

THEORIES OF GENDER EQUALITY: *Lessons from the Israeli Kibbutz*

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Because the Israeli kibbutz is innovative in collective ownership, production, consumption, and child care, and in part also because it is erroneously assumed to have once had a gender-egalitarian ideology and structure, it is taken to be a valid test case for many theories explaining or justifying gender inequality or gender equality. This article argues that the kibbutz cannot serve as a test case for theories that blame inequality on the family as such, on the exclusivity of infant rearing by women, on the precultural differences between the sexes, or on compulsory heterosexuality for women. Kibbutz experience refutes theories that blame the inferior social status of women on material inequality, on private ownership of the means of production, or on the inferior ritual evaluation of women's activities. Kibbutz experience is indeed a unique test case for, but also a refutation of, theories that base gender equality on maximal participation of women in work in the public sphere or on the maximal socialization of housework and child care. Finally, kibbutz experience corroborates the theory that gender equality depends on equal control over surplus resources and, conspicuously so, the theory that in modern society, gender equality depends on the full abolition of the gender segregation of all social roles, especially work roles, whether performed in the private sphere or in the public sphere, whether paid for or unpaid.

The Israeli kibbutz has been viewed as a valid test case for a wide array of social science theories because it differs from nearly all modern industrial societies in its arrangements of ownership, division of labor, organization of work, consumption, infant and

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child care, and education. Although the number of people living in Israel in kibbutzim is relatively small—about 100,000—it appears to be more viable than nearly all other forms of small alternative societies, usually known as communes. Israeli kibbutzim have maintained their basic structures for three generations.

Although the kibbutz has been considered a test case for clusters of theories ranging from Freudian infant psychology to the sociology of work organizations, perhaps the most prominent are theories of gender roles and gender stratification. One collection of essays (Palgi et al. 1983) on the kibbutz as a test case for theories of gender equality offers an integration of different views. What is still needed is the systematic presentation and evaluation of the full array of theories of gender stratification for which the kibbutz experience has been claimed to stand as a test case—or for which, by any stretch of the imagination, this could be claimed. This evaluation needs to make clear which theory is testable by recourse to evidence provided by the kibbutz experience and which cannot be so tested, as well as which of the testable theories are supported and which are refuted. (Some theories, though testable by kibbutz evidence, are better tested by other and weightier evidence.)

This article offers such an evaluation. I shall list the theories in question; in each case, I shall examine whether the kibbutz can be used as a valid test case. I shall indicate in passing when better and weightier test cases exist. When the kibbutz can serve as a valid test case, I shall assess whether the kibbutz historical experience and current social order support or refute the theory in question. Finally, I shall suggest improvements of explanatory theories of gender stratification and of the theoretical foundations for strategies in the struggle for gender equality.

THEORIES OF GENDER INEQUALITY

The theories discussed here may be classified in several ways. The seemingly simplest approach would be classification of theories as biological, psychological, anthropological, sociological, and economic. This is cumbersome, as hardly any theory stays within one discipline. Another seemingly simple method would be classification of theories as socialist, liberal, and radical feminist. For my part, this classification is quite inadequate: some theories are advocated by some but not all members of one or more of these camps and others are not feminist at all. A better classification, which will be used here,

is to group the theories according to their main themes: production and property relations; family structure and household; social roles, especially occupational work roles; and sexuality. Theories belonging to the first group are mainly economic; the theories in the second and third groups are economic, sociological, anthropological, psychological, and even biological. In the fourth and last group, the most conspicuous theories are psychoanalytic.

Production and Property Relations

Many theories concerning the status of women have originated within socialist thought, which blames the existing material inequality in society for most or all of its ills. Socialists assume the feasibility of the elimination or great reduction of this material inequality and with it, the elimination of almost all social inequalities as well as status hierarchies. In line with this assumption, socialists generally expect that the smaller the differentials in standards of living or property in a society, the smaller also the status differentials between men and women.

Marxism locates the origins of all inequality more specifically in the private ownership of the means of production by one class and contends that the elimination of all inequalities will be effected by the expropriation of the privately owned means of production by the revolutionary proletariat and by their subsequent administration by society for the benefit of all. According to Engels ([1884] 1972), the cause of women's inferior status is class society and the forms of family organization it produces; once class society is abolished, and the state withers away, the patriarchal family will also disappear. Engels blamed capitalism for the current separation of the place of reproductive work, that is, the family home, from that of productive work, that is, the factory, which has made women's participation in social production more difficult and limited. According to Engels, capitalists want to keep women reproducing the labor force without pay, while serving as a cheap reserve army of labor. His program for full equality for women was their full participation in social production. Engels did not assume that the socialist revolution and the elimination of the capitalists as a class would automatically overcome all the obstacles to women's equality. He added two assumptions concerning household and marriage; they belong to the second group of theories as classified here.

