

# Intergenerational Discontinuity in the Israeli Kibbutz

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THIS STUDY ANALYZES the phenomenon of youth leaving the Kibbutz, and particularly the reasons for its increase through the 1970's. The data are based primarily on participant observation on two Kibbutzim by me and my family, on interviews, and on supporting surveys. The data are organized according to variants of sequential models as developed by Howard Becker<sup>1</sup> and Kenneth Keniston.<sup>2</sup> I believe that structural and ideological changes in the Kibbutz are related to changes in the life-cycle. The study concludes with a discussion of the effects that modernization had had on the communal fabric of the Kibbutz.

The Israeli Kibbutz movement was founded on a revolutionary philosophy, the primary objective of which was the building of "a sea of Kibbutzim" throughout Israel. To accomplish this objective, the Kibbutz movement had to attract outsiders as new members and to retain its young. In the period from the mid-1920's to the mid-1960's—the heyday of Kibbutz growth—the Kibbutzim were highly successful in integrating new members. During this period, the number of Kibbutzim grew to 229, and by 1965, the membership had grown to 78,000.<sup>3</sup> Although most of the growth was due to external recruitment, the Kibbutzim maintained a very high retention rate of Kibbutz-born. From the mid-fifties onward, internal growth became essential to increasing the Kibbutz population because most of the new immigrants to Israel lacked the socialist ideals

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1. H. Becker, *Outsiders* (New York: Free Press, 1963).
2. K. Keniston, *Young Radicals* (New York: Harcourt, 1968).
3. H. Sachar, *A History of Israel* (New York: Knopf, 1979), pp. 149-151.

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of the pioneers and were attracted primarily to the cities. As a result, Kibbutz young became a "precious resource," the retention of which became vital to the continued existence of the Kibbutz and its revolutionary ideals. Once the Kibbutz lost its appeal to outsiders, its revolutionary ideals became a rhetorical exercise. Nevertheless, the Kibbutz still presented an exciting experiment in socialist communalism that had an influence far beyond its numbers, both within and outside Israel. Both to its members and interested outsiders, its continued development was of importance, and the retention of its young was the primary source of its continuation.

Historically, the Kibbutzim have had a very high retention rate compared to other rural societies—although this comparison may be somewhat inappropriate as other rural societies usually do not have the economic opportunities to support the young, whereas the Kibbutz has a labor shortage.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is estimated that the cumulative retention rate of Kibbutz-born in 1970 was 77 percent.<sup>5</sup> However, during the 1970's there has been a decrease in the retention rate to a point where there is concern about the future of the Kibbutz. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of those who leave, since many Kibbutz young experiment with life outside the Kibbutz—through work, military service, study, or travel—before deciding about their future. Also, many Kibbutzim give their young time to change their minds before officially listing them as departed. Nevertheless, a conservative estimate of the number of "leavers" at present is at least half of the postarmy age groups, and for some Kibbutzim the proportion of leavers is much higher.

Given the small proportion of outsiders being absorbed by the Kibbutzim, the decreased retention of the young has created a crisis atmosphere. This is particularly so, since most of the remaining pioneers are in their seventies—that is, beyond the age where they can put in a full workday. Through meetings in each Kibbutz and in inter-Kibbutz conventions, the Kibbutzim have attempted to analyze the problem and to develop policies for the retention of their young.

There have been two main bodies of research on Kibbutz leavers: (a) using the Kibbutz as a unit; (b) using the individual as a unit. The research using the Kibbutz as a unit indicates that Kibbutzim that have been truest to Kibbutz principles—well-attended meetings, minimal hired labor—have had the best retention rates.<sup>6</sup> The data for these studies was

4. U. Leviatan and E. Orchan, "Kibbutz Ex-members and their Adjustment to Life Outside the Kibbutz," *Interchange* 13, no. 2, (1982): 16-28.

