

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

HELLENIC STUDIES

**LA NOUVELLE
IMMIGRATION GRECQUE
THE NEW WAVE OF
GREEK MIGRATION**

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Systemic Consideration of Family Immigration Results of Empirical Research

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude qui porte sur le phénomène de l'immigration familiale en provenance d'Albanie vers la Grèce au cours de la période allant de 1990 à 2005. Les familles sont examinées par étapes successives de leur parcours d'immigration. En particulier on distingue trois étapes: a) l'étape de l'émigration initiale, b) la phase de perturbation et c) la phase de réorganisation. Le contexte théorique de cette recherche est celui de la théorie systémique.

ABSTRACT

In this article are presented the results of a research, which deals with the phenomenon of family immigration from Albania into Greece during the period of 1990-2005. The families are examined in successive stages of their immigration course. In particular, there are three stages: a) the stage of initial emigration, b) the stage of disruption and c) the stage of reorganization. The theoretical background of our research is based on systemic theory.

1. Introduction: Setting Limits - Methodology of Research

With the change of Greece from an emigration country to an immigration one - especially after the second half of the 90s - a more systematic approach of immigration issues begins on a scientific level. The interest of academic research is focused on social, cultural, psychological, educational and generally human parameters of immigration and not only on financial or legal-institutional ones. The study of family extensions of immigration is integrated in this hypothesis and analyzed below.

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In particular, the results of a research are presented in this article in the framework of our doctoral thesis, under the title “*Families in immigration environment. The case of Albanian families in Greece*”. The present research, which was conducted in the prefecture of Rethymno in 2006 (May-September), deals with the phenomenon of immigration of families from Albania to Greece during the period 1990 to 2005. The sample consists of thirty six (36) families - a “purposive sample” (Kyriazis, 1999, 118). As a means of collecting research data the “semi structured” interview was used (Robson, 2007, 321). The technique which was chosen to having access to those being interviewed was the technique of “snowball” (Miller, 2000, 79).

The families are examined in successive stages of their immigration course. In particular, there are three stages. The *first stage* is the stage before the emigration, when the members of the family live together in the country where they come from. In this stage for the first time there is an attempt for the immigration to be discussed and developed because of the different financial and social difficulties faced by the family.

The *second stage* is the stage of “disruption” of the family, when one or some members immigrate (the husband-father alone or both parents together) and the other members of the family live in the country they come from, that is the members of a previously united family live separately. The *third stage* is the stage of family “reorganization” and “balance”, when the members of the family meet each other again and live together, but this time in Greece. Between the second and the third stage there is the “rejoining”, which is a legal and practical process of rejoining.

The theoretical background of our study is focused on the systemic theory. According to the specific point of view, the family as a social system undergoes the influences of the environment, elaborates and transforms them into alternatives so that they can adjust successfully to the demands of reality. We use the systemic terminology in order to understand the communication of the family with the environment outside and the inner interactions.

In relation to the above, the following passage is structured. In the theoretical part, the systemic tools are clarified and the searching questions are expressed. In the next chapter there is an analysis of results and we finish with a total assessment and certain thoughts for further research.

2. Systemic Consideration and its Application

In our study we examine the family as a system in successive stages (initial emigration, disruption, reorganization) and the members as subjects that act within the framework of the system.

On the one hand, we focus on the structures and among them we integrate the societies they come from and the welcoming societies, social factors of immigration (institutional, financial, social, cultural etc), the family as an institution (system), and on the other hand, the equally important dynamics of people who intervene in the structures and give them a meaning is examined.

The systemic speech can reflect the above multiplicity and complex reality of the family, on condition that it “develops brief meanings-keys, which present the total view of phenomena, without losing the ability of focusing, the exact and thorough description of operations in any stage of procedure it is thought to be worthwhile.

This means that we can examine the different entities on the basis of their common characteristics, which concern the determination of relationships among the parts of their inner organization, as well as their relationship with the environment” (Katakis, 1996, 41).

At this point we think we should discuss specific systemic terms, such as “*system*”, “*parts*” of the system, “*environment*”, “*complexity*”, “*reduction*” of complexity, “*potentiality*”, “*reflection*”, “*limits*” and “*self-reference*”, on the basis of which we understand the communication of families with the outside environment and the inner interactions of their parts-members.

A. “System”, “Environment”, “Parts” of the System

The systemic theory considers the society as a group of systems, which make up the environment. At the beginning of this consideration we can find the variability of systems and moreover of the environment. This is a basic principle in order to understand the system of family and the way of changing within the environment.

The characteristic of systems to develop, to adjust and to be active will be discussed in relation to the family of immigrants, who emigrate, get disorganized and reorganized that is a change as systems, together with structural changes (diversification of financial, social, political circumstances).

The systems change, which is considered as a result of their relation to the wider environment (Luhmann, 1995). The system comes out of the communication with the environment. From the interaction between system and environment a different system turns up in comparison with the previous one. What changes is the image of the system towards itself and the environment. This “image” will be searched in the immigrants’ families.

Let’s consider that the systems develop competitions in the environment and their position in the systemic hierarchy depends on their power against others. Within this framework the systems attempt to smooth out the control of the environment against them, something that will be of our concern in case of a family immigration. Their aim is to have as much access as it is possible to the available material or non material resources and in order to respond, they can change their organization or their function.

