

KIBBUTZ AND SEX ROLES

Judith Buber Agassi

The central problem of Lionel Tiger and Joseph Shepher, *Women in the Kibbutz* (Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich: New York and London, 1975, 328 pp.) concerns the future of sex roles. Tiger and Shepher claim that the differentiation of the social roles of the sexes is inherent and therefore unchangeable. Women's role, they say, has always been and will always be maternal-domestic. They use the 1970 concept of Tiger and Fox, "biogrammar," which means (p. 265), "a basic diagram, a set of biologically determined dispositions." They claim that when culture opposes biogrammar, it must cause "serious difficulties for both individual and society" and so, in the end, culture must yield to biogrammar. The book is a polemic against all those who consider the abolition or reduction of the differentiation of the social sex roles¹ (which includes work roles, political roles, and more) both desirable and feasible. It argues that the kibbutz experience proves equalization to be a failure.

The core of the book comprises a statistical analysis of the present occupational distribution of women in two out of the four kibbutz movements as well as statistics about women's participation in kibbutz politics. This part has the merit of presenting some basic information to the wider public, especially English readers. Other chapters concern the authors' own general views and their projection on the question of sex roles, on the significance of the kibbutz for the study of sex roles, and the authors' own study. This part is fair. Other additional descriptive chapters concern the education of women, their military service, the kibbutz family and attitudes of members to sex roles and satisfaction. This part is much less detailed or accurate.

Though journalistic and often poorly argued, this book has the merit of stating its salient points in a few

passages. I shall ~~start~~ by quoting three paragraphs, two of them rather lengthy; I shall then present, without quotation, five general theories about sex role differentiation and five theories explaining the persistence of this differentiation in the kibbutz, as well as what I take to be the authors' reasons for rejecting them. The rest of this review will consist of two parts, one quoting two pages from the book which contain the authors' own conclusions, interspersed with my critical comments on them, and the other my conclusions in response to the authors' main points as expounded in the next three sections.

I. The Authors' Main Position

THE CENTRAL ISSUE

On page 182 of the reviewed book we encounter the question:

"David Hamburg, 1963,² has made the important point that the best question to ask in assessing the behavior of animals, including the human one, is not whether something is natural or learned, but rather, what is naturally *easy* for an animal to learn. For example, children find it easy to learn to talk, and their sensory motor systems prepare them to do so. However, learning the catechism or the table of chemical elements is less central to our conduct as a species; this requires more formidable supports and rewards than learning to talk does. A refinement of 'What is easy to learn' is 'What does the creature *want* to learn. Have we identified, in the relatively experimental and integrated kibbutz system, a truth about what men and women want to learn and, by extension, find easy to learn? We can make no such assertion. But unless we are certain that sex and gender are irrelevant to all experiences except copulation and childbirth, and that our social nature follows no biosocial patterns, the kibbutz may reveal some central behavioral structure of our species."

The question, then, is do women want to learn just what men want to learn in all matters except copulation and childbirth?

On page 272 we find the answer.

"We have already cited evidence that sex differences in political and economic activity are universal, that the care of young children is everywhere a female monopoly, and that some widely argued explanations for this universality are weak, improbable, or partial. Our data show that although some 10 to 15 per cent of the women in the kibbutz express dissatisfaction with their sociosexual roles, the overwhelming majority not only accept their situations but have sought them. They have acted against the principles of their socialization and ideology, against the wishes of the men of their communities, against the economic interest of the kibbutzim, in order to be able to devote more time and energy to private maternal activities rather than to economic and political public ones. Obviously these women have minds of their own . . . A single case cannot define a species, but given the experimental style of kibbutz society, the result is certainly revealing."

The answer, then, is no.

In what follows I shall argue against the points made in the above two quotes. The first quote exhibits a faulty logic and the second also false information about women in the kibbutz.

THE KIBBUTZ AS A CRUCIAL EXPERIMENT

On page 32 we read:

"We argue that the kibbutz is the best subject for investigation if one is interested in what men and women will do voluntarily when both ideology and social structure promote the possibility of complete equality of the sexes, and have done so for a relatively long period of time."

With this challenging statement the authors both advocate a view of their own about the causes of the tra-

ditional differentiation of social sex roles; and they criticize other views on the matter. Their not fully articulated claim is that kibbutz society serves as a crucial experiment refuting all extant explanations of the situation which share the conclusion that the radical reduction or abolition of the differentiation of social sex roles is both feasible and desirable. Here is a list of these theories. *First*, the socialization or cultural lag theory: differentiation and inferiority in the economy and in politics are dysfunctional in modern society but linger as a result of a cultural lag in socialization, which perpetuates women's acceptance of an inferior role. *Second*, the dual role theory: modern society demands of women performance in both the domestic role and the employment role, thus putting on their shoulders a double burden and severely handicapping them in competition with men in the economic and political spheres. *Third*, the ideology theory: society, and especially the male establishment, is not yet committed to equality between the sexes beyond lip-service and merely formal laws, so that the deeply rooted ideology of motherhood and "feminine mystique" impedes progress. *Fourth*, the class theory: as long as one class exploits another, there will also be a double exploitation of women by men just as there will be racial exploitation. *Fifth*, the family theory: as long as the family exists as an institution which transmits private property and social status, women will remain economically dependent and thus male superiority and female exploitation will persist. *Sixth*, the male conspiracy theory, or males as incumbents protecting their privilege.

How does the kibbutz experience dispose of all these theories?

The cultural lag or socialization theory is refuted by the claim that in the kibbutz collective socialization has consciously and radically abolished all sex role differentiation and to no avail. The dual role theory is refuted by the claim that the kibbutz experiment has abolished women's private household domestic role as well as their private child-care role, demanding of them

an employment burden equal to that of men (or even slightly lighter), and to no avail. The ideology theory is refuted by the claim that the kibbutz experiment has started out with a revolutionary egalitarian ideology which is still dominant and to no avail. The class theory is refuted by the claim that in the kibbutz no classes exist and no process of social stratification takes place and to no avail. The family theory is refuted by the double argument that in the kibbutz the family plays no economic role and no role in the placement of its members in any social position, and so women are not economically dependent on men at all, yet the family persists and even thrives in the kibbutz — despite the early anti-family ideology of the movement; the natural bond between man, woman and child could not be broken. The male conspiracy theory is refuted by the claim that in the kibbutz men beg women to take positions of responsibility and authority but women refuse.