5. Leviatan and Orchan, "Kibbutz ex-members and their adjustment to life outside the Kibbutz."

6. This point is discussed in a series of monographs by Uri Leviatan and his associates. These are: U. Leviatan, *Factors that Determine Attachment of the Kibbutz-born to Kibbutz Life*

collected in the early 1970<sup>s</sup>, preceding the large exodus, and it is not clear that they will stand up at present. Assuming, however, that this direction of analysis is supported by more recent data which include the larger number of leavers, it would suggest that there has been an overall weakening of communalism and traditional Kibbutz principles within the Kibbutz movement as a whole and in some Kibbutzim more than others. To understand why this has happened, this paper will undertake a detailed analysis of structural changes that have resulted in a weakening of communalism within the Kibbutz.

The studies using the individual as a unit of analysis indicate that Kibbutz leavers and stayers are similar in personality ability and education,<sup>7</sup> but differ in political attitude and marital preference. Stayers seem to adhere more closely to Kibbutz principles and are less likely to marry outsiders. Both surveys indicate that having an outsider as a spouse is the best single predictor of leaving. However, there are no data on the point at which people make their marital choice—that is, before or after leaving the Kibbutz. Nevertheless, this evidence is important because it suggests that key commitments taken at critical points in development weigh heavily in the decision to leave. These commitments cannot be isolated from the overall socialization pattern of the Kibbutz and structural changes affecting the pattern of socialization. The decision to marry an outsider, for example, reflects a pattern of socialization.

This study will analyze how structural changes within the Kibbutz have altered key factors in the development of the younger generation, particularly in adolescence and youth and in so doing have increased the probability of leaving. This study is organized around a sequential model presented by Becker.<sup>8</sup> The model suggests that a step taken in a particular direction increases the probability of another step in the same direction, and so on, until such time as a fundamental change in commitment has been made and this change is recognized by others. Becker's stages are strictly sociological; this study will use social-psychological sequences, as well as describing sociohistorical developments that parallel the developmental sequence within the individual. Thus, the tendency to leave the Kibbutz will be delineated in terms of stages of psycho-social

*and the Reasons for their Departure* (Haifa: Institute for Research of the Kibbutz, 1975); U. Leviatan, E. Orchan, and A. Avnat, *Increasing Retention Among Kibbutz-born Members* (Haifa: Institute for Research of the Kibbutz, 1977); U. Leviatan, E. Orchan, and A. Avnat, *Determinants of Success in Absorbing Kibbutz-born as Members* (Haifa: Institute for Research of the Kibbutz, 1978); U. Leviatan and E. Orchan, *The Adjustment of Kibbutz-born members for the non-Kibbutz Environment* (Haifa: Institute for Research of the Kibbutz, 1978a).

7. Leviatan and Orchan, "Kibbutz ex-members."

8. H. Becker, *Outsiders*; and H. Becker, "Notes on the Concept of Commitment," *American Journal of Sociology* 66 (1966): 32-40.

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development.<sup>9</sup> Within each stage, 'critical variables' that have an effect on the subsequent stages will be discussed.

The model that is presented herein is not descriptive of the sequence followed by all leavers. Rather, it is presented to describe "the model leaver."

### *1. Methodology*

Data were collected during a participatory observation experience in which I and my family lived at two Artzi Federation Kibbutzim. The observation period was slightly less than ten months—four months at Kibbutz Aleph and six months at Kibbutz Bet. I did not plan to make this study the focus of my research; rather my primary interests were Kibbutz education<sup>10</sup> and the development of political thinking on the Kibbutz.<sup>11</sup> My interest in the phenomenon of Kibbutz leavers evolved largely from the attention that Kibbutzim Aleph and Bet and the Kibbutz movement in general were devoting to this problem. In my studies of the other two problems, as well as my incidental observations, it became apparent that virtually all Kibbutz youth in the sixteen-twenty-four age group were noncommittal about their future on the Kibbutz and that often this noncommitment extended beyond the twenty-four year age group to longtime Kibbutz members. My observations about the extent of the problem were confirmed by the concern with which the Kibbutz movement treated it and the extent to which it was discussed generally. During the observation period, there were regular seminars devoted to it at Kibbutz Bet, and one inter-Kibbutz conference devoted exclusively to it. Among the older generation, and indeed throughout the Kibbutz, it was a frequent topic of tabletalk.

