Families

IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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This edited reader, with contributions from experts on families in various countries, documents and explains family life and practices throughout the world, including preindustrial, developing, fully industrialized, and postmodern information societies. Each article is organized around a set of similar themes and concerns: socio-historical and demographic information about the families being studied, religious and cultural beliefs tied to family practices, husband-wife/parent roles and responsibilities, parent-child socialization, and policy initiatives within that society. The opening chapters provide a theoretical overview and a basis for examining family changes and organization patterns from evolutionary and postmodern perspectives.

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CHAPTER 12

FAMILIES IN GREECE

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Our analysis of the Greek family elucidates the issue of changes in the structure and function of the traditional Greek family as a result of economic and other social changes in Greek society stemming from modernization and urbanization. The chapter is based on an ecocultural framework that analyzes elements of the Greek culture and relates them to the family. The chapter begins with an outline of the history of the Greek state. The next section describes the ecology of Greece, relevant to its means of economic subsistence and to the development of the types of communities and to the extended family system, the organization, and the institutions of Greek society—diachronically and in terms of

changes in the family system in today's Greece. These institutions include economic, political, and legal institutions, the educational system, religion, and bonds with groups in the community. This is followed by an analysis of the traditional Greek family and the roles of the family members. The question of the degree of transition of the Greek traditional extended family system to the nuclear family system in modern Greek society is then discussed based on demographic statistics and current research on family values and social networks. Employing Parsons' theory of the nuclear family and modernization theory, the definitions of the nuclear family are examined. These changes in kin networks are compared

with changes in other cultures to provide an indication of the degree of changes in Greece. The last section discusses conclusions regarding the Greek family system.

A HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF GREECE

The Byzantine Empire was established in the fifth century on a peninsula on the Bosphorus by Constantine, a Roman, and the capital of "New Rome" was Constantinopolis—today's Istanbul. The "Hellenes," or as they called themselves, the "Romioi" or Hellenophone Romans, with their distinct language, culture, and Orthodox religion, resided in an area that spread across North Africa, the middle East, what is today Turkey, around the shores of the Black Sea, what are currently the Balkans, southern Italy and Sicily, and of course the land mass and islands of modern Greece. One thousand years later, in 1453, after centuries of debilitating aggressions by the Romans, the Crusaders, the Venetians, and others from Western Europe, Constantinople fell to the Ottomans. After the demise of the Byzantine Empire the Romioi were one of many ethnic groups, with a distinct language, religion, and culture within the Ottoman Empire, and despite the lack of a nation-state of "Hellas" or Greece, the continuity of Hellenic identity was maintained.

Greeks rebelled against the Ottoman Empire in 1821, and aided by England, Russia, and France, the nation-state Greece or Hellas was established at the end of the 1820s, with borders that included only the Peloponnese, a few islands, and a small section of mainland Greece. King Otto of Bavaria was imposed on by the three powers to become its monarch in 1834, in order to play a mediating role among the quarreling factions of those who fought for independence. However, within 30 years Otto was deposed, and King George of Denmark became the new head of a constitutional monarchy. Athens became the country's principal city, its population growing exponentially from 10,000 in 1834, to 31,500 in 1848, to 179,700 in 1896 (Cassia & Bada, 1992). This urbanization was due not so much to industrialization as to the migration of farmers, fisher-

men, herders, and others from the provinces desiring a better life in the new and growing capital. These migrants sought employment in the new, highly centralized state administration, sent their sons for the opportunity of education at the newly established University of Athens, sought the opportunity to establish themselves as tradesmen or in other economically viable jobs as water carriers, servants, stevedores, builders, and so on.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, with the further weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the revolution that established modern Turkey, the geographic borders of Greece expanded to include what is currently northern Greece and the city of Thessalonike, Thrace, the island of Crete, the Ionian islands, and after World War II, the Dodecanese Islands. The monarchy in Greece had a turbulent history in the twentieth century: it was overthrown by coups, brought back, rejected, brought back by plebiscite after World War II, and rejected by plebiscite in 1974, when Greece became a republic.

Until the 1930s, industrial development in Greece was meager and primarily met domestic needs. At the end of World War II a civil war erupted in Greece, which did not end until 1950. However, during the 1950s Greece began to industrialize, albeit tardily in relation to other European nations also devastated by war. The rapid industrialization led to another wave of internal migration, primarily toward Athens, but also to Thessalonike, which was the second largest city in the Ottoman Empire. Greece became a member of the European Union (EU) in 1981.

The population of Greece is approximately 10,500,000. The population of Athens in 1928 was 802,600; in 1951 the population was 1,378,500, it was 3,000,000 in 1976, and approximately 4,500,000 in 2001.

AN ECOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK

The traditional Greek family and changes in its nature in today's society will be discussed within the context of cultural and ecological theory: the effects of history and environment on maintenance systems

changes have occurred within the Greek extended family system.

Family Values

Values related to family roles and functions are a psychological measure of changes in the family system. As indicated above, a series of studies investigated changes in traditional family values (Georgas, 1986, 1989, 1991). The values were measured on a 5-point scale. Factor analysis of the 64-item questionnaire resulted in three dimensions. The same three factors were obtained in a number of other studies with different populations and with different age levels—e.g., Papademou (1999), Bafiti (2000)—indicating a very stable structure.

The results of Papademou (1999), based on a representative nationwide sample of $N = 1,300$, ages 18 to 80, and from an unpublished study by the first author with 500 children ages 10–15, will be presented below.