Thus, all theories but one are refuted and the one which explains the difference of social sex roles by reference to biogrammar remains: the kibbutz is such an excellent crucial experiment just because women there are liberated from ideological, social and economic pressures yet they have freely chosen to return, and even increasingly so, to traditional feminine social sex roles. This freedom from constraints has permitted them to follow their natural inclination for motherhood and all that it entails.

REFUTING SPECIAL THEORIES

The theories stated above are, I think, the ones the authors claim to have refuted; but they certainly do not fully articulate them. Rather, they articulate (on pages 263-269) five theories which explain their data and which they think they can refute. Here are the five explanations and their alleged refutations; their connection with the general theories just discussed is fairly obvious. I shall follow the authors' nomenclature.

First, the argument of insufficient revolution: despite the ideological commitment of the kibbutzim,

the kibbutz revolution has not been a total one. Thus, from the very start very few men shared cooking and washing, and none sewing and child-care. *Second*, the socialization argument: since the founders of the kibbutz had been socialized in a culture where sexual division of labor was polarized, they were not able to carry out their revolutionary aims or to socialize their children in an egalitarian way. *Third*, the male conspiracy argument: males conspire against females. Note that here the theory is presented, all of a sudden, as general and not in terms specific to the kibbutz. *Fourth*, the retreat argument: when women realized they had lost all hope of staying in production because no man would take responsibility for child-care and other service tasks, they retreated into the service branches. *Fifth*, the external influence argument: the kibbutz could not sustain its "androgynous" revolution against the influence of the sexist norms of Israeli society.

How do the authors refute these theories? They admit that each of these theories has a point, but none is a sufficient explanation. The point of the argument of insufficient revolution is that indeed early kibbutz members were not as radical about the sexual division of labor as about private property etc., but the defect of the argument is that it overlooks the fact that the kibbutz did *more* to avoid sexual division of labor than any other society. The point of the socialization argument is not stated; its defect is in its excess: if it were valid it would preclude all change in the sexual division of labor. At least we have a stalemate here, they add. The point of the male conspiracy argument is even denied; the truth lies in the opposite direction: men in the kibbutz make special efforts to induce women to assume positions of responsibility. The point of the retreat argument is that it refers to well-established facts, namely that kibbutz women gradually identified with service roles; its defect is in that the use of the word "retreat" is value-laden. The point of the external influence argument is that the kibbutz is indeed an open society; its

defect is in that it fails to explain the failure of outside influence regarding property.

Thus we are left with one comprehensive and satisfactory explanation for the sexual division of labor in the kibbutz: the famous biogrammar which vanquished both revolutionary ideology and egalitarian structure.

II. The Authors' Main Conclusions

So much for the competing theories and the authors' alleged refutations. I shall try to evaluate both theories and alleged refutations in my conclusion — after my discussion of the faults of the authors' presentation of the situation in the kibbutz. I wish to continue now with my presentation of what I think are the authors' main points: I shall now summarize their report of the facts of the matter.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE KIBBUTZ

On page 262-3 we find the authors' conclusions from their own data, presented in twelve theses. These I will quote in full, commenting after each point or couple of points.

1. Early in kibbutz history, more than half the women worked for a considerable time in production. Then came a long gradual process of sexual polarization of work. Today the sexual division of labor has reached about 80 per cent of maximum.
2. Sexual division of labor is more polarized in the second and kibbutz-bred generations than it is in the first generation, and more polarized in younger kibbutzim than in older ones.

These two points, and the statistical material supporting them, comprise the core of the book. The present occupational polarization between the sexes in kibbutz society is well-known. The authors' classification of occupations I find inadequate; a more refined classification would prove the polarization even more pronounced.³ As to the early period of the kibbutz, statistical claims seem to me rather presumptuous; the tiny

and shifting population of this period certainly kept no statistics about its work behavior. Point 2 implies that the length of socialization within the kibbutz correlates with higher sexual polarization of the sex roles. Yet, if we consider that "first generation" kibbutz members are nowadays on the average older than "kibbutz-bred" and "second generation" members, and that the average age of members of "older kibbutzim" is higher than that of "younger kibbutzim," then older groups include proportionally to other younger groups less young children. The higher the proportion of young children to adults, the higher the proportion of women working in child-care and the higher the polarization of work-roles. Hence, the implication of the existence of a gradual strengthening of a "natural" feminine tendency of kibbutz women to perform "women's work" only is invalid.

Given the trend of rising standards of all personal service branches, and the great expansion of child-care and education needs, and given the basic norm that personal service branches in general are not suitable as a regular work-place for men,⁴ and that child-care and kindergarten and primary school education and teaching are unsuitable as a regular or even a temporary work-place for men,⁵ it was inevitable that an increasingly large proportion of kibbutz women would spend more of their working life in "female" kinds of work. Given this norm, the growing need for women to perform these services, and the relatively limited full-time labor supply of women members and part-time temporary labor of volunteers, teenage daughters and youth groups, it is obvious that the collective social pressure exercised not only by men as a group, but at least as much by women as a group, would make it increasingly difficult for any kibbutz woman to work continuously and exclusively in a "non-female" work branch or position.