In addition to field notes and incidental observations, I conducted forty-eight open-ended interviews of one to two hours with Kibbutz youth, both leavers and stayers. As a final data collection device, I surveyed one senior high school (N = 75), and thirty-five post-army-youth from four Kibbutzim. The survey was primarily to confirm the trends which were emerging from the qualitative data.

9. For an example of this approach, see K. Keniston, *Young Radicals* (New York: Harcourt, 1968).

10. See J. Quarter, "Kibbutz Education and its Relevance to the West," *Interchange* 13, no. 1 (1982): 29-44. See also the total collection of essays in *Interchange* 13, no. 1 (1982), J. Quarter, editor.

11. See J. Quarter, "The Development of Political Reasoning on the Israeli Kibbutz," *Adolescence* 19, no. 75 (Fall, 1984): 569-593.

## 2. Analysis

*Step 1—Childhood: Independence.* The overall child-rearing philosophy on the Kibbutzim is very child-centered and values the child's independence. As noted by Uri Bronfenbrenner and his associates, emancipating the child from adult norms is part of Israeli culture; it is not particular to the Kibbutz.<sup>12</sup> But the multiple care-giving system of the Kibbutz and the relatively secure environment seem to enhance the child's potential for independence.

Spiro traces the child-centered philosophy of the Kibbutzim to the antipatriarchal philosophy of the founders.<sup>13</sup> He suggests that the decision to have the children raised communally by a metapelet may have been encouraged by an unconscious desire to avoid the authority functions of parenting. Kibbutz parents go out of their way to make the children's visiting hours (4:00-8:00 each afternoon) "quality time."<sup>14</sup> Influenced strongly by liberal child-rearing practices, the child's desires are given priority and every effort is made to minimize conflict. During my ten-month stay on the Kibbutz, I did not observe any instances of a child being spanked by his parents and, by Western standards, reprimands were infrequent. Where differences of opinion between parents and children exist, the tendency is to discuss the differences and try to reach a reasonable compromise.

The interview data of leavers and stayers tended to confirm the view that Kibbutz parents are very supportive of their children's desires. Almost without exception, the interviewees stated how supportive their parents had been. Typical was a twenty-two-year old male at Kibbutz Bet: "My family gave me the choice to do what I want. Try it/ they always said. They were very open and gave me support."

The survey data provide a similar impression: 88 percent of the high school sample and 84 percent of the post-army sample indicated that their parents had been supportive of their desires.

The relatively conflict-free parent child relationship is in part facilitated by the division of care-giving functions between the parents and metapelet. The metapelet is entrusted with such aspects of child care

12. See E. Devereux, R. Shouval, U. Bronfenbrenner, R. Rodgers, S. Kav-Venaki, and E. Kieley, "Socialization Practices of Parents, Teachers, and Peers in Israel: The Kibbutz versus the City," *Child Development* 45 (1974): 269-281; and also R. Shouval, S. Kav-Venaki, U. Bronfenbrenner, C. Devereux, and E. Kieley, "Anomalous Reactions to Social Pressure of Israeli and Soviet Children Raised in Family versus Collective Settings," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 32, no. 3 (1975): 477-489.

13. M. Spiro, *Children of the Kibbutz* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). This same point is made by E. Irvine, "Observations on the Aims and Methods of Child Rearing in Communal Settlements in Israel," *Human Relations* 5 (1952): 247-275.

14. J. Quarter, "Talking about Life on a Kibbutz," *Orbit 2*, no. 1 (1980): 11-17.

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as rising, dressing, grooming, eating, bathing and homework—care that usually requires more adult regulation. Not surprisingly then, this relationship is seen as conflict-laden; and because of its transient and universalistic qualities it does not have the same closeness as the parent child relationship. Whereas 94 percent of the high school sample and 93 percent of the post-army sample viewed their parents as a positive influence in their life, the comparable figures for metapelet were 40 and 53 percent. By contrast to the parents, who were seen as consistently supportive, only 32 percent of the high school sample and 11 percent of the post-army sample recalled their metapelet as supportive.