Several modern materialist theories that stress the central importance of women's place in production for their status in society have

been developed by Brown (1970, 1975), Sanday (1973), and Lesser Blumberg (1984). Brown's earlier version (1970), based on an analysis of the anthropological literature, explains the greatly varying degree of women's contribution to subsistence production as depending on the degree of compatibility of child minding with the kind and conditions of subsistence production in each society. Her later explicit theory of gender equality is based on the analysis of the exceptionally high status of women in Iroquois society. She found that this status cannot be "attributed to the size of the women's contribution to Iroquois subsistence. The powerful position of Iroquois women was the result of their control of the economic organization of their tribe" (1975, p. 251). Sanday (1973) uses samples from Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* (1967) to test the theory that women's high participation in subsistence production results in high social status. She refutes it by pointing to the existence of societies whose women, though they contribute over half of their society's subsistence, nevertheless have extremely low status. Consequently, she reformulates her theory to say that participation in subsistence production is a necessary but not sufficient condition for women's high status. Lesser Blumberg's theory is sociological and is relevant to industrial as well as simple societies. She claims that it is only the production of surplus resources, and access to and control over these resources, that translates into power or valued status—for men and women alike.

Family Structure and Household

Engels's first additional assumption was that the private family household condemns women to household work and child care and thus to inequality. Women can become equal, then, only through the dissolution of the private family household by the socialization of domestic services and child raising. Engels's second assumption deals with women's unequal status and financial dependence within marriage: according to Engels, only propertyless proletarian marriage can be based on "individual sex-love," that is, on genuine free choice, and only in such a marriage can women be equal.

Modern sociological feminist theory has continued the severe criticism of the conventional family household for burdening women with all or most of the unpaid domestic and child-care work and of conventional marriage for causing women's economic dependence and limiting their autonomy. As a precondition for gender equality, they call for extensive changes in both the marriage contract

and the household division of labor. Several theories are based on the assumption of the feasibility of gender-egalitarian family households and egalitarian, long-term, heterosexual partnerships in the future. These, it is predicted, will come about as a result of one or more of the following factors: the decline of women's economic dependence on men, the increase in women's control over reproduction, the improvement and greater availability of nondomestic child-care services, the reduction and greater flexibility of occupational working time, and men's gradual realization that a gender-egalitarian dual role of occupational and of family work is in their own long-term interest (see, for example, Agassi 1989; Bernard 1975; Lewis and Sussman 1986; Mason and Lu 1988; Pleck and Sawyer 1974; Rapoport and Rapoport 1971; Whicker and Kronenfeld 1986).

In examining the nuclear family household as a capitalist and patriarchal institution that prevents all but a minority of women, who employ other women to perform services at relatively low pay, from having a career, Hunt and Hunt (1982) argue that to expect men in nuclear family households to undertake half of the household and child-care work is unrealistic. They reject as stultifying to children's development their supervision for much of the day in child-care centers or in schools. The best alternative, according to Hunt and Hunt, is a household with more than two adults, in which children systematically participate in domestic work.

Additional theoretical questions that have to be considered are the significance of women's status in marriage or in the household for their status in the community and the society at large, and vice versa. Lesser Blumberg argued in 1984 that the economic independence of women may be sufficient for their acquisition of equal power (i.e., equal status) in marriage and in the household without, however, being sufficient for women's equal status in the community or larger society.

Social Roles, Especially Occupational Roles

Modern liberal feminist theories of gender equality are based on the assumption that in order for women to achieve equal status, all stereotyped social roles for men and women have to be abolished. Conventional women's work roles assign to them the major responsibility for unpaid domestic and especially child-care work, and thus handicap them in their occupational roles. Despite legal rights of women to equality in employment, men use women's actual or

presumed domestic handicaps in order to perpetuate de facto discrimination by forcing women into a small number of occupational roles that are segregated according to labor-market types and working-time schedules and that have lower pay and prestige than comparable men's occupations. Employed women's inferior income is used as a justification for the perpetuation of their unequal burden of domestic and child-care work and their inferior power within the family. Their segregated and inferior occupational roles also hinder their acquisition of economic and political power. It is in the short-term interest of men of all strata to use the unpaid domestic services of women and to prevent women from competing with them for the better jobs (see, for example, Agassi 1977; Bergmann 1974, 1986; Epstein 1981; Kanter 1977a, 1977b, 1982; Lorber 1984; Mednick et al. 1975; Reskin 1988; Reskin and Hartman 1986).

This theory of gender inequality is usually applied to industrialized societies alone; a generalized version of it has been applied by some anthropologists to preliterate societies. These anthropologists assert that the more work activities are carried out by both genders indiscriminately, the higher the status of women; the more rigid the segregation of women and men during work activities, the lower the status of women. The idea behind this theory is quite general; there are no separate but equal functions or roles (Bacdayan 1977; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Sacks 1974). Thus, even if women perform central roles in food production, as long as they are excluded from roles that provide access to means of exchange, they are devoid of prestige and political power. Similarly, as long as women are barred from significant political or ritual roles, there is no genuine gender equality.

The liberal feminists' theory includes the claim that the abolition of gender segregation of occupational roles is necessary for the achievement of women's equality. It follows that for the acquisition of gender equality, all domestic consumption work and all child-care work—as well as the responsibility for their performance—must also be freed of gender stereotyping and must be divided equally between partners and between parents. These theories are thus linked to the theories of family structure and household.

A different modern anthropological nonmaterialist theory of gender roles is that of Schlegel (1977), who claims it is of no importance whether work activities are gender segregated as long as the creation myths and ritual system of the society evaluate and celebrate women's activities as highly as men's. According to

Schlegel, neither segregation of work roles nor participation in production determines the status of women and men, but only the spiritual evaluation of their activities. Sanday's later work (1981) downplays her earlier emphasis on production and presents a theory of women's status rather similar to Schlegel's: she claims that for gender equality, what is needed is a high mythical and cultural evaluation of birth, as well as women's participation in sacred roles. Yet unlike Schlegel, Sanday does not dismiss the significance of gendered role segregation for women's status; she claims that "[symbolic] sex role plans determine the sexual division labor" (p. 6) and "whether or not men and women mingle or are largely separated in everyday affairs plays a crucial role in the rise of male dominance" (p. 7).