Now to points 3 and 4 dealing with politics and authority:

3. Despite complete formal equality in political rights, women are less active in the General Assembly than men are, as measured both by their presence in the Assembly and by the incidence of their participation. Women are somewhat over-represented in committees dealing with social, educational and cultural problems; they are seriously under-represented in committees dealing with economy, work, general policy-making and security.
4. The higher the authority of an office or committee, the lower the percentage of women in it. At the highest level of the kibbutz, women make up only 14 per cent of the personnel. Although the authors see in both occupational polarization and in the low level of political activity of kibbutz women signs of the victory of female biogrammar, they do not mention the obvious causal relationship between the two. Much of the business of the General Assembly is economic, i.e., production business, and advancement to the top positions of authority in the kibbutz and to outside political positions is through continuous work in a production branch, minor positions of authority in the branch and membership in the core committees dealing with the kibbutz economy.
5. Women seem to have special problems sustaining all-female work groups; they usually prefer mixed sex groups or male leadership. This seems to be a mere gesture in support of Tiger's famous thesis of the superior ability of men to work, play and do politics in groups; documentation here is poor to the extreme. What the authors do not mention are the objective differences between service and production branches: higher turnover in service branches, lower degree of skill needed, poorer possibilities for professionalization, the tiny size of the work force in baby and children's houses which is hardly sufficient for a work-team, the great strain that the demands and the criticism of their "customers" puts on kitchen and child-care personnel.

EDUCATION AND MILITARY SERVICE

6. Men and women receive nearly the same number of years of education; in fact, women have a slight edge. Advanced schooling, however, differs in kind for each sex. Women are over-represented in higher academic education leading to such jobs as kindergarten and elementary school teaching and nursing. Men are over-represented in higher academic education leading to such jobs as agriculture, engineering, economics, and management.

Point 6 is a direct consequence of women's concentration in service work. Their further education consists either of a few months vocational course or of semi-professional training for nurses, children's nurses, kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers and recently also social workers. The kibbutz movement has attempted to supply all this training in its own institutions, and until quite recently⁶ none of those was entitled to grant academic degrees. Men, however, in order to qualify for secondary school teaching, for the higher engineering and management positions in agriculture and industry need a specialized academic education that kibbutz movement institutions cannot supply.

Kibbutz society always was and still is rather critical towards the wishes of individual members, men and women alike, for education or training which seems irrelevant, or not obviously relevant to their future employment. A kibbutz norm is that employment outside the kibbutz confines, and even outside the joint regional economic or service institutions, is considered permissible for men with special talents⁷ but eccentric for women and outright undesirable for mothers of small children.⁸ It is thus easily understandable why so few kibbutz women request and insist on academic higher education.

7. From the ninth grade on, women consistently fall below men in scholarly achievement. This discrepancy between the sexes seems to be wider here than in comparable modern societies.

This claim is based entirely on a study in Ichud

schools by Y. Dar,⁹ who himself explains his results by the lower level of expectation of kibbutz girls as a result of their familiarity with the reality of the sexual division of labor in the kibbutz. The Kibbutz Artzi educator Muni Alon,¹⁰ who draws much less sweeping conclusions from his research, nevertheless also mentions that some girls' academic achievement falls off in the higher grades; he, too, tentatively explains this fact by the girls' realistic expectation of a limited choice between — to them — unattractive and unchallenging work roles in the future.

8. Although women, like men, are drafted into the army, the overwhelming majority of kibbutz girls (like other Israeli girls) do secretarial and service jobs there; few do characteristically male work or occupy command positions. The conception of the women's army as essentially a substitute unit, also providing back-up and encouragement for the fighting men, is completely accepted by the kibbutz girls.

Why not? They are used to a polarized division of labor at home. Why indeed should they excel in pointless weapon training? The performance of kibbutz boys in the army not only grants them status at home, it often also serves as a step in their work career, and through preparation for security tasks, also for their political career. Not so for girls.¹¹

9. Even the long, demanding Yom Kippur War did not substantially change the division of labor in the kibbutzim, even though almost half the men were called up by the army for a long period.

So what? The dysfunctionality of the present sexual division of labor was sharply felt all through the Israeli economy during the war, but in most cases it proved difficult to fill even the most vital positions with women, because women lacked the needed training and licenses. When some training was started after the war, the male organizers made it quite clear that the women were going to train not for regular employment but as a reserve

force for emergencies only. Such an attitude is hardly conducive to an enthusiastic response from women.

Even when and where opportunities do exist for kibbutz women to enter permanently more attractive production work, women are likely to hesitate; the continuous restriction of so many kibbutz women within a narrow range of domestic work activities and their continuous absence from positions of authority have produced low self-confidence and hesitancy to undertake new and unconventional tasks or to put forward their candidatures for male-typed positions of authority.

FAMILY AND FAMILIZATION

10. The family has risen from its initial shadowy existence to become the basic unit of kibbutz social structure. It now fulfills important functions in consumption and education, and there are demands for further expanding its function. Increased familization is indicated by high and growing rates of birth and marriage, and by a decreasing divorce rate.¹² The status of singles, especially of women, is becoming more and more problematic, to the extent that the family, the kibbutz, and even the federations now try to help them marry.

11. The main instigators of familization are women, whose attitude toward familism is more positive than men's.

The "shadowy existence" of the monogamic marriage to which the beginning of point 10 refers was a rather short phase, typical of a youth-movement way of life. The fact that the nuclear family has become the basic unit of kibbutz social structure has long been documented. Kibbutz leaders and ideologues have long since come to consider the family, i.e., the married state plus a high birth rate, as desirable for the stability and future of the kibbutz. But why should these facts be evidence for the inevitable victory of female nature over egalitarian ideology and structure?

What we have here is not a clash between an "egalitarian" ideology that advocated the full development of

sex the individual, disregarding the norms of conventional semi-roles, including conventional family life, on the one hand, and eternal female nature which pulled the kibbutz severely back to familism and stereotyped sex role behavior on the other. Kibbutz ideology was never individualist nor liberal, but collectivist.

Men and women in the kibbutz have fostered familism i.e., marriage and the birth of many children, as a central life goal. It should be quite clear that this familism, comprising great social and economic pressure on young women and men alike to get married, the low status of single women, the sanctity of large families (despite their enormous contribution to the problems of poverty and social backwardness), intolerance toward any life styles departing from conventional family life, all these have been predominant in Israeli society since the establishment of the State. So, in this area kibbutz norms merged with those of the larger society. They were considered as both furthering national collectivist interests and the particular collectivist ends of the kibbutz movement.

