake functioning, which must be taken into consideration, being sensitive to the change of the cultural frame of reference. (Figure 1).

The adaptation effort (aspecte legate de internal process), towards adjusting to a nee culture (acculturation process) can be seen in the mental balance, and is evidentiated by the functioning levels of the personality structuring tendencies. Among the 8 scales of the W-M standardized questionnaire, we used the ones of interest for the acculturation process, which target the internal equilibrium of the targeted population, respectiv: emotional stbaility/instability (instability tendencies), respecting the norms (antisocial tendencies) and depresion and somatisation tendencies (depressive tendencies and somatisations), processes usually seen in major changes, as e.g. in the acculturation process.

In what concerns the instability tendencies that are normal and often encountered in acculturation, the results confirm with their high percentage of border functioning level, of over 50%, the openness towards multicultural integration, for both girls and boys. One has to notice, though, the high instability level (pathological levels), of girls in comparison to boys, both in the enlarged family, as well as in the restrained family (11,1% - F, in the enlarged family; 11,5% - F, in the restrained family). (Figure 2).

Regarding the functioning levels in antisocial tendencies, in what concerns accepting norms and pro-social behaviors, we notice that both boys and girls have an overall understanding and acceptance of norms (55%+33% - B from enlarged family; 68%+24% - B from restrained family and 65%+28% F from enlarged family; 61%+35% F from restrained family). Only a very small percentage, that comes naturally in any collectivity, manifest antisocial tendencies, which is normal in any colectivity. (Figure 3).

Regarding depressive tendencies and somatizations, for boys, the normal functioning condition is met in 60% of the cases, for those that remained within the enlarged family

and in 43% of the cases for those that stayed in the restrained family. This means that boys are more bounded to the family system. The difference consists of the fact that a higher percent of the boys from the restrained family have a border functioning level (38% - enlarged family; 55% - restrained family). (Figure 4)

For girls, one notices that they find themselves in the border functioning level more than in the case of boys (61% - enlarged family; 43% - restrained family). Apparently, one finds less girls within the restrained family in what concerns the border functioning area, yet, the difference consist in their shifting towards the pathological functioning level (14%F - restrained family). (Figure 4)

Discussions

In acculturation, one frequently notices sleep related issues, in what concerns both the quantitative aspect, regarding duration, as well as its quality (wake/sleep transitions, night sleep development). This means a lowering in the functioning efficiency during the day, health social costs as a consequence for major sleep disturbance and also a drop in the economic efficiency.

From the point of view of sleep duration this is placed within certain borders, beyond which certain problems related to sleep pathology appear. Sleep duration is a species characteristic with genetic determination (molecular genetic clock). Sleep duration also has a cultural variability, being philogenetically established, specific to bio-cultural environment conditions. In the process of changing the pattern of sleep duration, qualitative changes of sleep become visible, as well as changes of the duration itself, from the wake/sleep transitions (the duration of the process of falling asleep, subject's state when waking up, physiological or informational processing aspects during night sleep). (Borosanu, 2013, Borosanu et al. 2014).

The cultural change, which takes place in the acculturation process, requires changing certain values and belief systems that are attached to an affective component. As a consequence, both sleep disturbances as well as perturbances in the level of functioning of certain affective vectors appear in the process of acculturation. Taking into consideration the reminded aspects, adapting the analysis models of acculturation requires introducing certain elements which characterize sleep patterns. On the other hand, the Woodworth-Matthew personality questionnaire represents a useful instrument in evidentiating the affective processes that accompany the transforming value and belief systems.

In our research, the results fit in the category of normal processes, fact that was also shown in other researches in this area that target this aspect.

Moreover, for the target sample of investigated subjects, we were able to put together in a complex approach certain elements that are only found separately in scientific papers.

Conclusions

In the analysis of the acculturation process which implies changes in different functioning areas of human existente, one needs to take into consideration certain

aspects related to the sleep/wake functioning and subsequently to connect them to acculturation analysis models.

In our culture, in the acculturation context the enlarged family is supportive especially for boys and the restrained family is supportive for girls, but many of them shift towards pathology.

In our culture, during the acculturation process, both boys and girls respect the pro-social norms and behavior, which can be translated as our openness towards multiculturality (the Western European model). Boys are more resistant in the acculturation process, being more easily moldable by multiculturality