Apart from the interactions of systems in the environment, externally, the systemic theory refers to the relations of the parts of the system. In the system of a family each member or more members together in groups are considered to be parts (e.g. the child with a parent). There are three levels concerning the processes among parts.

The *first level* concerns the organization and function of the system in relation to the hierarchy of positions-roles among the parts. The *second part* concerns the processes of decision making and generally the communication in the system. The *third level* refers to the emotional field and concerns the psychological extensions of the inner systemic relationships. Twofold interactions, agreements-disagreements, cooperations-competitions are detected in the system (Morin, 1998). What is left is to detect the character of the interactions within the immigrants’ families.

To the question, if the parts as active subjects are superior to the system as an entity during the communication with the environment or finally the system as an entity is beyond the parts, the answer is that both these elements are examined in correlation with each other. The system consists of parts, classified as an entity. But the entity is comprehended and is involved in systemic parts.

The entity is comprised of parts, which through their action make the system a field of action (Craib, 1998). The systems, on the other hand, as entities of

these interactions, give meaning to every action. They connect the actions of the parts, which do not concern each one of them individually and separately, but they result in the system.

Extending the above acceptance to our own research, there is an interest in the formation of a balance of entity-parts in the system of family. We should point out that the “whole” differs as a magnitude from the total, that is the family as a system-entity is something different from the simple sum of its members. In this case the “difference” is qualitative and not quantitative.

B. “Complexity”, “Reduction”, “Potentiality”, “Reflection”

The term “complexity” (Komplexität) suggests the complex, problematic or inconsistent reality in the environment of a system (Willke, 1996). In each case recipient of complexity is the system, in some cases as an outside recipient of the environmental influences and in other cases as a recipient of inner and equally important processes among its parts. They concern immigrants’ families, who are exposed to successive environment and undergo complexity.

In parallel, systems develop mechanisms of restriction of the accumulated complexity. Their aim is to make it approachable. This process of bringing the environment under control is called “reduction” of complexity” (Reduktion der Komplexität) (Willke, *op. cit.*).

Bringing back the system into the environment leads to new data, when complexity cannot be reduced in the given framework and there is a demand for structure and not ad hoc solutions. The alternative choices of the systems as a response to complexity are printed in the meaning of ‘potentiality’ (Kontingenz) (Luhman, *op. cit.*). The above process is equally complex and produces new complexity, which must be reduced and be transformed into partial ways of action by the system.

The previously mentioned processes are not automatic and it is likely to bring the system into a difficult position. Its care is to predict the repercussion of its actions to the other systems. By the term “reflection” we mean the general characteristics of systems to estimate the repercussion of their initiatives in the environment and on the basis of this estimation to act (Willke, *op. cit.*).

In combination with the above, we can distinguish complexity, reduction, potentiality of a system on certain levels.

Family *complexity* is divided and examined on four levels. The *first level* concerns complexity of the inner environment. The *second level* has to do with the inner acceptance of the outer complexity (what complexity means for the family). The *third level* concerns complexity which is created by potentiality (in relation to the result of a potential choice, as well as in relation to the division of this choice into partial and additional decisions). The *fourth level* refers to complexity of the parts of the system or, otherwise, the inner-family complexity and it concerns the processes of decision making, the hierarchies of relationships and roles and generally the way of viewing complexity by members.

The levels of *reduction* are four. The *first level* refers to the understanding of complexity of the environment and the transformation of complexity to complexity of the system. The *second level* refers to ad hoc processes of complexity supervision, so that the system will be able to adjust to the given conditions that prevail. The *third level* refers to the control potentiality complexity, which is achieved through a definition of criteria and presuppositions concerning decision making. The *fourth level* refers to the reduction of inner systemic complexity among its parts.

The *potentiality* of the system of the family is analyzed on three levels. The *first level* refers to the alternative choices against complexity, which lead the system to structural changes - the decisions concerning emigration, rejoining and the development of family staying in the recipient country are placed and discussed on a certain level. The *second level* refers to the decisions and choices of the system on the basis of primary and already clarified potentiality (secondary potentiality). The *third level* of potentiality refers to the parts of the system and their choices in relation to the decision making, the hierarchy of roles and the inner systemic negotiation of potentiality.

C. “Self Reference”

Despite the difficulties, the family manages to keep the unity and inner balance with a bigger or less success. Consequently, there is a question, how can the family keep the balance under conditions of intense disturbances as the members live separately for long. The answer has to do with the ability of systems to handle their outer-systemic or inner-systemic relationships. It also depends on the possibility of reproduction, perpetuation or renewal of the

system structure. The characteristic of the system to self reproduce is printed in the term 'self-reference' (Willke, *op. cit.*).

In other words there are some invariables and on the basis of them a system focuses on things, employs them and encodes them. The meaning refers to these constants. The meaning refers to existential or identifiable substance of the system. The existential substance refers to the value core of the system and the bonds of its parts. The acceptable way of the life, commitments, rules and "moral" values are involved in the value-core, and on the other hand, paternal relationships and generally psychological functions are involved in the bonds.

In brief, the self referred system, reproduces its cohesion and in this way *self reference* is examined on two levels: The *first level* refers to value - moral models of the system. The *second level* refers to emotional functions of the system.