The strongest factor that emerged from these studies was termed *Hierarchical Roles of Father and Mother*, based on value statements such as: The father should be the head of the family . . . handle the money in the household . . . the breadwinner . . . provide a dowry for the daughter. The mother should live for her children . . . accept the decisions of the father . . . agree with the opinions of the father . . . place is in the home. This factor contained values related to the traditional roles of the patriarchal extended family, in which the father was the head of the family, acted in an authoritarian manner, controlled the finances, while the mother was submissive, conciliatory, a housewife, who cared for the children.

The second factor that emerged consistently was *Responsibilities of the Parents toward the Children*, based on value statements such as: Parents should not argue in front of the children . . . should teach their children to behave properly. The problems of the family should be solved within the family.

The third factor was *Responsibilities of the Children toward the Family and the Relatives*, based on value statements such as: The children have the obligation to take care of their parents when they become old . . . should obey their parents . . . help with the chores of the house . . . respect their grandparents. One should maintain good relationships with one's relatives.

The next step was to compare the means of the values on each factor for different age levels. Figure 12.1 presents the mean scores from Papademou (1999) for ages 10 to 85. The means on Hierarchical Roles of Father and Mother showed the greatest variability across ages. Children 10–15 years old were "not certain," 18–25-year-olds "disagreed" most among the age groups, followed by slightly less disagreement of 26–35- and 36–45-year-olds, and approximately the same level of "not certain" of 46–85-year-olds as with 10–15-year-olds. These scores also varied on the basis of urban–rural residence: Athenians rejected these traditional roles more than residents from small communities. They also varied according to gender, with females rejecting these roles more than males. Gender and residence interacted, in that there was a greater discrepancy in mean values of the Hierarchical Roles between young males and young females from small communities, and less discrepancy in disagreement between genders in Athens (Georgas, 1989). Also, correlations of hierarchical mother–father roles between the offspring and the mother and father indicated that male adolescents correlated higher with fathers than daughters, suggesting that sons identified with the father's position regarding these hierarchical mother–father roles, while there was little correlation between fathers' and daughters' values (Georgas, 1991).

An interpretation of these results might be that family values associated with the patriarchal authority of the father were rejected by people of all ages in Greece, or at least, they did not agree with them. This interpretation might appear to extend also to the conclusion that the extended family type is disappearing in today's Greece. However, let us look at the mean scores of the other two factors in Figure 12.1.

In contrast with the rejection of *Hierarchical Roles of Father and Mother*, young people did not reject values associated with *Responsibilities of the*

Strongly agree

Responsibilities of Children
toward Family and Relatives

5

4

Agreement

3

2

1

Parental Responsibilities

Hierarchical Roles

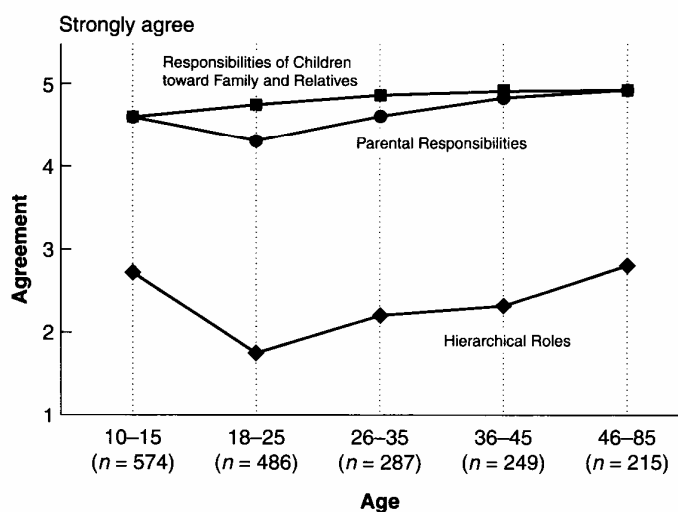| 10–15	18–25	26–35	36–45	46–85
(n = 574)	(n = 486)	(n = 287)	(n = 249)	(n = 215)

Age

FIGURE 12.1   Mean Agreement Ratings for Hierarchical Roles of
Mother and Father, Parental Responsibilities toward Children, and
Responsibilities of Children toward Family and Relatives According to
Age Groups 10–15, 18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46–85

Parents toward the Children and *Responsibilities of the Children toward the Family and the Relatives.* These latter values are related to responsibilities of children to the family and also to the importance of maintaining ties with members of the extended family—that is, traditional values of the Greek extended family system.

We can come to the conclusion that children, adolescents, and young people in Greece do not reject all values of the traditional extended family, but only those associated with the traditional hierarchical roles of father and mother, son and daughter, male and female. These are roles related to father having the economic and social power, the strict obedience of children, the dutiful and acquiescent mother, and so on—roles consistent with the agricultural extended family in many cultures. Safilios-Rothschild (1967) found over 30 years ago that in Athenian nuclear families, with fathers employed in the professions, the father's social power was diminished in

relation to the mother's. Our findings suggested that the father's power within the family has lessened and the mother's has increased, due to the increased entry of women into the workforce beginning in the 1980s, the equal proportion of women attending universities, and other developments. These trends have also been widely observed in Europe and the United States (Aerts, 1993). On the other hand, young people in Greece agreed with values of the traditional extended family with regard to the importance of maintaining relations with relatives, of respect for grandparents, of offering help to parents, of obligations toward the family, and so on. These are values related to maintaining close emotional relationships and ties with kin. In a recent study of attitudes of EU 12-year-olds (*Eurobarometer,* no. 39.0/1993) in response to the question, "If in the future working people should care more for their elderly parents," Greek children had the highest level of agreement, 80 percent, as compared to less than 40 percent in Belgium.