Nevertheless, the parents are a more important influence in the Kibbutz child's life than the metapelet, even though part of the care-giving function is entrusted to the metapelet. The children model themselves after their parents and introject their parent's values, including independence.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the nuclear family in which parental authority is taken for granted, the Kibbutz parent must reach out to his children and gain their respect. Thus Kibbutz children have greater bargaining power than in the nuclear family, because neither the parents nor the metapelet have exclusive authority. Moreover, conflict between the metapelet and the parents does occur, and children become adept at playing off one care-giver against the other.<sup>16</sup>

The bargaining power of the Kibbutz child vis-a-vis his care-givers is buffered by the peer group, which exacts a degree of dependence in adherence to its own norms. Put simply, through growing up with a permanent peer group from birth, the Kibbutz child is not alone in his struggle with adult authority. Here one may see a parallel to adolescents in the city who, in large part, rely on their peer group to assert independence from adults. In the Kibbutz, however, the peer group as a source of independence starts from childhood. Not only does the peer group provide a source of support for the Kibbutz child, but also it diminishes a need: that is, the need for parental companionship. The close ties between children and their availability to each other, even when they return home, make children less dependent upon their parents than in noncommunal settings. During the "at-home" hours, for example, it is quite common to see children playing together on the fields near their parents' apartment.

In addition to the close ties between the children, a number of other factors contribute to the children sustaining their peer group interaction during at-home hours. These include: the large family (usually four

15. M. Gerson, "Family, Woman, and Socialization in the Kibbutz," in (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1978), pp. 142.

16. M. Nathan (Personal Communication, 1981).

children) and relatively small dwellings; the fields and facilities that are immediately available for play (usually there is a playground within a short distance of each dwelling); the long summers and relatively mild winters; the limited television offerings—there is just one channel available and Hebrew programming does not usually begin until early evening; and the secure environment. (Children can play outside free of adult supervision, because parents need not be fearful of automobile accidents or other urban dangers. It is, for example, quite common to see two-year olds walking home unattended.)

All of these factors add to the child's independence. Often parents have to be assertive to participate in their children's lives. Furthermore, they have agreements with their children to come to their apartment at a particular hour; they join in the children's play; or they offer the children such inducements as cakes and cookies. Generally, parents seemed to be quite pleased if their children watch TV in their apartments, whereas many city parents try to get their children away from the TV.

But as the communal peer group appears to contribute to the Kibbutz child's independence from his parents, so it seems to increase his dependence upon his peers, particularly in childhood and early adolescence. The peer group is a very important influence in the child's life and can be very harsh toward noncompliance with its norms. Almost all of the interviewees noted the pressure to conform in the peer group—which, unlike the peer group in noncommunal settings, is very comprehensive, involving all aspects of the child's life. Because of this comprehensiveness, the children are very vulnerable to each other. As one of the interviewees stated: "We knew each other's weak points, and how to get at them, if need be."

Also indicated was the effort to struggle against this group pressure—in part, perhaps because of the "independence" that is encouraged within the children's houses. Even at age two, Kibbutz children usually exhibit a high degree of independence in dressing, eating, and readying themselves for bed. The group setting itself requires this type of independent behavior to function. Where children do not employ self-sufficiency, the metapelet usually attempts to develop it—often with the assistance of a psychologist or special educator.

Kibbutz schooling also encourages a pattern of development which enhances the child's independence. Influenced heavily by the progressive tradition, Kibbutz schools tend to downplay academic norms and to encourage the socio-emotional development of the children.<sup>17</sup> Kibbutz education emphasizes the arts (music, painting, and dancing) and

17. A. Rabin and B. Hazan, eds., *Collective Education in the Kibbutz* (New York: Springer, 1973).

stimulates curiosity about the world outside the Kibbutz through projects about other countries.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas achievement norms induce dependence upon the teacher, Kibbutz schooling reduces this dependence through maintaining a social promotion policy to the end of high school. Not having normative evaluation removes, in effect, a primary control mechanism from the teacher and provides the child with greater bargaining power. Like the parent, the teacher must rely upon reason and positive emotional ties with the child to maintain control.