D. "Limits"

In order to understand the "limits" we focus on the system family. The following five pieces of acceptance contribute to our analysis. The first one is that the environment is comprised of different systems, which are structured in various ways: a) the person is integrated in the family, which is integrated in a particular cultural or socioeconomic group, which is integrated in the total system of social formation, b) the family is horizontally related to other systems and c) the parts of the family interact.

The second piece of acceptance shows the existing relations of hierarchy among systems. A system interacts with others and their hierarchy depends on the power difference concerning financial, social and institutional environment. On the other hand, on the basis of positions-roles distribution among parts, it is possible for us to approach limits from an inner-systemic point of view.

The third piece of acceptance concerns the cognitive frame of system reference (see family) - in which there are codes of behavior, convictions, assessments and suggestions for "self" and "others" who equally regulate limits (Katakis, *op. cit.*).

The fourth piece of acceptance is that the limits change during the life circle of the system.

Concerning the fifth piece of acceptance, the efficiency of limits is connected

with their flexibility of being “open” or “closed” to the influx of information from the environment.

On the basis of the previous criteria, the *limits* of the family system are divided into two levels. The *first level* refers to the outer limits of the system - environment. The *second level* refers to the inner limits among the parts.

E. Systemic Research Questions

Following the above classification during all stages of family immigration, we expressed the following questions:

- a. What things constitute economic, social and institutional complexity of the environment before emigration, during the period of disorganization and during the period of family reorganization?
- b. How is the above outer complexity been accepted by families, what it means for them and which processes of reduction are followed?
- c. Which parameters influence the potential choices of emigration, rejoining and continuation of family staying in the recipient country and which are the family strategies that are connected with potentiality?
- d. Which are the inner systemic processes in combination with complexity, reduction and potentiality?
- e. How are the family limits set against the remaining systems in the outer environment and in their inner environment what self reference constants govern them as systems?

3. Discussion of Results per Stage

3.1. Stage of Initial Emigration

During the period before emigration the family lives together in the country of origin and as a system undergoes the economic, political and social complexity of the environment (*1st level of complexity*). In particular, the economic complexity reflects problems concerning work, income and consumption (low wages, high unemployment, restricted value of money due to gradual increase of cost of living). From a political - social point of view complexity equals to political manipulation and it leads to prolonged social instability (systematic violation of human rights, disruption of the social fabric,

crisis of confidence in institutions-nepotism, intense class structure of society).

The family tries to understand the complexity of outer environment and to rank their extensions in the inner part of the system (*1st level of reduction*). We are talking about the inner intake of other complexity (*2nd level of complexity*). On the basis of economic criterion there are two categories of families: a) families of “survival”, who are not able to survive (households without financial sources) (Markova, 2001, 252) and b) families of “living”, who cover only basic financial demands (simple upkeep of the house). Common characteristic of the above families is the financial insecurity, with the indicative following statement: *«From the financial point of view don't discuss, even the person who has a job...and he doesn't feel very well. Now think of a family, when there is no employment. Others don't have money at all. A family with children cannot manage. Every night you sleep anxious for the next day. It is terrible what I've been through, the insecurity that everybody has, what the next day will bring.»*

On a political-social level complexity is considered to be institutional social exclusion (control of family life in communism, discriminations and unequal treatment depending on each one's ideology, absence of social welfare in capitalism), social isolation (citizens' sluggishness) and uncertainty for the prospect of society in the future.¹ The following disappointment was expressed in a family: *«When a society is broken up and I don't have any kind of help from the state what else can somebody hope for when society is broken up? Everybody left then. Society has collapsed financially. We live in a society and I don't know what the next day will be like with so much confusion that existed. Will I be unemployed? I couldn't know.»*

Under these conditions the family tries to manage and to reduce complexity (*2nd level of reduction*). Among these reduction procedures exhaustion of employment seeking, inner immigration, cooperation with network are also included etc. On the basis of economic crisis, the family tries to find alternative solutions outside the system. In this case emigration is considered to be the most appropriate solution (*1st level of potentiality*). From now on the family has to rethink on the basis of this decision-potentiality.

The choice of emigration produces new complexity for the family, which is analyzed on three levels (*3rd level of complexity*). The first one concerns the inhibitive factors of emigration - financial, social, psychological. The financial factors have to do with the financial viability of immigration (results concerning work, income, saving and possibility of keeping two households). The social

factors have to do with several issues of immigrants' adjustment to the environment (integration into supporting mechanisms in order to face possible difficulties). The psychological factors have to do with obvious, implications of disorganization in the family unity (isolation).

The second level of complexity concerns the following strategies of the family (which members are going to move, which will be the destination country, how long this emigration will last) and the third one concerns organization practices and emigration (awareness of the labor market and generally social-economic condition in Greece, regulations of some issues for the members who do not leave Albania, overcoming some legal obstacles of moving).