All gender stratification theories mentioned until now agree that gender equality is both desirable and feasible. We come now to two gender-role theories that claim that gender equality is unfeasible and that attempts to achieve it are therefore unwise.

The first of these argues that gender roles are biologically given and thus unchangeable. According to this theory, during the millennia of the infancy of the human species, males and females had radically different experiences; these have implanted in each individual a "biogrammar" that makes male humans better disposed to pursue action and adventure within male groups, much like their presumed activities during the hunting stage of humanity, while it makes female humans better disposed to pursue the domestic and maternal activities. Hence, all attempts to equalize gender roles will be in vain, since they will be opposed by biogrammar differences (Tiger 1969; Tiger and Shepher 1975).

Variants of the biogrammar theory can be found in Trivers (1972) and Wilson (1975); they claim that most higher vertebrates, humans included, exhibit an asymmetry of parental investment between male and female. This unequal investment, they say, is the foundation of the sexual division of labor, since the female, by investing generously in offspring, has to forgo investment in alternative tasks (see also Shepher and Tiger 1983).

The second theory that shares the thesis of the inevitability of gender inequality is that of precultural motivational disposition (Spiro 1979). According to this theory, there is a gender difference in the degree of the need for initial parenting. The alleged cause is possibly the human biogrammar, possibly human anatomy (women's "inner space" predisposes them to domestic maternal interests), or

possibly the difference in the psychological development of male and female infants. The Freudian version is that penis envy drives girls inevitably toward mothering; castration fear drives boys inevitably away from primary child care.

A variant of this theory, less traditionally psychoanalytical yet still somewhat Freudian, is Chodorow's (1978). According to Chodorow, gender equality is both desirable and feasible, but its attainment depends on fundamental changes in human behavior: As long as only mothers—or substitute mothers—care for babies during the first stages of infancy, women will develop a personality different from that of men, and that personality will shape their attitudes and behavior in work and family roles. In Chodorow's view, gender equality could be achieved, but only if babies of both sexes would be nurtured, from birth onward, equally by women and men. This theory can therefore also be classified as a theory of family structure.

Sexuality

One radical feminist theory of gender inequality condemns marriage and any other form of long-term heterosexual liaison as detrimental to women's equality, not because of economic dependence or double work burden, but because of the inevitability of the resulting emotional dependence of women on men (Atkinson 1970a, 1970b; Firestone 1971).

Another radical feminist theory of gender inequality is that of obligatory heterosexuality (Rich 1980; Rubin 1975), which derives from Lévi-Strauss and from Freud as interpreted by Lacan. The basic form of male dominance, according to Lévi-Strauss, is men's use of women as objects of exchange. Women are raised, according to Lacan's reading of Freud, to internalize their inferior status by being pushed from birth to see heterosexuality as obligatory. Denied the choice of any form of sexuality except passive heterosexuality, Lacan claims that women accept marriage and the responsibility for mothering as the only option open to them. This theory allows for the feasibility of gender equality; as a necessary—yet perhaps not sufficient—condition, it postulates, as does Chodorow's theory, equal nurturing for infants from birth by men and women.

MacKinnon (1987) presented the radical feminist view that the basis of all gender inequality is the sexual violation of women, namely, violence against women in the forms of rape, wife battering, sexual abuse of children, sexual harassment, nonvoluntary prostitution, and pornography. According to MacKinnon, the concen-

tration on legal and occupational equality cannot touch this core oppression and so will necessarily fail to achieve gender equality. According to a socialist variant of this theory, the root cause of men's violence against women lies in the frustrations and injuries generated in men by class society (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983).

THE KIBBUTZ AS A THEORETICAL TEST CASE

Are men and women equal in the kibbutz social order? If they are, which theories of gender equality are thereby corroborated and which are refuted? If they are not equal, which theories are thereby corroborated and which are refuted? First, criteria to determine equal status are needed. As components of status, I propose (1) access to resources; (2) autonomy, that is, the freedom to make life choices and the freedom of movement; and (3) power, that is, participation in the making of decisions concerning the members of the social group through membership and active participation in the decision-making institutions, and the holding of positions of power—economic, political, and ideological (Agassi 1979).

Are Kibbutz Women and Men Equal?

Access to resources. Kibbutz women receive the same basic resources as kibbutz men in meals, foodstuffs, clothing, housing, and pocket money. They also receive the same health services and have the same rights to maintenance in old age. Kibbutz members, women and men, usually receive no wages or salaries, so that there is no differential caused by women's lesser income. Salaries and pensions paid to those members who work outside the kibbutz are handed over to the kibbutz. Nevertheless, because of the polarization of work roles, men as a group have considerably easier access to certain material resources, such as the use of a car, an office, or an apartment in town and travel abroad for activities on behalf of the movement, for studies and occupational training, and even for longer periods of employment—for example, as agricultural advisers to Third World countries. Nonmaterial resources should be included here as well. The most important of these are the intrinsic rewards from occupational work; and of these, kibbutz women have considerably fewer than kibbutz men.