Why then do kibbutz girls marry even younger and have more children than women of comparative income and education strata in general Israeli society? It is simply easier in the kibbutz for men and women to behave in accordance with the norm. They can get married early without worrying about an apartment, the payment of tuition fees, a sufficient income; they can have children, without obvious far-reaching changes in their daily way of life.

Yet the authors claim that women are the "main instigators of familization." This is not true. There has been no evidence that any considerable number of kibbutz men have come out against the centrality of marriage and reproduction in kibbutz life.

MY VIEW OF THE RESIDUAL FAMILIAL ROLE

Kibbutz men have never offered to share in the communal child-care burden. Moreover, the "familial" part of the care of the baby in the first months of life

is carried out exclusively by the mother; familial child-care — looking after her own children in the afternoon, evening and at the weekend — is considered first and foremost the duty of the mother, although the father's interest in, involvement with, and "help" with the education of his children is considered desirable. In practice fathers hardly ever share equally in "familial" child-care duties, largely because of the polarized division of labor.

The work situation of many kibbutz men does not permit them to be free and home by mid-afternoon. In practice, like employed mothers outside the kibbutz, kibbutz mothers also carry a double burden although the entire familial domestic child-care role is considerably lighter than that of the outside family. It grows somewhat heavier with each additional child. However, the kibbutz mother cannot use part of her income to pay somebody else to perform any part of her private domestic maternal role. In short, given the norm that child-care work is unsuitable for men, behavior according to the familistic norm, i.e., early marriage and four children plus, has not only contributed much to the polarization of sexual communal work roles, it has also created a considerable amount of inequality between men and women in their competition for higher education, for desirable work places and for positions of political authority.

I claim then that kibbutz women have not "instigated" the basic norm of familism any more than kibbutz men, and that this norm limits the choices of all kibbutz women as a group and, even more so, those of mothers of several young children.

Admittedly, however, women rather than men have demanded the widening of the private or familial child-care sphere, i.e., their own part in looking after their own children. Women in the Kibbutz Artzi have demanded and achieved the introduction of the "hour of love," the rule that mothers of children especially up to age 3 are free to spend an hour with them during the morning. Not all the women voted for this innovation and for it to pass, it was necessary that

a considerable part of the men also vote for it. The second demand, that for having children or only babies or only teenagers sleep in their family quarters instead of in communal children's houses, has not been accepted at all in the Kibbutz Artzi and in only a minority — 20 kibbutzim — of the Ichud federation. (It should be remembered that in some of the Kvutzoth* familial sleeping arrangements for older children had been the rule since their foundation.)

Now the question is, why should any women be in favor of changes which make their private maternal role more onerous? The authors' answer is that the maternal role is natural to women, therefore it is only rational of them to demand its widening; what is natural to animals or to humans comes easy to them — "doing what comes naturally" — and it is rational to do more of what comes easy.

My explanation of this puzzling behavior of some kibbutz women — by no means all of them — is not original. Dorit Padan-Eisenstark and Helen Hacker¹³ and Martha Mednick¹⁴ have offered variants of it before. Many kibbutz women are dissatisfied and frustrated with their communal work roles of performing personal services to people who are *not* their family members. For many their work roles do not accord with their dispositions, for many the challenge and possibility for personal growth are too limited. It is those same mothers who are most dissatisfied and frustrated with their communal work roles, who demand the widening of their private maternal work role, searching there for relevance and emotional satisfaction. Among them are to be found the most enthusiastic advocate of multiple motherhood as the central life experience of women, women who belittle all aspirations for the equalization of male and female work roles.¹⁵

Kibbutz women who are satisfied with and interested in their work roles maintain that by breaking up the work day and limiting their occupational choice even

*Kvutza (Hebrew), a collective unit.

more the introduction of the "hour of love" and the shortening of women's work day are detrimental to mothers of small children. They are the severest critics of this kind of "familization."¹⁶

SOUL-SEARCHING

12. Attitudes toward equality have always been more egalitarian than actual behavior. This discrepancy causes recurrent soul-searching within the kibbutzim and federations.

I have already pointed out that this "egalitarian" ideology concerning the sexes never included the crucial issue of child-care and personal service work which were always considered to be unsuitable for men. At least parts of agricultural and construction work were from the beginning considered by men as unsuitable for women. Under the then prevailing circumstances, it can be assumed that this view was objectively correct. In the meantime kibbutz agriculture has been highly mechanized, cutting out nearly all heavy physical labor. Yet far from welcoming women to agricultural work or to skilled and technical industrial work, present generation agricultural and industrial technicians and managers have adopted the conventional prejudice that women are incapable of or unsuitable for working with large and especially with moving machinery.¹⁷ It is not true that nowadays kibbutz men encourage women to enter into and advance in agriculture and industry in general; they want them to enter only rather sharply delimited job areas such as pest control in agriculture, or assembly, packing, bookkeeping and laboratory work in industry. Many men are opposed to women as branch managers.¹⁸

As to political activity — there exist considerable reservations among kibbutz men about the suitability of women for the main managerial/political positions as well as considerable hesitancy among women to offer their candidacy. The declared ideological goal in the areas of both work and politics is not complete equality of the sexes but the rather patronizing slogan of "furthering the progress of the woman-comrade."¹⁹

What causes frequent "soul-searching," i.e., discussions at federation conferences and special meetings of secretaries and activists and the commission of special surveys, about the problem of women in the kibbutz seems to me less the gap between ideology and behavior than the widespread impression of the existence of a social problem in kibbutz society: the realization that the dissatisfaction of women in the kibbutz with their work role is considerably greater than that of men; that this problem is especially serious with young second generation women;²⁰ that the level of aspiration of kibbutz girls is disconcertingly low; that the self-esteem of younger kibbutz women is considerably lower than that of men; that the level of political participation of second generation kibbutz women is especially low; that there exists a serious problem of second generation women leaving the kibbutz.²¹

According to the authors, the ideology is inappropriate and problematic, but behavior and praxis are appropriate and non-problematic. The authors see the low level of aspirations of kibbutz girls as appropriate to their natural female role; they deny the well-documented dissatisfaction of many kibbutz women with their work roles; they disregard the fact of massive leaving of second generation women.