The reduction of certain complexity refers to the evaluation of objectionable and attractive parameters of emigration (possible benefits-damages for the family), the hierarchy of priorities and the examination of existing possibilities (*3rd level of reduction*). The following passage is a representative narration concerning complexity that families had to manage:

A coin has two sides, everything together, you can't. You don't go abroad and it is over. If something goes wrong? Will you be so sure? I don't know a lot of things about jobs. I'll save all this money my family needs...The idea of what I'll meet in this foreign place I'll visit frightened me. All of us left the place where we had lived for the first time and it frightens you. And how about your own people! I left and you left my wife alone with three children. Is there anything worse than that? I don't have passports, such papers, we had to pay some money. What will the wife do, the children, the problems, all, all they required a program. I, myself how long will I stay with you? Would they come later?

Through these processes of reduction the family ends up in certain decisions and choices in relation to emigration (*2nd level of potentiality*). Concerning the people who move, either one spouse moves or both of them. The direct immigration of the family is rejected because of the legal state, lack of sufficient presuppositions of members staying in the recipient country, temporary duration of emigration (the immigrant who intends to come back directly to the country of origin moves without his family) or various other parameters (e.g. difficulties of children's moving).

The choice of Greece as a country of destination and not as a country of

another European country is due to legal, economic, social, psychological and mainly geographical factors (short distance from Albania, easy border crossing, getting information from already settled immigrants, quick return in case of failure, facilitation of contact with the family).

Concerning the long term prospective of the family in the recipient country, we can see that there are three tendencies. First of all, it is the temporary staying of the immigrant or his family in Greece and his return to Albania after a shorter or longer period of time (they cannot imagine their life far away from their place and their relatives, they expect improvement of economic, social and political conditions in Albania, they have connected their socio-economic progress with a successful returning). Secondly, the permanent staying of the family in the recipient country after rejoining (they face insurmountable economic problems, all their hopes have been frustrated and they connect immigration with more favorable conditions for children). Thirdly, an obscure family planning on a more restricted scale (they don't discuss the specific subject at the present stage or they don't attribute the appropriate meaning to it).

The legal state leads to legal or illegal emigration. Consequently, the final moving is planned and takes place individually or in groups, in rings or not. The last one in relation to the immigrant's available means.

Concerning the further living of the members who do not immigrate, there are three cases: in the first one, the immigrant's family live together with relatives, in the second one no change is predicted in the family organization and function and in the third case there are some intermediate forms of family living together (e.g. occasional visits to the families of origin).

Making all the above decisions creates an inner-systemic family complexity, which is interpreted as disagreements and arguments between husbands and wives or between prospect immigrants and their relatives (*4th level of complexity*). About this it was said: «*My wife didn't want. You won't go she said, you won't leave us alone. And then I don't leave, you can't talk to the wife or to my own dad, because we are close to the family. Nobody wanted it, but what to do. All these fights there exist, took place, not only once, many times we fought for these things and they were right, I saw it when we got ready, I felt sorry and I do too. My mother cried, she cried when they told her.*»

The reduction of the inner systemic complexity is achieved through a minimum communication among the members of nuclear or extended family,

the support of the family from near systems (relation) and reasoning of choices (*4th level of reduction*). In the majority of families the decisions constitute common resultant of spouses' views or close relatives' views.

On the other hand, there are cases of one-sided determination of choices from husbands: they announce their decisions the last minute or they immigrate without warning (*3rd level of potentiality*).

In parallel to the above processes the family limits vary. The outer limits transform from closed (fear of exposure to the social environment) to open (thinking about immigrating), which serves the need of family system balance. In the same way the inner limits move from closed (strict hierarchy of roles and relationships) to open (talks in the family framework) or the opposite.

Apart from these the family has the ability to self-reproduce as a system in order to adjust to the requirements of the environment. In the value system of the Albanian nuclear or extended family there is the already mentioned self-reference dimension. In addition, the family recovers from mental bonds and psychological orders that keep the system together.

3.2. Stage of Disorganization-Rejoining

The emigration of one or both spouses leads the family to a stage of disorganization. The living conditions of immigrants in Greece and of the rest of the family members in Albania reflect the complexity of the environment (*1st level of complexity*). The complexity of immigrants refers to the initial problems of adjustment after the arrival in the recipient country (e.g. many of them don't speak the language), the intense insecurity due to illegal entry and staying and generally the legal state (they "hide" to avoid arrest), the disorders from work (permanency, low wages, exploitation), the difficult conditions of accommodation (accommodation in rundown neighborhoods), in a social displacement whether it concerns restricted social relationships or weakness in access to social goods, services or institutions and finally the psychological consequences of disorganization (sense of isolation from the family). The following experience of an immigrant is indicative of the above discovery: «*The borders are something terrible that I don't want to remember, what we went through and what I saw. When I came for the first time, apart from this trouble so far on foot, I ran out of money. Conditions that you say now...There is no work every*

day, I ran everywhere I could work. I have worked in Athens for a few months, I went to Trikala, go around because of work. And what we haven't done! Building, olive oils, restaurants, petrol stations, paints, if there was work I didn't care, celebrations or Sundays. The money I got I sent to my wife who wanted it because she didn't have. (...). I will accept exploitation and I accept everything because I can't read. I haven't taken any money I have worked for, what I could say though. Most people didn't know who I am and what I do. They didn't do you a favor to speak to you after we came most of us. The people don't love us! Who do I trust. (...). Today they have now changed, then what we have been through, I have been through something that cannot be forgotten. I have slept even outside an awning when I came or then five people have stayed in a room. You don't call it a house. You are afraid of the police, because I don't have a permit. We had always been worried. (...). You miss your children so much that what I can say, I came back tired from work, I am thinking of them at night until I fall asleep».