Autonomy. Kibbutz society limits occupational choice mainly because of the economic constraints of its organization. Each kibbutz has a limited set of occupational slots to be filled by its members.

Within the given constraints, however, men have considerably wider occupational choice than women do. There is another important aspect to the autonomy of life choices: a kibbutz member may contemplate leaving the kibbutz. Here, men kibbutz members obviously enjoy an advantage because men's occupational qualifications—civil and military—are much more suitable for outside paid work than women's.

Freedom of movement is an important part of autonomy, which may be hard to distinguish from access to a car or even from having a driver's license, both of which are significantly scarcer among kibbutz women than men. But there is also the important question of the relative constraints on movement and on time due to the obligations of private household services and of private child care. Although the gap between kibbutz women and men may be smaller here than elsewhere, it still exists and reduces women's autonomy significantly more than men's.

Power. In the kibbutz, some positions of power, such as heading the branches of the economy, are not formal jobs; and some, such as the central positions of secretary, treasurer, and economic manager, are formal jobs. Since the industrialization of most kibbutzim, there are factory managers, laboratory managers, and other positions in regional industrial enterprises of all sorts. Kibbutz members also serve in the financial, economic, cultural, and administrative positions of the kibbutz federations; in the trade union federation and its large business sector; and finally, in Israeli political parties, parliament, and—occasionally—government offices and agencies. Few kibbutz women work in any agricultural or industrial branch of the kibbutz long enough to acquire the expertise and seniority to become its head or to become a member of the appropriate economic or financial committees and to become in due course committee chairperson. Women do serve on educational and social committees and sometimes also become their heads. Yet it is from the position of head of an agricultural branch or industrial enterprise, and especially that of chairperson of the economic committee, that the candidates for the central positions of power in the kibbutz movement are chosen. Some women serve as secretaries of kibbutzim, very few as treasurers; women as economic directors are still a rarity.

Experience in the internal positions of power is the stepping stone to external positions of power. There has been one woman national secretary of a kibbutz federation. The kibbutz federations usually send one token woman at a time into national politics. While the

holding of these positions gives access to decision making—and to many of the material and nonmaterial rewards mentioned above—much of the kibbutz local and federation policy is discussed in the general assembly of each kibbutz, which meets once a month. The overwhelming majority of the items on the agenda are economic and thus outside the expertise of most women members. Women attend these meetings less frequently than men, and they largely refrain from participation in debates.

There is no full agreement on the evaluation of women's status in the kibbutz. All agree that women have a somewhat lower status but disagree as to the locus of this inferiority of status. All agree that women participate less than men in political debates and hold fewer positions of power, but some belittle the difference in autonomy and deny the very existence of any difference in access to resources. Nor is there full agreement as to how gender segregated the kibbutz division of labor is. Those who consider gender inequality inevitable as well as those who demand its abolition agree that it is extensive; others consider it minimal and unimportant (Palgi and Rosner 1983).

DOES THE KIBBUTZ CORROBORATE OR REFUTE THEORIES OF GENDER INEQUALITY?

Production and Property Relations

Kibbutzim are modern communities where differences in standard of living and in property of members are very small. Kibbutzim should therefore, according to socialist theory, have egalitarian gender relations. Since they do not, the theory that blames property differentials for gender inequality is refuted.

In the kibbutz, the means of production are common property, but it is doubtful if the kibbutz can serve as a proper test case for Marx's theory (Marx and Engels [1848] 1972). His theory envisaged the expropriation of the means of production on a large societal—preferably even international—scale, whereas the collective kibbutz settlements function within a national society that is capitalist. The socialist countries are better test cases. They show that the nationalization of the means of production does not produce equality between women and men (Heitlinger 1979; Michal 1975; Molyneux 1984; Scott 1979).

Engels ([1884] 1972) tied the disappearance of the family as it was known to him, and of the subjugation of women in general, to the end of class society. Since the kibbutz introduced some far-reaching

changes in the functions of the family, broke up the household, and, especially in the early days, tended to disregard conventional religious rituals of marriage, the erroneous impression was created that the institution of the family had been abolished there. The disappointing discovery of the absence of full equality for women in the present-day kibbutz was then, following Engels's theory, blamed on the gradual reestablishment and strengthening of the family in the kibbutz. Yet the assumptions that in the early kibbutzim there was no family and no gender inequality are false. The kibbutz, therefore, cannot serve as a test case for the theory that blames class society and the family structure that it produces for the subjugation of women (for research on changing functions of the family and the status of women in the kibbutz, see Safir 1983a; Shilo 1981; Talmon-Garber 1956).

As to the theory that women's equality hinges on their full participation in production, kibbutz experience does not accord with it. Kibbutz homes and workplaces, for most members, are as near each other as in any preindustrial society. Most child care and service work take place, not in the family dwelling, but in the collective public sector, where nearly all of it is performed by women. In the kibbutz, the generally endorsed principle is that all adult women work a full workday in the public sector. If we deem production to be any employment outside the private family household, then kibbutz women fully participate, and therefore, according to the theory that blames women's lack of full participation in production for their inequality, they should be equal to men. Since they are not, that theory is refuted.