Another factor which weakens teacher authority and power is that teachers are hired by the community and remain responsible to the community. Because of this, many Kibbutz people (as well as outsiders) are reluctant to take on such a position. Symbolic of the reduction in teacher authority is the fact that, until the middle elementary years, school is conducted in the children's house rather than a separate building to which the children must go.

In summary, childhood on the Kibbutz affords children a surprisingly high degree of independence from adults. This independence is counterbalanced to some extent by the tightly-knit peer group.

*Step 2—Adolescence: Individuation and Identity Formation.* The processes that are set in motion in childhood are accentuated in adolescence as the young Kibbutznik moves toward the self-definition that develops during this stage of the life cycle. The Kibbutz adolescent assumes a very independent posture in relation to his parents, particularly in Artzi Federation Kibbutzim where he lives in a separate community ("the mosad"). Although the mosad is financially dependent upon the Kibbutz, the Kibbutz adolescent is not dependent upon his family for financial support. Thus the ties between the adolescent and his family are largely emotional; and where the quality of the relationship is not good, the adolescent can exercise the option to visit his family infrequently or not at all. Most Kibbutz adolescents do maintain close ties to their family, but relative to adolescents in the city they are very independent.

Indicative of this independence is one twenty-six year old male interviewee who, at age fourteen, decided to remain on the Kibbutz when his parents left. He said of his parents:

They didn't agree, they wanted me to go with them: but they were clever. They said, "first let him try one year, well see how it goes. If he's happy, then it's his way . . ." Family is not everything, especially in the Kibbutz. You grow up with a group, you're a Kibbutz member, and you have everything.

The Kibbutz adolescent also has much independence in relation to his teachers because—as in childhood—there is a social promotion policy

18. J. Quarter, "Kibbutz Education and its Relevance to the West."

that assures promotion. As such, the student need not fear the teacher's assessment. Also unlike Kibbutz children, adolescents are less emotionally dependent upon their teachers. Thus if the Kibbutz adolescent is uninterested in school—as is often the case—the teacher may find it difficult to maintain control. It is quite common to see students walking about during classtime or leaving the room to get coffee. Nonattendance posed a problem at Kibbutz Bet, but because of the progressive educational philosophy, the community was reluctant to compel attendance or to impose punishment. Kitchen work was used as a punishment for nonattendance, but with reluctance because it was feared that the student would develop negative associations with work.

The Kibbutz adolescent also is able to assert greater independence from his metapelet, insofar as he or she is able to do many of the functions that required the metapelet's assistance in childhood. Moreover, Kibbutz norms encourage the adolescent to assume as much independence as possible. The mosad is a self-governing community that models itself after the democratic processes of the Kibbutz. Its members are encouraged to function independently of adults.

In childhood, independence is offset to some extent by the dependence on a highly cohesive peer group. However, by mid- to late adolescence, this cohesiveness and the consequent dependence starts to weaken. Several factors contribute to this weakening of peer group cohesiveness, some traditional to the Kibbutz and others to the adolescent period of the life-cycle. For instance, heterosexual pairing starts to take precedence over the group—56 percent of the high school survey sample indicated that they had a boy/girlfriend. (In childhood, it was also true that the peer group would break down into subgroups of friends, but these usually were of the same sex, usually involved more than two children, and lacked the exclusivity and the emotional intensity of heterosexual pairing during adolescence.) Privacy becomes increasingly important during adolescence (so said 89 percent of the high school survey sample), and it may be that communal living adds to the value of privacy, although that is speculative. In adolescence, individual interests assume greater priority, often leading to a time-consuming hobby, although some hobbies are collective (for example, dancing), others are individual (for example, painting, horseback riding), and reduce involvement in group activities.

Adolescence does, then, on the Kibbutz involve greater independence from the peer group than does childhood. However, certain social changes have increased this independence.