The anthropological frame work proved its adequacy in investigating the context of multiculturality, necessary to manage the stages of the acculturation process.
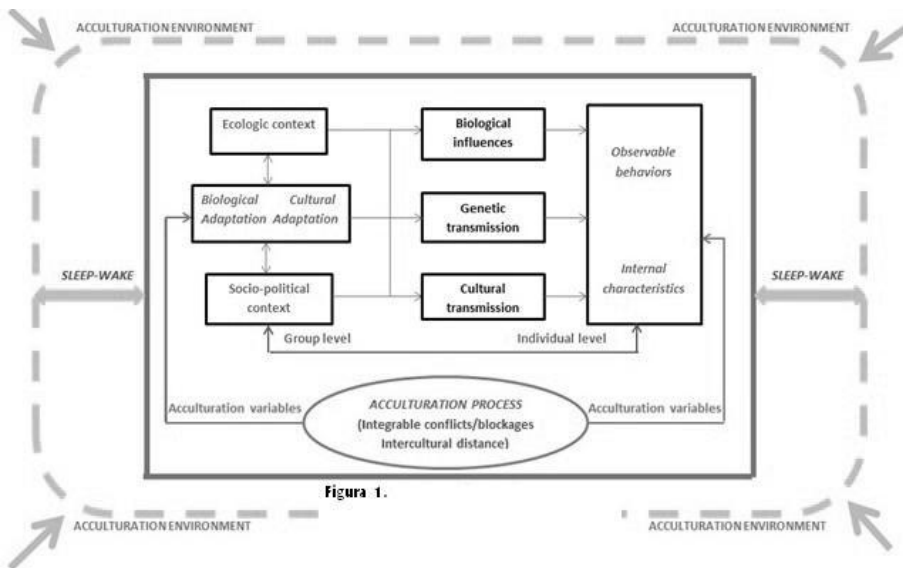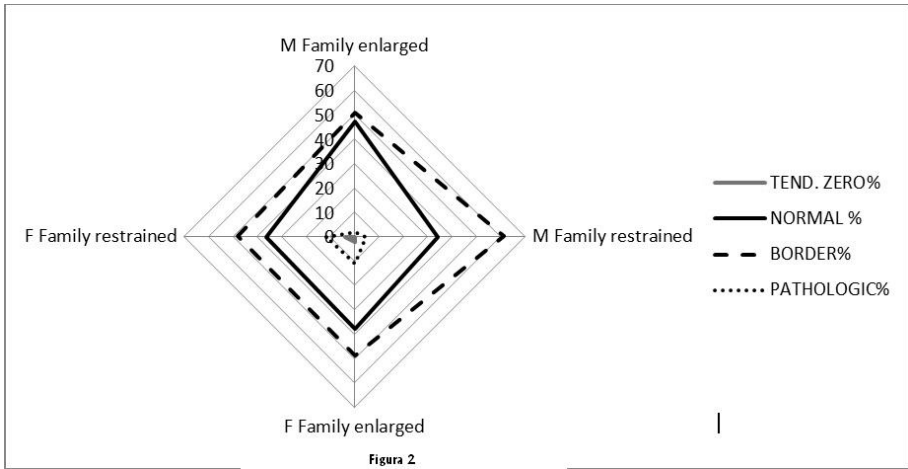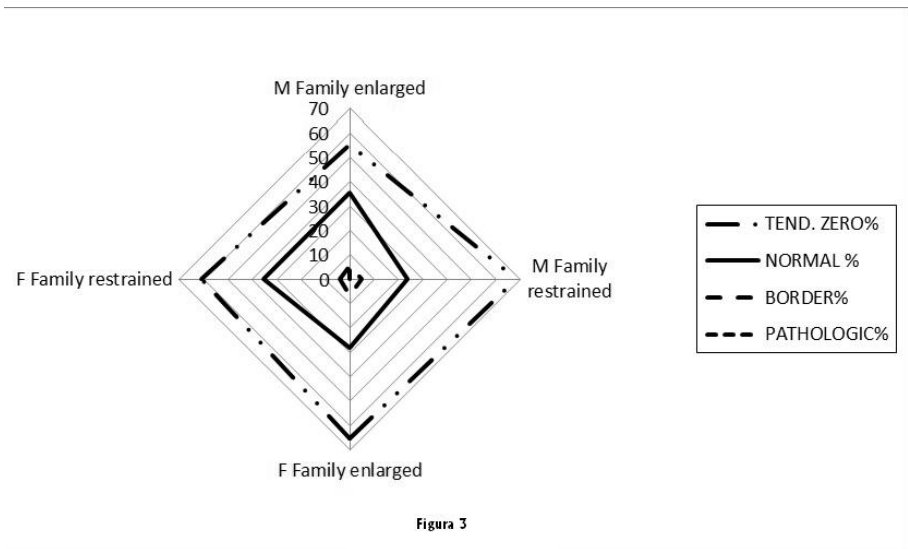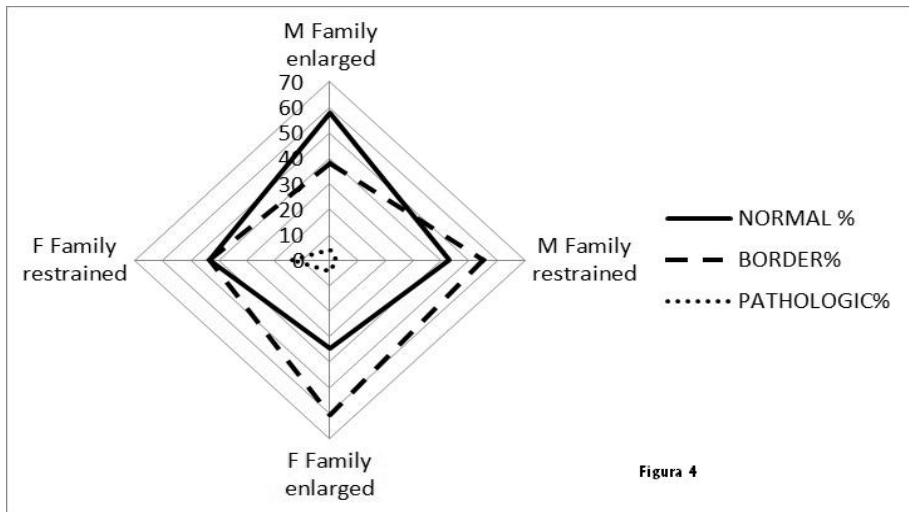

Figura 1.

Figura 2

Figura 3

Figura 4

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