Marx and Engels ([1848] 1972) considered work in the public sector of industrial society to be production; in present-day highly industrialized societies, more people work in services than in production. The content of much of the service work done in the labor market is indeed often very similar to that done in the private household; namely, it is "reproductive" work, to use Engels's terminology. We might, therefore, reformulate Engels's theory of participation in production to say that women will have achieved equality when they participate as much as men in the production of objects and goods, not of services. In this version, Engels's theory would not be refuted by the kibbutz experience but would be left open, since women do mainly service work.

Brown, in her 1970 theory, considered women's rate of participation in "subsistence production" important for their status. This theory was clearly limited to simple, nonindustrialized societies in

which all, or most, of the most needed goods are produced within the local community. The kibbutz is nowadays as far removed from such a state of material self-sufficiency as any village in a complex and industrialized society. Kibbutz kitchen managers even buy most of the needed foodstuffs. Therefore the kibbutz cannot serve as a test case. Neither can it be used to test Brown's 1975 theory that the high status of Iroquois women is due to their control of the economic organization of their tribe, since kibbutz women do not control the economic organization of their industrialized small communities to any higher degree than do women in other modern societies.

In industrialized society, or in capitalism, according to Engels ([1884] 1972), women's unpaid work in the home is regarded as of especially low prestige and even becomes invisible, because at the present cash nexus stage of economic development, the worth of a person is judged by the worth of his or her paid work, and the worth of market work is the wage or salary it brings. This contrast between paid and unpaid work does not exist in the kibbutz. No member or resident there exchanges labor power for cash. It follows, then, that women's reproductive work should not be devalued in the kibbutz. But work in the communal service branches, which is performed overwhelmingly by women, has for decades been regarded there as of lesser value, as "not productive," and is of lower prestige than work done primarily by men in agriculture, industry, and administration, which is highly valued.

What has kibbutz experience to offer regarding women as an exploitable reserve army of labor? With collective ownership of the means of production and collective consumption patterns, kibbutz women's participation in public-sector work nearly equals that of men. What about permanence? In principle, kibbutz members should be ready to fill any work position for which they are qualified. There are no formal employment contracts within the kibbutz, and, except for some elective positions, there are no fixed and limited periods of tenure. Yet a comparison of women's and men's work histories reveals that women switch much more frequently than men among different jobs, workplaces, and branches. Women, much more than men, are drafted to perform seasonal rush jobs in agriculture. So, even in the kibbutz, women seem to be a reserve army of labor.

Sanday (1973) suggested several factors that might be responsible for the fact that in some societies women, though contributing much to production have, or had, very low status—their not producing

“strategic” goods, not producing goods for exchange, or not having control over their own products—but she did not develop these suggestions into a new theory that could be tested.

According to Lesser Blumberg (1984), even where women participate equally in production or contribute more than men to the satisfaction of the needs of society, they nevertheless have less power than men as long as men control the scarce and desired resources that serve as vehicles for exchange: it is such control that is the way to power. Lesser Blumberg uses the kibbutz as a test case for her theory. According to her observations, while kibbutz women and men may be equal in the home, women definitely possess less political power than men. She explains this inequality as the result of the gradual process of women’s exclusion from the production and control of surplus value—namely, from the production of lucrative agricultural and industrial goods for the market—and the increasing concentration of women in use-value production—namely, the internal service branches.

Lesser Blumberg (1976, 1984) thus claims the kibbutz experience as corroboration for two parts of her general theory of gender status, namely, that equality of power (or status) of women within marriage and the home will (or may) result from their equality of economic power with their spouses and that women’s equal production and control of surplus value is the necessary precondition for their equal power (or status) on any higher level of social organization.

According to my observation and understanding, most kibbutz women do not possess equal power in marriage, so I do not see the kibbutz as corroborating the first part of Lesser Blumberg’s theory. (This will be explained in some detail in the next section.) I do agree with her claim that the kibbutz experience serves as a test case for the central part of her theory—that production and control of surplus value are needed for social power and status—and that it strongly corroborates it. However, her contention that kibbutz women were originally more involved in production than they are now is questionable.

Family Structure and Household

Engels ([1884] 1972) criticized the private family household for condemning women to household work and child-care work; he proposed, instead, that such work be done communally. Here, the kibbutz serves as a unique test case. For several decades, the small

kibbutz family dwelling had no cooking or laundry facilities, and in most kibbutzim they had no beds for infants and children. No private food-processing and very little food-serving work was performed in the family dwelling. The child-care work performed in the late afternoon and on days off (usually Saturdays) was mainly supervision of play, putting young children to bed in the children's house, and common play and leisure activities, not the staple cleaning, clothing, and feeding of children and the usual training work that accompanies these activities. Today, some food—especially cakes—may be prepared, and entire meals may be served and consumed at home; kibbutz dwellings have become larger, and in many kibbutzim, children have bedrooms in their parents' homes. But in the largest kibbutz federation, the Kibbutz Artzi, communal sleeping arrangements for children, from birth to the end of high school, remain the rule. Thus, in the kibbutz, the socialization of housework and child-care work has gone farthest over a considerable length of time. Yet women are not equal in the kibbutz. If we accept the kibbutz as a valid test case here, we must conclude that the socialization of family work does not suffice to make women equal.