The complexity of wives in the country of origin has to do with experience of husband deprivation (feelings of melancholy, anxiety and disappointment), the social control from the extended family as well as on the social level (prejudice against immigrants' families), the multiple responsibilities they take as workers, housewives and parents and the difficulties they have to face in the role of the only parent (problematic interactions of a mother and children). In this framework we can see the consequences of father's absence to the children. According to what mothers have said, children sometimes cry and miss their father and sometimes they forget him or they consider his absence as abandonment. The statement that follows, shows the reality of wives: «*When my husband left, there was no more difficult moment in all my life, I lost everything under my feet. I missed my husband and I cried for hours, I said what he is doing now? We couldn't talk, at that time we didn't have mobile phones, we were talking just for a while. When I went to give birth, when I gave birth to the second child, he didn't know it at all. (...). Everything, the children, the household chores, everything was on me. Once the baby got sick, so high fever that he started shivering! At that time you need your husband, I need my husband. And as the children grew up they ask where dad is, when dad will come. I got very tired with the children, a child doesn't grow up in the right way only with mum or only with dad, he needs both parents. (...). So many things happen and I got frightened, the world isn't good. And what I have heard, he will never come back, he will leave the money somewhere else, he has found another woman, yes, and I don't want anyone, I stay inside with the children.*»

Members' complexity, which refers to the economic, social and institutional environment and the coincidence of disorganization, transforms into family complexity that is complexity of the system (*2nd level of complexity*). This process is achieved through a hierarchy of economic, social and psychological consequences of emigration and their projection to the family itself (*1st level of reduction*). Concerning economy, our research showed that the family report was inferior to their initial expectations. There may be a financial improvement in the family in comparison with the near past (sending money), however, there is no spectacular change (saving or better living conditions). The previous categorization of families continues to exist in families "living" and "survival" showing cases of less or nonexistent economic progress.

The social complexity is presented by the family as a social control and prejudice and as a social pressure by the close family or wider environment to respond to the targets of emigration. The psychological dimension refers to the isolation of the members of the family and as a result its cohesion is tested. In other words the family is presented to be in difficult financial conditions, socially weak and isolated or disorganized concerning relationships.

Understanding complexity keeps up with the processes ad hoc of overcoming the existing difficulties (*2nd level of reduction*). The reduction is a result: a) of a redefinition of roles and action of subjects (the immigrants are interested in work and collecting money, develop essential adjustment mechanisms (language) and are gradually integrated in networks with employers and people of the same nationality, and on the other hand, the wives sources, organize household and try to substitute the emotional gap of fathers' absence, b) relatives' support to the immigrants in Greece and their family in Albania (psychological, financial and social support), c) the communication among members (the immigrants often return to the country of origin and they are together with the family). Through the above inner and outer reorganization of the family there is the first adjustment of the system in the stage of disorganization.

The extension of emigration and the following disorganization brings back the reduction of financial situation of the family and the psychological parameters of disorganization. The question is, if the immigrant returns to Albania and comes back to his family or if the family moves to Greece. The potentiality of the family's rejoining in the recipient country comes from the

answer to the dilemma (*1st level of potentiality*). The following statement reveals the content of such a process:

In the end even your children wouldn't recognize you, first of all you go for six months, the month becomes three years. The children will forget you. You can't anymore, we are people and the heart can't stand it the family to be separated for so long. What shall we do with the money, which is not as we thought in the beginning, what do you want all these. I collected some money, but this doesn't make the difference. I have a target from the beginning, I have a target we will stay until we make a house for the children, but the house doesn't make and we are forced to stay, that's why we decided and we brought our families. I couldn't do anything else. We are staying for a better life. Others are even worse. There isn't anything left. It is better the whole family in case you do something in five years, you fell bored to leave and come back. Let alone there is nothing left. And the wife can't. And I personally wouldn't like to go back and start from the beginning, empty hands you don't come back easily.

The choice of rejoining produces new complexity in the inner part of the family, which it concerns the different factors of rejoining - institutional, socioeconomic, psychological (*3rd level of complexity*). When there is no, for example, a permanent job, home, minimum income which covers the needs of the whole family, social network of facilitating settlement etc, rejoining is really difficult from the beginning. The majority of families don't fulfill the legal criteria of rejoining (five years of waiting as minimum time for the beginning of the process of rejoining on the basis of law 1975/91 and two years with the law 2910/01, strictly income and economic criteria, delay in examining applications which in some cases was more than one or one and a half years. The exclusion of children from rejoining prolongs disruption. Also, the time of rejoining can't be predicted.

The family has to balance the cost-benefit of each decision, to rank priorities and to determine pursuits at the present stage (*3rd level of reduction*). Ending up to certain choices is considered to result from reflection (*2nd level of potentiality*). In relation to time reference, there are two types of family potentiality: the one is of the brief or temporary staying of the family in the recipient country after rejoining and the other of the permanent staying. Comparing to the period of the initial emigration, we can understand firstly, that although families tend to live longer in the recipient family, there is a tendency to come back in the country of origin, secondly, the number of

families that are thinking of permanent staying in Greece has been increased and thirdly, families with more specific goals show their intention to a more lasting rejoining, which depends on the result of their emigration.