III. A Critical Response

Tiger and Shepherd's book claims to have import way beyond the bounds of the kibbutz. It claims that all known avenues towards the reduction of the difference between social sex roles, i.e., the equality of women in work and in politics, are blind alleys. It also claims that the major sociological theories explaining the backwardness of women in work and in politics have been refuted by the kibbutz experience. The authors also claim to have refuted all extant explanations of the development of the present status of kibbutz women.

WHAT IS THERE TO BIOGRAMMAR?

In my opinion this whole volume looks like nothing more than an exercise in the loose application of Tiger's and Fox's pseudo-scientific biogrammar theory to Shepherd's information about the kibbutz movement, without first applying it to the social history of the status of women in general, as would be more reasonable. It is worth noticing that where matters come to the crunch the authors show willingness to withdraw from parts of their theory and hold their stand on one and only one thesis of David Hamburg regarding lower animal biograms which they insist applies to humans as well. After the withdrawal the resultant thesis is this: the two sexes naturally find it easy to master different skills, and consequently they show desire or willingness to master different skills under all sorts of external circumstances.

Supposing this thesis were true, then common structures of social sex roles should appear under all circumstances of social structure and socialization. To show this, one has to refer to comparative studies in the field. This the authors do not do. What comparative studies show in all societies is that the bulk of infant rearing and of domestic chores has been carried out by women, and that in all known societies the status of women is at least somewhat inferior in both production and politics. Combined with the authors' thesis this means that all the skills required for child rearing and domestic chores are more easily and more willingly learned by women than by men, and that all the skills that make for excellence in either production or government go the other way.

All this does not explain the known enormous variety in the service and production skills and activities of women and of men in diverse societies past and present, as well as at least some outstanding examples of female political excellence. Yet this enormous variety shows that men are capable of learning service skills and that women are capable of learning all sorts of production and political skills. Moreover, not only have the social sex roles changed and varied to a large extent;

also, because of the basic and unique change in the control of fertility and the prolongation of human life, which further reduce the part of a woman's adult life taken up by admittedly specific biological female functions, what is common to all known examples of social sex role differentiation may from now on be changed.

Therefore, even if we concede the authors' thesis that it is easier for women to learn to look after infants and perform household chores, and even we give this thesis the fullest weight possible, it amounts to very little, as it tells us nothing about the impact of modern living conditions on social sex role differentiation. The authors say that since the kibbutz is most modern (revolutionary utopian, they call it) and has had no such impact, none is to be expected. Yet what is this to the average woman in the industrialized world, who gives birth to 2½ children and lives to be eighty? The authors claim universal significance for their conclusions from the kibbutz experience. Yet I cannot find their answer to this question. Or do they expect a female counterrevolution against population control, and women's desertion of the labor market?

WHAT IS SPECIAL IN THE KIBBUTZ?

So why single out the kibbutz at all? Because there nurture was special: this was a new planned, self-conscious society with an ideology aiming at complete equality of the sexes, socializing their children communally in total disregard of sex role differentiation, building a communal structure of production and consumption which demands of men and women equal work contribution and abolishes the traditional private domestic/maternal work sphere of women.

The authors themselves concede that the nature versus nurture argument cannot be proven empirically as it is impossible to raise any new generation of human infants by socializers that are not themselves contaminated by conventional socialization.²² Nevertheless they claim that the nurture of the second generation in the kibbutz was as revolutionary-egalitarian concerning

social sex roles as humanly possible; therefore they claim that the result of this kind of nurture, namely a sharp differentiation of the roles of the two sexes in work and politics, proves the case for nature.

In the course of the book they concede here and there that neither ideology, nor socialization, nor structure are or have ever been completely "egalitarian"; yet they never add up all those little defects and omit large chunks of additional evidence; had they added up the evidence it would have become apparent that while the kibbutz is a unique experiment in egalitarianism, in ownership, the duty to work and material rewards, it is not any more egalitarian regarding sex role differentiation than most modern societies.

Its ideology never seriously dealt with the problem of the division of labor between the sexes. It included influences from male superiority/female inferiority theories, from Otto Weininger to Freud. The Kibbutz Artzi went through a prolonged period of Orthodox Marxism; for Marx and Marxists the problem of the backwardness of women is the product of private ownership and class; therefore a special social effort at raising the status of women is superfluous.

In short, although there exists as yet no entire national society where all or most of its members hold a consistent ideology of "androgyny," i.e., complete abolition of sexual stereotypes, there exist today subcultures of considerable size in several western countries where ideology is certainly more "egalitarian" than that of the kibbutz movement.

Now, to socialization. The disregard of gender differences in the infant and pre-school sexual stage as to dress, hairdo, toys and games is today commonplace in somewhat enlightened families and nursery schools²³ all over the West. Even had kibbutz education and instruction been resolutely egalitarian in its content, the polarization of work and political roles not only of the children's parents but also of most other "significant others," i.e., the other adult members of the collective, would have acted as a most forceful, though unplanned

non-egalitarian socializer. Indeed most kibbutz girls lack, even more than Israeli girls outside, approachable female models who have achieved excellence in any field of endeavor other than conventional female activities.

The same fact of polarization of work roles, which in itself acts as a non-egalitarian socializer, has also gradually led to the introduction of different content and direction in the education of boys and girls²⁴; these practices were supposed to be necessary as realistic preparation for and induction into their future work roles of boys and girls. The result has been a socialization system that is certainly not "utopian egalitarian" concerning sex roles.

Now to structure. The founders of the kibbutz certainly did not aim at a society with extreme polarization of work roles and low participation and status of women in politics. These features were unintended consequences of its revolutionary collective structure, combined with the conventional norm of child-care and service work as women's responsibility. Socialization adapted to the situation and buttressed the status quo.

Why, however, should polarization of sex roles have become sharper in the kibbutz than in many societies with less egalitarian ideologies and systems of socialization, including at least parts of Israeli society?