As to Engels's claim that the "monogamic" marriage was detrimental to women's equality among all but propertyless partners, in the kibbutz, choice of partners and marriage does not involve any property considerations, since kibbutz members are collective property holders. However, the norm of monogamic marriage, namely, of heterosexual liaison of one man and one woman, intended to be of some permanence, is accepted in the kibbutz. If we interpret Engels to mean that women's financial dependence on men in monogamic marriage is the root cause of gender inequality in society, as well as within the relationship, then the kibbutz experience, where marriage does not involve women's economic dependence on their partners, would support the theory at the private level only if kibbutz women indeed had equal power in marriage. At the public level, the kibbutz experience clearly refutes Engels: economic independence of wives does not translate into equal status in the larger society.

The claim that economic or financial independence raises the status or power of women in marriage has been widely endorsed by feminists. Status or power in marriage includes access to family resources; management of the family budget; making major decisions concerning the couple and children, such as choice of residence, employment, schooling, leisure activities, and so on; equal division

of, and responsibility for, housework and child care; control over sexual and reproductive behavior; and ability to initiate divorce. Kibbutz women are not financially dependent on their partners. Is their relative status in marriage equal to that of their partners, or is it at least considerably higher than that of women of a comparable socioeconomic, educational, and ethnic stratum outside the kibbutz? In the majority of cases, kibbutz husbands and wives are not equal, and the status of kibbutz wives is not considerably higher than similar Israeli wives' status.

Several of these components of status in marriage have not been empirically studied. Access to everyday resources supplied by the collective is certainly equal; it is popularly claimed and empirically supported that women have considerable influence on the use of the couple's "personal budget" (Selier 1973). I have mentioned above the unequal access to some resources that pertain to autonomy, especially in the sense of freedom of movement. Because of occupational differentiation men have—on the average—more contact with, and spend more time in, the world outside the kibbutz and are thus less controlled by the very powerful communal public opinion (Spiro 1956). The result is an inequality of power in marriage, certainly an inequality in control over sexual behavior.

Since the collective has a major influence on many decisions, the economic independence of wives may be irrelevant. Decisions about job choice, further training or study by partners, and educational or occupational decisions concerning the future of their children may be greatly affected by the current gender-role attitudes in the collective, which may be very traditional. Because of gendered occupational differentiation, there also is a marked imbalance in the effect of major decisions concerning one partner on the other. Changes that advance the occupational career of the male partner much more frequently affect the female partner's career negatively than the other way around.

In addition to control over the couple's personal budget, only one other component of power in marriage, the division of private housework and private child-care work between kibbutz spouses, has been empirically studied (Palgi and Rosner 1983, p. 265) and is claimed to be equal. Palgi and Rosner base their claim of equality in kibbutz marriage on three rather limited studies of the division of private family work. On the basis of these reports, they contend that kibbutz men, especially kibbutz fathers, perform many private family

work activities or participate in a relatively high proportion of them when compared with men outside the kibbutz. Their own research, the Kibbutz Artzi study, used answers given by women members of their federation to questions concerning their evaluation of the degree of gender equality in kibbutz families compared with Israeli families outside (not with families of an equal socioeconomic and educational stratum). Seventy-five percent of the women evaluated kibbutz families as more egalitarian. Since there was no time-budget study, we cannot compare the average time spouses spend on private household and child-care work. Nor was it reported which partner is usually held responsible for which chore. Both items of information would be needed for the resolution of the question of the gender division of private family work in the kibbutz. Information on the same two items from comparable Israeli nonkibbutz families would be needed to resolve the problem of whether kibbutz women are more equal in status and power within marriage than economically dependent wives.

I assume that a perfectly egalitarian division of residual private family work is precluded by the different time and space schedules of men's and women's public work in the kibbutz. Women, on the average, work a somewhat shorter workday than men, and their workplaces are nearer to home and children's houses; consequently, in the afternoons, women, not men, pick up supplies and laundry and, most important, small children. Many more fathers than mothers are absent from home during part of the week and at times even for weeks; they work outside the kibbutz settlement or study or serve in the military reserves (this last item is of course due to the unequal role division in Israeli society: mothers are exempt from reserve duty). In addition, kibbutz norms put squarely on the mother the responsibility for the physical and emotional well-being of babies and small children, and also consider baking and serving food to family and guests women's work and obligation. In short, as long as public work roles remain gender segregated, and gender-role stereotypes are not resolutely broken, a fully egalitarian division of private family work cannot be achieved—even when there is no financial dependence of wives on husbands.

Is the kibbutz a good test case of the advantages to women of multiadult households and communal housework, child care, and education? It may well be that the existence in the kibbutz of separate, private family dwellings, with residual consumption and child care,

runs counter to the image of communal households. Many kibbutzim may be considered too large, and their social structure too formalized, for genuine communal living. Nevertheless, since the kibbutz does not permit the private employment of one woman by another for the performance of household or child-care work, and does much of this work communally, it conforms to a feminist egalitarian communal image. It also integrates a considerable amount of housework and collective infant-care work into the daily schedules of grade-school and teenage children. As a group of adults who take a common responsibility for the maintenance, care, and education of all their children, as well as the common maintenance and care of their old, the kibbutz appears to fulfill the central functions of a multiadult communal household. But most of the adults who do this care-work are women. As a test case, then, the kibbutz indicates that a small society that functions according to communalistic principles can nevertheless also practice a division of labor in which nearly the entire collective child care and personal service work is performed by women. It is not necessarily easier in a multiadult, communal household than it is in a nuclear family household to achieve a gender-egalitarian division of family work (as studies of other communes have also indicated; see, for example, Abrams et al. 1976, Wagner et al. 1982).