Concerning the legal state there is either legal rejoining or rejoining after 'temporary staying' of a member (immigrant's wife) or illegal rejoining - possible with the greatest frequency. In relation to the order of members' moving, we consider the potential of immediate rejoining of all family members, nuclear or extended, wife's rejoining and later on children's or relatives' arrival (gradual rejoining). In relation to the time period which follows until final rejoining, we can see the following family differentiation: families that wait for four or five years in order to be together, families that are together after a time period of two or three years and some family cases in which the time period of waiting may extend or diminish.

In the state of disorganization inner systemic balance is also influenced. Complexity of parts relies on psychological implications of separation and family members' absence, role conflict and hesitation during decision making (*4th level of complexity*). It was said: «*It is not easy to decide. You are far away from your family, they don't even want it, who would like it. Then we wouldn't go no matter how I want it, I could see it and from others. Psychologically you aren't ready for such a big step, you are pressed psychologically.*»

Reduction is a consequence of reasoning of reality and family choices, adjustment to new roles and maintenance of family cohesion through temporary contacts or even through symbolic means (*4th level of reduction*). Consequently, families are distinguished on the basis of inner systemic potentiality (*3rd grade of potentiality*). Families differ according to the frequency of contacts and the content of communication, familiarization or not of the members with their roles and decision making (spouses' agreement or disagreement).

The examination of family limits refers to the attribute of the system or its parts to reflect and then to act in the environment. Examining the immigrants, their outer and their inner move from closed to open or the opposite. Immigrants seem to be extrovert to work and financial sources seeking and introvert to the social field (self-protection from the police). Their inner limits are closed (self-isolation) or open (relationships). Immigrants' wives either keep their outer and inner limits closed (self-protection - self-isolation) or

widen them (responsibilities-roles). In relation to the family as a system, there is a distinction of closed-open limits, having the outer limits closed (social and economic restrictions of the environment) or having them open (decision of rejoining) and having the inner ones move to closed ones (self-protection) or open (communication) depending on the circumstances.

The self-reference of the system is determined mainly by the psychological functions of the family and the reproduction of emotional bonds of members. The value models of the family develop their own dynamics. So despite the removal of members and the difficulties of disorganization, the family unity is not threatened: «*And five and ten years the family remains strong, the Albanian family doesn't break up. Something that keeps you is the inner power of the family, for a father to love his children the same although he doesn't see them and so do they.*»

3.3. Stage of Rejoining-Reorganization

After rejoining a new chapter starts for the family on the basis that the disorganized members meet again in the recipient country. The family has to adjust to the new environment and the disorganization is examined in relation to the outer complexity (*1st level of complexity*). In this stage we can see economic, social and institutional complexity, which refers to difficult economic circumstances and to a non familiar and sometimes hostile social and institutional system (offer and demand of work, income, expenses, cost of living, institutional and social disruption).

The family assesses the above problematic reality (*1st level of reduction*) and through this process we can realize the implications in the inner part of the system (*2nd level of complexity*). According to data, complexity of the family concerns: a) accommodation (small houses and generally insufficient living conditions), b) household finances-standard of living (frugal family life-weakness in saving, restricted professional mobility with consequences on income and consumption, any kind of financial improvement keeps up with the parallel widening of needs and social obligations of family and a high cost of life), c) children's attending school, d) socio-cultural attitude of the family (racism, prejudice and xenophobia, restricted or weak social relationships, withholding data of national cultural identity), e) the legal and institutional treatment (obstacles to legalizing, time consuming and costly processes of permit renewal, citizenship problems, nonexistence of political social welfare etc).

The psychological repercussion of the settlement of family members is related to the above mentioned ideas. The first touch of new coming women with the social environment is associated with skepticism or disappointment because of the new living conditions, fear of the unknown and generally with insecurity, alienation and frustration of expectations. The children have been influenced by the previous period of disorganization and show mixed feelings to parents and introversion to the environment (e.g. school). The settled immigrants have difficulty in establishing communication with their children and get adjusted to the requirements of common life. Complexity is also created by the absence of family members, who have not yet rejoined. An immigrant mentioned the following in relation to the family disorganization:

I got used here very late. I don't know what it meant to me, it means something negative to me and I always cry. Once I said I will leave, nobody had told me what I will meet. When I saw this house, two rooms that have a bed and a small wardrobe, I tell my husband shall we stay in this house? I didn't know anyone to speak to, I spoke only a few words, nobody understands what I say and we didn't know the basic things. Everything unknown the first months! Psychologically I'm getting through it not easily, staying in I am looking at the walls. It was difficult for children until they get used to their father. It was as if they had forgotten him. Then the girl was close to her father while the little boy wasn't. He isn't close to his dad. And at school the same things until they get used. He came home and cried, the other children bullied him. As the time passes children and I got used, problems are something else, they existed and it will exist, it isn't the same though. We have a better place, we paid something more of course, when you have you will give it, the first house let it go! We both worked then, when there is work I will work because children's obligations don't leave you relax. Expenses, rent, school, food, work. Children are missing things...we miss a lot. You keep money as long as you can, then after a month we buy something, clothes for children, a sofa, a cooker, television, mobile phone, DVD, we bought a second hand car, not from the beginning, you start with two three things and then you think of something more. First you start with the essentials, two forks and a spoon, the children wear two pieces of clothes, I wash one of them and he wears the other. When we came my husband didn't have a permit and

we were illegal until we got our papers ready. We had a problem with children and hospital so when I gave birth to the third child I ran in the street and I don't know if the police stops me and arrests me. Perhaps the world or the others don't accept you, we have experienced racism when somebody doesn't behave very well, but when he knows you the ice breaks. They didn't look at you favorably at the beginning, it depends on the person. The boss a very good person, he has helped us, we owe to him a lot. He has people whom he helps. We keep company to each other, I had my sister or if know somebody, you must know well though. What if he is an Albanian, all Albanians are good?