1) Modern transportation has made it easier for Kibbutz adolescents to travel to the city—44 percent of the high school survey sample visited the city at least once a month and 20 percent visited at least once a week.

Historically, this type of contact always has existed where Kibbutz members have had relatives and friends in the city. But improved bus and charoot (communal taxis) transportation has made access to the cities more available, and with this access has come increased outside influence.

2) Television came to most Kibbutzim about 1970 and has assumed increasing importance in the life of the members—89 percent of the high school survey sample indicated that they watched TV at least an hour per day and 4.4 percent watched TV for two or more hours per day. With the advent of TV has come greater outside influence than during the era of the radio. It may be coincidental (but it also is noteworthy), that the major decrease in retention of Kibbutz young has occurred during the period in which TV has been on the Kibbutz.

3) The large volunteer and ulpan communities (students coming to the Kibbutz to learn Hebrew) on most Kibbutzim has been another source of outside influence. About 40 percent of the high school survey sample reported contacts with volunteers/ulpanists, and some had boy and girlfriends among this group. Historically, there always have been outsiders on the Kibbutz through youth aliyah programmes (underprivileged children from the city who come to the Kibbutz to be educated) and ulpanists. However, youth aliyah and ulpanists come to learn from, and often to be integrated into, the Kibbutz. They often are supportive of Kibbutz ideals. The volunteers were originally of the same ilk, coming to help during the 1967 war. However, since that time, the volunteer communities have had less commitment to the Kibbutz, usually being youth from Western Europe and North America who finance a holiday in the Middle East by working on the Kibbutz. For the Kibbutz, it is a convenient way of solving a labor shortage and freeing members of boring unskilled work. The influence of the volunteer community on Kibbutz young is difficult to specify. One leaver ascribed a positive influence: "I liked them. It interested me to hear how they live and to know about their country."

Others denied any influence or suggested that the volunteers were a negative influence. It is noteworthy, however, that the attitudes and values expressed by Kibbutz adolescents resemble the 'individualistic-noncommittal' outlook so typical of western youth, although still embodying some of the puritanical elements of the Kibbutz such as the value of work. Of particular importance is the Kibbutz adolescents' lack of interest in politics (especially external to the Kibbutz), and their lack of commitment to the Kibbutz. Only 24 percent of the high school survey sample indicated that they definitely planned to live on a Kibbutz, and 65 percent were uncertain. Another survey<sup>19</sup> using an extensive sample

19. M. Nathan and A. Schnabl, "A Survey of Drug Users on the Kibbutz" (Personal Communication, 1982).

TABLE 1 Attitudes of Senior Kibbutz High School Students (N = 75)\*

Variable	Percentage Important	Percentage Unimportant
1. Having new experiences	88	0
2. Being independent	95	0
3. Being different	32	32
4. Doing your own thing	99	0
5. Individuality in dress	15	68
6. Privacy	89	11
7. Keeping your options open	79	21
8. Having a good time	81	19
9. Soft drugs	07	85
10 Rock music	28	48
11 Leisure	91	12
12 Expressing one's feelings	79	08
13 Controlling your feelings	83	07
14 Being sensitive	52	17
15 Dancing and art	45	35
16 Sports	76	14
17 Living close to nature	62	12
18 Religious observance	03	91
19 Doing your best	87	07
20 Doing better than your peers	50	28
21 High marks in school	51	32
22 Seeking a challenge in life	93	01
23 Making use of your potential	95	03
24 Creating something new	66	11
25 Sacrifice for a long range goal	50	22
26 Sacrifice for the group	41	18
27 An improved standard of living	37	28
28 Wealth	31	49
29 Politics	35	45
30 More Israelis on Kibbutzim	49	21
31 More Socialists in the Knesset	72	08
32 Getting married	59	16
33 Marrying a Kibbutz member	08	69
34 Living together before marriage	83	11
35 Having children	81	04
36 Peace	89	03

\*Items were marked according to the following categories: very important, unimportant, neither important nor unimportant, important and very important. The column 'percent important' represents the percent of the total sample that marked important and very important. The column "percent unimportant" represents the percentage of the total sample that marked "unimportant" and "very unimportant." All percentages were adjusted for "missing data."

from all the Kibbutz movements indicated that only 12 percent of adolescents definitely planned to live on the Kibbutz; most were uncertain about their plans. The typical plan was to take time away—to live in the city and to travel—before making commitments.