Social Roles, Especially Occupational Work Roles

For occupational as well as for family roles, kibbutz experience corroborates the core thesis of the gendered-work-role theory, according to which the equalization of social roles is the key to gender equality. Even in this rather egalitarian society, as long as occupational roles are segregated by gender, women's roles tend to offer them less access to important material and nonmaterial resources, grant them less autonomy, prevent their equality of power in marriage, and, above all, prevent their equal participation in economic and political power—as most of the roles having these advantages are filled by men.

Kibbutz experience teaches two important specific lessons concerning occupational segregation. First, the vicious circle of the unequal, gendered division of routine personal service and child-care work and the unequal, gendered division of productive and professional work may operate without the intervening factor of unequal,

gendered wage scales. Second, even in a society in which there is no unpaid and paid work, as long as the routine personal service and child-care work, performed either within a private family household or in a communal kitchen or children's house, is allocated to women only, it depresses women's status.

Thus, kibbutz experience supports the mainstream feminist demand for the radical desegregation of gendered social roles as necessary for the elimination of women's social inferiority. It also supports the hypothesis (recently sharply reformulated by Reskin 1988) of the existence of short-term interests common to men of all social strata in keeping the status quo of women performing less-liked activities and of preventing women from equally competing with men for more valued and intrinsically more satisfying activities and roles, which, not incidentally, also offer access to scarce privileges and greater influence on major social decisions.

If women's nurturant work were equally evaluated and celebrated in the kibbutz, then the kibbutz could serve as a test case for Schlegel's (1977) and Sanday's (1973) theory that this is the key to gender equality. In the kibbutz, just as in most other societies, women's activities are not equally valued, nor is there full gender equality; hence, the kibbutz is not in conflict with that theory, nor is it a special test case for it. Nevertheless, the kibbutz experience may be of interest for testing a special interpretation of that theory.

Cultural feminists advocate that, as a major strategy, women's maternal and nurturing activities be celebrated in order to gain from society evaluation and support for these activities, which should be equal—at the very least—to that granted to men's technical, acquisitive, and competitive activities. This variant, then, is a theory of the feasibility of a special kind of value change in modern society. It has found nonfeminist adherents among some writers who denied the negative effect of work-role segregation on the status of women in the kibbutz, because, they said, women's work activities are, objectively, of equal value to kibbutz society. Since the kibbutz is not an acquisitive, capitalist society, income and profit do not count most in the kibbutz; the quality of the life of its members, and above all the birth and well-being of its children, are supposedly of the highest value. For decades, these kibbutz ideologues demanded that women's collective service and child-care activities be celebrated and their "image" be improved. These demands met with no response from either women or men and, finally, these ideologues came to realize—

under pressure—that the gendered occupational polarization would have to be reduced. The failure in this small manageable community to upgrade women's objectively poorer work roles by declaring them equal, the failure even there to effect attitude changes by an appeal to officially held values, should serve as a caution to cultural feminists.

The defenders of the biogrammar theory of gender inequality, Tiger and Shepher (1975), take the kibbutz experience as the best corroborating test case possible. It is to their credit that they were the first to publish observations concerning the great extent of gendered occupational segregation and inequality of political participation in the kibbutz. They argue that kibbutz society had originally been based on egalitarian ideology and planned as an egalitarian social order, with men and women equally economically active and equally free of private domestic work and traditional private child care. Progressively, they observe, social and political equality between the women and men in the kibbutz constantly diminished, and the allocation of work reverted to the traditionally gender-polarized division of labor. This reversion, they say, was a victory of nature over nurture; it was demanded by women, who preferred work in the service branches and who pushed for the constant expansion of private domestic and maternal activities. (This description of kibbutz history as a process of radical change concerning women's roles and women's status does not agree with historical research, but has unfortunately been widely accepted.)

In actuality, the kibbutz is a bad test case for the biological theories of gender inequality. The social structure of the kibbutz was never egalitarian as to gender roles, since men never fully participated in domestic and child-care work (Agassi 1979). The principle that all members were active outside the private household and that none was paid was considered a sufficient expression of egalitarianism. It was the kibbutz social structure, not kibbutz women, that pushed toward the traditional polarization of work roles. The desire to increase the size of the kibbutz population is held by men as well as women, and the birthrate is significantly higher compared with the same Israeli socioeconomic stratum. In principle, kibbutz children receive high-level care all day, and, in many kibbutzim, day and night. Since child care is not deemed a position suitable for men to hold on a permanent basis in the kibbutz, as elsewhere in Israeli society, and since the kibbutz movement has long opposed the hiring of outside labor for child care, the inescapable consequence is that most kibbutz women

must spend a large portion of their working life in child care, that is, in so-called maternal activities. They did not prefer these roles; for many years, they have expressed dissatisfaction with their limited occupational roles. The only way the demand to switch from collective to familial sleeping arrangements for children could have been effected was by a majority vote in the kibbutz general meetings, where men are usually both more active and more heavily represented. To the extent that women actively supported the broadening of private consumption and child care, their frustration with their communal work roles may well have been an important cause.