Reduction of complexity has the aim of consolidating changes in the stage of disorganization (*2nd level of stage of reduction*). In this framework certain initiatives appear from families: a) they help with the members' adjustment (husbands' contribution, wives' social adjustment and the wife's contribution to diminish the 'distance' between immigrant's father and children), b) they try to increase incomes and attempt to adjust as realistically as possible the economic situation of the family (integration of women into production, steps towards professional field - self-employment, abandonment of initial plans and emphasis on reorganization of household), c) they integrate into social networks (communication in the neighborhood, contact with employers, with people of the same nationality, native people, children's relationships at school), d) they get legal-institutional security (legalization).

The decision on all these issues and their results in the process of reorganization, show the corresponding types of families (*1st level of potentiality*). In reference to the standard of living, the first type concerns families with improved standard of living (moving to a better house, imitation of local consuming models, possibility of saving in some cases) and the second type concerns families with continuous living problems, but not as previously - «*not, you are not as before, we aren't on something that you are comfortable, the children grow up and obligations never stop. I have been in Greece for almost ten years and I am not safe. My son has told me, dad, he says, why we are so poor! Why, I say, my son? Dad we don't have a lot of money, the child said so.*» And in both cases the financial status of Albanian families is inferior to the Greek one and we are talking about families of medium and low socioeconomic status.

Concerning social relationships, there are the following categories of

families: a) families who attempt an opening to the social environment and they are satisfied with their communication (they are invited to various festivals, native people christen their children, develop social network with nationals or of the same country people), b) families who talk about xenophobia, prejudice and racism, c) families who rely their social contacts on the cost they bring.

We should see the potential management of national cultural identity from the part of families in relation to social extensions. The majority shows a tendency to keep their national-cultural characteristics, without restricting social relationships apart from some exceptions. On the contrary, certain families seem to be tied up to negative stereotypes and they end up behaving, as it is expected by 'others' (withholding their origin - instead of "Albanians" they come from Northern Epirus, withholding their religion, use of Greek names). Other families use selectively their national-cultural identity or its meaning is considered to be unimportant in order for them to avoid the conflict with the dominant group and to manage social accession. It was said: *«I personally have a good time with the local people here, because they helped us and me and my family. Mind your own business, take care of your family, why shall I argue with you? I am not interested in what others believe, people are the same. Everybody who christens children we do it because we believe. You speak Albanian in the house, you speak Greek outside. The other accepts you well? We forget everything else. I know what I am.»*

The legal state doesn't differentiate families in this stage, based on the fact that they are all legal and nobody has Greek citizenship. Another last issue has to do with children's arrival or family members' arrival. There are families who think about children's rejoining and other, who apart from children are interested in a wider rejoining (parents or other relatives).

Albanian families' tendencies towards their staying in the country of origin or the recipient country have been discussed in previous stages. The specific subject comes up in the stage of disorganization where families don't seem to make their plans clear. According to the available data, we can find the following family cases (*1st level of potentiality*): a) families, who tend to live in the recipient country permanently, b) families, who tend to return home and c) families, who consider the meaning of the whole thing unimportant and have a vague or "open" orientation.

The decision making is influenced by inconsistent financial, institutional and psychological factors. Such complexity is produced and issued by potentiality (*3rd level of complexity*). Families mention for example, that their financial expectations were not fulfilled and at the same time they discover the existence of non favorable circumstances of returning to Albania (e.g. unemployment). A lot of families consider that they have been familiar with the local way of life and the social condition in Greece and that they point out discrimination phenomena of legal and institutional exclusion. If we add psychological parameters (nostalgia for the country, for the parents or immigrant's feelings), the result is reduction of complexity in relation to potentiality (*3rd level of reduction*).

On the other hand, the family has to assess the advantages and disadvantages of emigration and reorganization, and on the other hand, to carry out decision-choices of potentiality. A family which extends staying in the recipient country has to face the potential rejoining of the family members (parents), the redefinition of economic situation (buying a house in Greece or investment in Albania), security, institutional equality (citizenship) and equal social participation. Similar issues arise for all families regardless of orientation.

The inner family processes are examined in relation to the outer ones, which we have already referred to. Apart from adjustment, difficulty of the family members and the restoration of mental bonds, we can see three more parameters of complexity (*4th level of complexity*). The first one has to do with decision making (e.g. continuation of emigration or not), which can cause conflicts between husbands and wives. The second one extends to the hierarchy of roles with the wives to claim a more equal position. And third, the communication between parents and children constitutes another kind of potentiality, which is influenced by inner-family and outer-family factors. The inner-family factors relate to the perennial perceptions about family (control of children's life) and the outer family factors have to do with social influences factors, which according to parents threaten Albanian family's identity (they react to children's company, disagree with their attachment to local socio-economic models, talk about language change etc). Sometimes conflicts between children and parents result from the generation gap and they are simply reinforced by complexity of emigration and disorganization.