What the kibbutz experience has proven is that if communal consumption and child-care services are established in a producers' collective which includes a limited number of agricultural and even fewer industrial branches, and which aims at filling all (or most) of the production jobs by its own manpower and persists in filling all its service jobs exclusively by its womanpower — the result cannot but be sharp occupational differentiation between the sexes, much more limited occupational choice for women than for men, less opportunity for occupational careers for women, less participation and lower status in politics, and even lowered aspirations for women.

WHAT HAVE THE AUTHORS REFUTED?

At the beginning of this essay I cited a few general theories concerning social sex role differentiation, plus the authors' claim to have shown the kibbutz experience to be a refutation of all but one of them. And that one, I have just shown, has no relevance to the average woman in modern industrialized society. It is therefore of some interest to see whether the authors' claim is correct, since if it is, it forces us to look for newer theories.

It seems to me obvious that the authors' claim is not true. Let me show this point by point.

1. The kibbutz experience does not refute the cultural lag theory because socialization in the kibbutz is not egalitarian.
2. The kibbutz experience refutes the dual role theory if and only if it is interpreted — wrongly — to say that the establishment of communal personal consumption and child-care services is a necessary and sufficient condition for equalization. If, however, a communal consumption experiment would resolutely allocate production and service duties on an egalitarian basis (including also the residual private consumption and child-care activities), then the outcome as to women's aspirations, occupational achievement and political participation may be entirely different. This still remains to be seen.
3. The kibbutz experience does not refute the ideology theory which adequately describes the kibbutz situation where preaching sexual equality is indeed largely lip service.
4. The kibbutz experience may figure as a refutation of the class theory, but this refutation is rather superfluous since the Soviet Union, where "classes" in the Marxian sense have been abolished, has already served as a somewhat larger refutation.
5. The kibbutz experience obviously cannot refute the family theory — as the family as a conventional unit of sex and of procreation has never been abolished in the kibbutz.
6. The case of the male conspiracy or incumbent

theory in relation to the kibbutz experience is rather involved. On one reading, which I herewith advocate, the kibbutz experience not only does not refute the theory but even lends it considerable support. First of all let me note that under no reasonable reading of this theory does it suggest that the incumbents, in our case the men, actually meet and declare to each other their intentions to prevent the newcomers, in our case, the women, from getting their equal share. Of course in some cases, incumbents do so conspire; but the theory does not demand that this always be the case. In my suggested reading of the theory, even when incumbents are not fully conscious of the situation, they may actually prevent, as a group, the equalization of the rights of the new group. The incumbents may not be fully conscious of, and may never fully articulate, either the nature of the scarce resources for which they compete with the newcomers, or of the very existence of the competition. Nevertheless, I suggest, the theory says that incumbents repress the newcomers.

I think this theory is true even in this comprehensive strong reading. For example, I do not think that male university professors, as a group, are aware of their competition with women as a group, yet they do so compete, i.e., as incumbents guarding their traditional privileged positions. In the kibbutz we have a case where the stronger incumbent group holds on to a scarce but extremely important commodity in kibbutz life — non-material rewards from work (both status and intrinsic satisfaction or self-realization) Men, as a group, have used cultural lag in kibbutz ideology and conventional socialization to hold on to a much larger share of this commodity (and gain access to such rewards from new and as yet limited work activities) than women — the weaker subgroup of newcomers in the occupational sphere in the kibbutz.

Thus the authors certainly have not refuted with the help of the kibbutz experience the six theories of social sex role differentiation. On the basis of claims that have no foundation in fact they claim to have refuted some theories and on the basis of faulty logic they claim to have refuted others.

IV. Conclusions

I have brought here several explanations for the development of a relatively pronounced social sex role differentiation in the kibbutz.

1. Given the acceptance of the conventional norm that child-care and consumption services are women's responsibility, the peculiar collective egalitarian structure of the kibbutz and its limited and finite labor pool necessarily brought about an occupational differentiation between the sexes more pronounced than in the general society.
2. Kibbutz socialization has gradually adapted itself to the existing occupational differentiation and has become a factor which lowers the aspirations of kibbutz women.
3. The existing occupational differentiation, the limited occupational choice for women, the internal limitations of service occupations, the lower aspirations of kibbutz women, and the connection between production positions and political positions in the kibbutz — all have brought about the lower political activity and authority of kibbutz women.
4. The upholding of the norm that service activities are the sole responsibility of women was in the interest of men as a group, as it has enabled them to obtain a larger share of the non-material rewards from work, i.e., status and intrinsic satisfaction.

Yet the existing differentiation, the actually lower occupational and political status of women, runs counter to the long-range economic, and even more so, to the social interests of kibbutz society, and this is realized by growing numbers of women and of men there.

The situation is not inevitable. By consciously introducing a few obvious, though by no means easy, changes in its norms, the kibbutz movement could adapt both structure and socialization to the goal of the reduction of social sex role differentiation. There are today many women and men in the kibbutz who are anxious to find the way to the declared goal of equal opportunity for full human development for men and women in the kibbutz. There are others who defend the status quo from "feminine nature" or the priority of familism arguments. This book, despite its major flaws and its wrongheaded bias, may serve as a catalyst.

Appendix on the Education of Girls in the Kibbutz

There are different views, some more egalitarian, some less, of what is the best arrangement in any social sphere and how to attain it. The less egalitarian view, which is our authors', rests on naturalistic arguments of a general biosocial kind. Let us examine, first, how effective such a general argument can be vis-à-vis the specific problem of the education of girls in the kibbutz.

Of course there exist some inborn psychological limitations in any animal, but even for lower animals we do not know what are the parameters of learning, let alone their limitations. However, the claim that the limitations differ under different circumstances makes it difficult to know whether human nature exists, and if it does what it means. And of course without human nature it makes no sense to speak about feminine and masculine nature. But then even if we knew what human nature was and what is easy for a human being to learn, then the ease would still depend on conditions and these may be controllable. Second, even if it is easier by nature to learn a skill which has no use in the modern world, we would nevertheless not wish to acquire it and, conversely, high motivation makes us acquire difficult skills. If the authors were right, not only women but also men should avoid studying mathematics and foreign languages.