The other two biological theories, that of unequal parental investment (Shepher and Tiger 1983; Trivers 1972; Wilson 1975) and that of precultural motivational disposition (Spiro 1979) resemble the first one as far as the possibility of the kibbutz serving as test case. Shepher and Tiger used the parental investment theory to explain the agreement of kibbutz women to communal child-care arrangements in the early days of the kibbutz movement as in accord with objective maximal maternal investment under the harsh economic and security conditions prevailing then. Later on, kibbutz teenage girls were required to work in the children's homes; only recently has that been true of the teenage boys of one federation (Hertz and Baker 1983). Thus, girls were socialized into and trained for child-care work (Safir 1983b); their later acceptance of this role did not emerge from a greater biological disposition for maternal investment.

In sum, kibbutz experience does not corroborate biological theories of gender inequality, nor does it refute them. Only the success or failure of an attempt to establish a stable practice of equal sharing by men and women of parenting, service work, and production of valued goods would constitute a test case of the theories of the unchangeable, or precultural, or biological differences between the genders in their tendencies and capacities.

Because kibbutz babies are reared from birth in communal children's houses, it has been claimed that there is no special bond between mother and infant in the kibbutz, which therefore can serve as a test case for the theory of gendered personality development (Chodorow 1978). The kibbutz, however, is not at all revolutionary in its methods of infant nurturing. Kibbutz mothers are encouraged to breast-feed, and during the first six months, the mother tends her baby at regular intervals, whereas kibbutz fathers have no more body contact with their infants during the first stage of development than

do fathers generally in modern Western society. During the mother's absence from the children's house, the infant is attended to and nurtured by other women. Thus, the kibbutz is not a test case for Chodorow's contention that the only way to achieve the equality of social roles and of social status of women and men is by putting infants into the care of both male and female caretakers from the very start.

Sexuality

The kibbutz cannot be used as a test case for the radical feminist rejection of all long-term heterosexual liaisons as detrimental to women's equality, since kibbutz ideologues have considered marriage and the family as basic to the success and the stability of the kibbutz. Singles are considered a problem to themselves and to the kibbutz, and considerable social pressure is used to ensure relatively early marriage. Kibbutz norms concerning premarital and extramarital sex, contraception, and abortion (except for the religious kibbutzim) do not differ from those of the rest of the secular population in Israel. Since kibbutz norms deny the very existence of male or female homosexual relations or liaisons within the kibbutz population, the kibbutz cannot serve as a test case for the theory that presents obligatory heterosexuality as a major instrument for the subjugation of women.

Does the kibbutz serve as a test case for MacKinnon's (1987) theory of gender inequality as sexual oppression? As long as MacKinnon does not clearly designate any one social factor as responsible for sexual oppression, this cannot be determined. In the case of the socialist variant of this theory, which assumes the major cause of men's sexually violent behavior to be class society, if we assume the kibbutz not to be a class society, it could serve as a test case. We would then have to ask whether forms of sexual violence against women, such as rape, incest, wife battering, sexual harassment, involuntary prostitution, or pornography are absent, or less prevalent there than in Israeli society. I do not know of any empirical study on this subject. Were such a study undertaken, should it—in order to test the theory—include the possible resort of kibbutz men to sexual harassment, prostitutes, or pornography outside the confines of the kibbutz? The official ideology of the entire kibbutz movement is certainly radically opposed to all these forms of behavior, and the occurrence of deviant behavior would be denied vehemently by

kibbutz members. There have been no public reports, and in the absence of any research, we will have to let the matter rest.

THE FUTURE CONTRIBUTION OF THE KIBBUTZ TO GENDER EQUALITY

Can the kibbutz make specific contributions in the search for institutional forms permitting and encouraging genuinely equal status for women? In modern industrialized societies, it has become evident that in order to break the vicious circle of women's inferior status in the family and in the labor market, the traditional patterns of work, especially time patterns, have to be altered. The kibbutz is the collective employer of most of its members. It has shown innovative initiative in the past; for example, for its older members, it shortened and made work time flexible; in order to equalize the sharing of disliked work, such as serving in the dining hall and night-watching, it has had a long-standing arrangement of work rotation. It also has a tradition of midcareer changes, extended study leaves, and combinations of manual and cerebral work (Cherns 1980). The kibbutz could just as well work out a system in which all of its women and its men, or all of its parents, performed all nonprofessional communal child-care work on a rotational basis, in conjunction with their occupational work. It could also recruit both women and men for professional work in the communal education of infants and young children. Thus, women, equally with men, would be free to pursue all the available technical and professional work roles, achieving more satisfaction in work, and, in due course, also gaining equal status with men in the kibbutz.

A first step in this direction was taken by the Kibbutz Artzi Federation in 1980 (Palgi et al. 1983, p. 303). A resolution adopted then declared that both genders bear the responsibility for children's education; it was decided to aim at filling 20 percent of the professional jobs of educating young children with men, and to recruit suitable members of both genders for the nonprofessional jobs in child care to serve for a specified number of years. Most important, high-school boys were to participate in the care of preschoolers—until then done by girls only.

This first step would not have been taken had women not organized, published (Silver 1984), raised consciousness, formulated goals, and started to work out strategies. The women's movement came late to the kibbutz, not until the end of the seventies. Until then,

the word *feminist* was a swear word. The perennial arguments against feminism were the following: there is no room for a separate women's organization in the kibbutz; quotas are alien to the kibbutz; we have already achieved gender equality. So, perhaps an additional important theory is corroborated by kibbutz experience: there is no chance for gender equality in a modern society without some autonomous women's organization fighting for it.

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