The management of family problems is achieved through several processes (*4th level of reduction*) such as role distribution (the woman is integrated into

production, men take on traditional women's roles - e.g. taking care of children), relatives' contribution to problem solving of the family (creation of social network and relationships), reasoning of decisions and family cooperation (difficulties to bring members together and reduce difference), gradual balance of system and the family ending up in a model of organization-function, which responds to influences of the environment and family principles.

Therefore, we distinguish potentialities in relation to inner-family organization- function (*3rd level of potentiality*). In most families we can see a transition to more equal roles than in the past, without changing hierarchies in the family. In a small number of families traditional roles are kept. The inner family processes of decision making agree with the above during these decisions; men don't force their views but uncontested solutions are found. On the contrary, the gap between parents and children will continue, although social influences seem to lead families to a readjustment of interactions. An immigrant wife and mother of two children said:

We discuss everything, we have become modern now. I can see my husband who has changed. I have two friends I am talking to, you will call her, she will call you. I don't want to go to the other end, I listen to my husband, I won't do anything else. And the children the same, they will listen to parents. How can a parent of this child will sleep well, when his child isn't at home and he doesn't know what time he will return? I would be really annoyed if my daughter went out fourteen years old, it would annoy me! It isn't of my character. When children learn this way, they don't learn to listen to what you are saying. And my own children. Then my husband shouts what are you doing? And he is right, the children are out of control, we are foreigners here. The older one more. Once he started shouting at him in case he understands, because and the girl must stay in, tomorrow she will get married, she will have her own family and she should learn the good way, and this respect, she will pass it to her children. And shouting though doesn't make sense, whether we want it or not she has become modern.

To sum up, we can say that the communication between husband and wife and generally family members' communication tend to a balance between

modern way of life and contemporary outlook on family nature and identity.

During the reorganization time period the family changes limits from closed into open or the opposite depending on its position in the environment and the inner balance. For example, we can mention that during the first time period after rejoining the outer limits are closed, which allows members a more restricted exposure to the social system and leaves them space to establish their relationships. In the process limits widen, which is something imposed by economic and social needs of family (employment, accommodation, social network, school). In parallel, the closed inner limits keep national-cultural identity and support members psychologically and the outer ones cover the need for family familiarization with the way of life in the country.

From the above analysis we have come up with self-reference characteristic of family, which contributes to the reproduction structural components. At first, emotional bonds among members through living together and some psychological functions and, secondly, value models of the family group. In other words members draw satisfaction and have a sense of security from their relationships and at the same time obey to values and rules of the family as the least contribution to keep the family unity.

4. Summary and Thoughts for Further Research

From the above analyses the analytical power of the tools of systemic theory becomes obvious. It presents a common practice during all stages of family immigration: from the initial emigration to disorganization, rejoining and family reorganization. At first, the family as a system is in contact with the remaining systems of the environment and is influenced by them. At the same time the parts become active and they develop their own communication in the family system.

In the first stage the family attempts to understand the implications of the outer environment so that the members can realize their roles. At the same time they attempt to reduce the consequences of the environment. But if complexity is not reduced to the desired extent and family problems continue, the family may be led to decisions which totally put the system again in the environment.

The choice of emigration, rejoining and extension of staying in the recipient country constitute different alternatives of the system (see potentiality). The choice whatever it is, is connected with new pending issues concerning the purpose of decisions, plans and realization. Complexity which is produced by potentiality must be reduced, because otherwise there will not be clear decisions and choices or potentialities.

The limits of the family determine the position of the system in relation to other systems. The family can differentiate limits and restrict or widen interactions in the environment. Opening or closing limits may have positive or negative extensions in the family and their extension depends on the ability of the family to predict the effects of their actions on the other systems (see reflection).

Finally, there is one more function, which determines the system as an existence and in contrast with the environment. This is self-reference or reproduction of family through inner processes. Some of them are self renewal of mental bonds of members, self renewal of value models of family and principles that determine relationships and roles.

According to the above the family is kept in a dynamic and not static balance. In other words they move from balanced conditions to conditions of balance disruption and restoration of new balances in the outer environment. The question is, if a balancing theory such as systemic way can be applied to conditions of balanced disruption. In some families, for example, the couple get a divorce and a different type of family appears. As a consequence, there is a question related to interpretative limits of systemic theory and on the other hand a need for a different aspect of the object appears.

In addition, the research of the family can be extended and include the development of staying and strategy of the family in the recipient country, planning of the second generation and the importance of social network relative to the family's adaptation. Also, the psychological consequences in the family require a much more specialized study and another methodology. Therefore, the research field is open to new cases such as families, whose all members move directly and continue to live illegally. Finally, the choice of another nationality as a target group offers the possibility of comparison of results between families of different national origin.

NOTE

1. This has been confirmed by other theoretical and empirical studies on social, economic and political situation in Albania (Vickers & Pettifer, 1997).

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