I am all for individual choice in the acquisition of skills, but cannot see that the choice should be determined by gender; indeed choice by gender means social pressure, which limits the choice of skills, especially for women.

In 1968, Menahem Gerson, a major Kibbutz Artzi educator, published a collection of essays *On Education and the Family in the Kibbutz* (in Hebrew) which contains an essay, first published in 1945, on the education of girls in the kibbutz, and part of a study, conducted in 1955/56, on the adolescent girl in the kibbutz. The author notes (p. 72) that he was discouraged by the lack of response within his movement. The situation of obvious inequality between the sexes in the work and political sphere and the possible link between this situation and certain negative effects of the apparently egalitarian education for boys and girls led Gerson, already in 1945, to examine the scientific-ideological basis for the education of girls in the kibbutz.

He considers the conflicting claims of Bebel — all so-called “feminine” qualities are the result of the oppressive social conditioning of generations of patriarchy — and of Freud — for the sexually determined psychological inferiority of women. Gerson apparently adopts, at least tentatively, Freud’s assumption of naturally stronger feminine narcissism and emotionality (dropping Freud’s underdeveloped feminine super-ego and lesser feminine sense of justice) for which allowance should be made in school and youth movement instead of forcing girls into a male mold. And from Bebel’s story of generations of conditioning for inferiority he draws the conclusion that even in the kibbutz girls and women need special encouragement to overcome their tendency for withdrawal from competition with men. In opposition to majority opinion he advocated, already in 1945, quotas for women on all movement political bodies, as well as the establishment of a women’s movement to foster solidarity and mutual support among kibbutz women.

In the sphere of work Gerson advocated women’s access to vocational training for all kibbutz occupations including agriculture, the introduction of training for the until then underskilled or at best semi-skilled service jobs, and the technical rationalization of service branches in order to reduce manpower (womanpower) needed, thus permitting more women to work outside the service branches. These last two changes, incidentally, have been gradually introduced during the last decade, 20 years after Gerson’s suggestion.

On one point, however, Gerson did not break out of conventionality — he too assumed that consumption services and child-care had to be performed by women only, apparently from now to all eternity.

In the study of the adolescent girl, conducted 10 years later, Gerson noted that there existed an enormous gap for the girls between the educational ideal of agriculture and the reality of service work for women and pointed out the danger of developing cynicism toward kibbutz ideals in general.

In response to his questions, the girls of the Kibbutz Artzi, even more than those of the Kibbutz Meuchad, declared that the ideal of equality of the sexes — especially in the field of work — had *not* been achieved. A considerable majority did not want to work either in the kitchen or in child-care. They considered their mothers prematurely old, limited, ignorant and unambitious as a result of work in the services only; and many of them openly broke the taboo and suggested that boys too should work in infant care (“Why not? Are they going to kill the kids?”) and in sewing (“Can’t a boy sew on a button or iron?”). “This is a mere matter of tradition, and bad traditions can be violated,” p. 85. Gerson reports that hundreds of teenage kibbutz girls responded in this way. This was in the fifties.

Unfortunately, Gerson ignored the critical young voices he himself quotes, and came out with two palliatives: 1) raise the prestige of service work, 2) introduce pre-vocational training for the services *for girls* into the

high school curriculum. The palliatives soon became addictive and harmful.

Fifteen years later a study conducted by Muni Alon, a colleague of Gerson's (see note 10), indicates that not much of the critical and fighting spirit remains in kibbutz teenage girls. Girls now expect to achieve some further education for themselves which they desire, but are most pessimistic about their occupational future; they do not think that they have a realistic chance to work in the kibbutz in the occupation they really desire. Alon is puzzled by the fact that one third of the boys declare that girls in *general* are inferior to boys in development and in talents, and that this is caused by their apathy: girls suffer more from inferiority feelings. Alon is also puzzled at finding so many symptoms of anxiety about the future in these girls, much more than in the boys, who, just before their military service, have so much more realistic reason for anxiety.

Forty per cent of the girls (32% of the boys) think that there is need for raising the status of women in the kibbutz, and another 13% of the girls (21% of the boys) think that such a struggle has no chance of success. Thus, far from finding Tiger and Shepherd's claimed situation of the second (or third) generation kibbutz women content and happy with the kibbutz reality of occupational polarization and political passivity and inferiority, and looking forward enthusiastically towards their "natural" feminine role, we now find girls who dread this reality but are uncertain about their own talents, and pessimistic about their chance to attain within the kibbutz a more desirable role for themselves.

NOTES

¹ Some people prefer to call social sex roles gender roles.

² "Emotions in Perspective of Human Evolution" in P. Knapp, ed. *Expression of the Emotions in Man* (New York: International Universities Press, 1963).

³ Men in kibbutz "education and teaching" are all concentrated in teaching in secondary schools and in teachers' training schools, but not a single man can be found in baby and child-care and kindergarten teaching, and hardly any in primary teaching.

In "industry" most men work in skilled, technical, supervisory and managerial positions, while most women work either in unskilled or in semi-skilled assembly and packing jobs and only a minority in drafting, laboratory, or bookkeeping jobs.

Thus in the kibbutz even the minority of each sex that works in an occupational group sex-typed by the other sex are segregated in either the higher (men) or the lower (women) positions.

⁴ The exception is the "economist" or kitchen manager, a position nowadays held by men in some kibbutzim; men perform temporary work on a rotation basis in the dining hall and in some kibbutzim also in the kitchen, especially on Saturdays.

⁵ Even temporary and partial help of teenage boys with child-care is the great exception.

⁶ One of the kibbutz teachers' training schools is now affiliated with Haifa University. Others have been licensed to grant the B.A. starting 76/77.

As to post-graduate studies, the Kibbutz Artzi movement has not favored them at all for either its sons or daughters; of Ichud sons some 20 have gone on to post-graduate studies but only 2 women.

⁷ Thus for example the author, Joseph Shepherd, is a professor at Haifa University; it is now exclusively men who serve in high kibbutz movement, youth movement, Histadrut, political party, government and Zionist overseas activity posts. Men, too, have been much more successful than women in introducing new profitable activities into the economy of some kibbutzim such as computer services.

⁸ The conventional attitude of kibbutz education committees is to oppose the higher education plans of mothers of infants. A sign of change is that recently in at least one kibbutz, the wish of a young mother to study medicine has been granted; it is interesting that in this kibbutz several daughters returning from the army have announced their wishes to study for non-conventional professions.

It is also interesting that this kibbutz has in spite of pressure from some of its members not adopted the widespread rule of an obligatory year of service work for daughters returning from the army.

⁹ Y. Dar, *Sex Differences in Academic Achievements among Kibbutz High School Students* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Ichud Research Institute, 1974). Mimeographed.

¹⁰ Muni Alon, *Youth in the Kibbutz* (Sifriat Poalim: 1975), p. 248.

¹¹ The authors present all these explanations themselves on pp. 197-198, and it is surprising that they should see in these data an independent evidence for their thesis of the victory of kibbutz women's "natural" tendencies.

¹² I doubt the accuracy of this last statement. Recently student-members of at least 5 kibbutzim have independently and spontaneously reported to me the (to them) disquieting proportions of separation and divorce in their own kibbutz.

¹³ Dorit Padan-Eisenstark and Helen Hacker, *Women in the Moshav Shitufi*. In this study a similar process is discerned among women in the *Moshav Shitufi* (where agricultural and industrial production is collective,

but private family households do exist). Out of those 35% of the women respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with their (unskilled) collective service jobs, 80% were interested in reducing women's working-time on the collective. Yet those same women who were themselves retreating towards the private domestic sphere did not really identify with the traditional housewife role: for their daughters they strongly insisted on the opportunity to study and to work in jobs that would interest them.

The study was published in Hebrew, "*Women in the Moshav Shitufi in an Ideological Trap*," in *Megamoth*, 12(4), 1975.

¹⁴ Martha Mednick, *Social Change and Inertia and Sex Roles; Reality in the Kibbutz* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, June 1974) mimeo. "Childbirth becomes perhaps the only source of self-esteem for the woman. In fact it is likely that this is the only way for the female kibbutz member to be productive, to raise her status and prestige, to achieve a measure of qualitative satisfaction, that she does not achieve in her second important activity — work." (p. 20).

¹⁵ There are, of course, also some ideologues like "the important columnist," *Nira*, whom the authors quote on pp. 307-309, who themselves obviously have succeeded in a non-personal-service-occupation but preach to kibbutz women that "work for women is 'secondary', that family, motherhood is their calling, that childbirth is the greatest experience, that however many times it is repeated, its intensity never fades." Here we meet an extreme sexist view of natural differentiation between men as soldiers who have to prove themselves in work and women as mothers who keep the home fires burning.

Outside the kibbutz there may be women workers who have indeed some grievances about unequal pay but for kibbutz women the women's movement is ridiculous.

¹⁶ In summer 1974 a meeting of Kibbutz Artzi secretaries discussed the problems of *The Female Kibbutz Member*: Giv'at Chaviva, 21 July 1974, mimeo. (in Hebrew). In the course of the discussion the custom of the "hour of love" and the resultant interruption and shortening of the work day of women only came under severe criticism by women, who pointed out the vicious cycle of frustration of those working in disliked and/or unskilled service work leading to search for fulfillment in the maternal role, and extension of the familial sphere, aggravation of the private domestic burden of the mother of several children, plus social pressure from children and women as a group against "deviant" women, and thus perpetuation of the existing polarization of occupational roles with its resultant frustrations for women.

¹⁷ In conversation with many young kibbutz men, technicians in agriculture, industry or engineering, I found an extremely conventional attitude of doubting women's capacity and readiness to master any technical occupation.

¹⁸ M. Rosner's 1965 survey found that the overwhelming majority of his kibbutz respondents considered the work of electricians and of drivers suited to men only. Kibbutz attitudes are here much more sex-stereotyped than those found in a French survey.

The differentiation and the inferior quality of the industrial jobs of women is reflected in the general job satisfaction figures of Rosner's 1969 survey. Women in industry were the only occupational group that showed a low general job satisfaction — only 40% of this group declared themselves satisfied with their work.

¹⁹ Less than one third of Rosner's 1965 survey respondents considered the post of general economic manager as suitable for women.

²⁰ M. Rosner's 1969 survey of the second generation pinpointed the basic difference in the nature of satisfaction from work of members of the younger generation. 57% of the young men found "relevance and achievement" in their work branch, but only 45% of the women. Among the 23-25 year olds, 40 % of the women wanted to change their work branch, but were at a loss where to go, as the occupation they desired did not exist in their kibbutz; only 20% of the young men wanted to change their work branch, most indeed being already settled in the same work branch which they had chosen before their military service.

²¹ At the meeting of secretaries of the Kibbutz Artzi of July 21, 1974, mentioned in note 16 above, the central motive of the discussion was the problem of massive leaving of young kibbutz women after their military service.

The population tables of the two kibbutz movements that the authors bring on page 70 show a deficit of females to males in the second generation of 1,365; if we remember that the entire adult second generation in these two kibbutz movements comprises 10,404 men and women, and that the kibbutz movements suffered heavy losses, especially of second generation men, in the four wars since the establishment of the State, it becomes obvious how serious the problem is.

²² See Appendix.

²³ Not so in the average Israeli nursery school, where pictures, stories, toys and games are all still conventionally sex-typed.

²⁴ The extent and the consequences of this change, which started in Kibbutz Artzi high schools in the sixties, and which introduced modern technological education for boys, and cooking, sewing and cosmetics for girls, is described in critical detail by the educator, Sara Tal, at the 1974 conference (see note 16). She accuses this system of perpetuating the unequal kibbutz reality; of producing young women who tend toward leaving the kibbutz and insensitive young men. She suggests several far-reaching but very practical changes: (1) The abolition of the home economics stream; (2) The opening of the technology stream to girls and its adaptation to their needs; (3) The opening of a serious pedagogic stream for girls and for boys.