Typical of this noncommittal style was this statement of a sixteen-year-old male:

I want to see the world. If I can't find something special, I'll return. I know some people who at sixteen-years of age are saying: 'I won't come back to the Kibbutz . . . I'll go to America, and stay there.' First of all, you have to see what they have in America . . . I'm not sure it's better than here.

Also prevalent in the plans of Kibbutz adolescents is higher education. Only 12 percent of the high school survey sample did not plan to attend university and 52 percent were definitely doing so. The importance attached to higher education on the Kibbutz represents a change in thinking; previous to the 1970's, higher education studies were uncommon.<sup>20</sup> It also represents an additional opportunity for Kibbutz youth to live outside the Kibbutz and develop incompatible commitments. One sixteen-year-old stated this attitude bluntly: "If the Kibbutz does not support me in what I want to study, I'll leave." The noncommittal syndrome that begins in adolescence does not mean that Kibbutz young will definitely leave the Kibbutz; it does, however, indicate that they plan to test other possibilities, thus increasing the probability of leaving.

Interestingly, the desire to test other possibilities does not stem from a dislike of the Kibbutz. Kibbutz adolescents view themselves as privileged—54 percent in the sample viewed themselves as "better off" than their peers in the city and only 3 percent perceived themselves as "worse off." Even leavers have a very favorable assessment of their adolescence.

Rather than growing from a negative view of Kibbutz life, the noncommittal individualistic framework of Kibbutz adolescents seems directly related to the combination of Kibbutz socialization and outside influences. Child-centered socialization and progressive education communicate the message that "the individual is very important." With the increase of outside influence, Kibbutz adolescents have tended to set goals that are of questionable value to the continuation of the Kibbutz. The adolescent subculture has shifted from one that primarily emphasized the future of the Kibbutz to one that primarily emphasizes the individual and his personal development. Although this shift has happened gradually, it has become quite pronounced during the 1970's.

Kibbutz adolescents still are concerned about the survival of the Kibbutz. There is a very strong identity with Kibbutz ideals, and 44 percent

20. U. Leviatan, "Kibbutz Ex-members."

of the high school survey sample indicated a desire to emulate the pioneers by moving to a junior Kibbutz on the frontier. But this was one possibility among many—most were very uncertain about their future commitments. Before making them, they planned to test themselves by living outside. Ironically, this too is seen as a form of identification with the pioneers who (as many noted) departed from the communities of their birth.

*Step 3—Youth: Testing the Waters.* The first living period outside the Kibbutz is usually the military (Israeli Defense Forces), although some Kibbutz youth do a year of "movement work" in the city prior to military training. This military service is mandatory. All males do three years of service, and females do twenty months. There are several significant factors about the army experience that interact with the process of self-definition with which Kibbutz youth are involved.

a) For the first time, Kibbutz youth are outside the influence of the peer group with which they have grown from birth. Although there is a tendency to associate with other Kibbutz youth, many live and become friends with non-Kibbutz youth. Whether or not they associate primarily with other Kibbutz members, Kibbutz youth experience much criticism of their community. One leaver described her military experience as follows:

The first year, I lived with a group of teachers from the Kibbutz. I began to discover myself: they gave me direction and helped me to ask, 'who am I'? It was important to me: it changed me a lot. . . . At this point I started to become more critical of the Kibbutz. . . . All of us were very active in our Kibbutz, but we began to understand together what disturbed us.

Many other interviewees felt that, during the army period, outside criticism did not affect them. But on looking back, most of the leavers felt that there was a delayed impact from the criticism.

A twenty-six-year-old male leaver described the experience as follows:

I had to defend Kibbutz socialism all the time. At the beginning I felt it was important, but I got tired and I couldn't stand these arguments any more . . . I don't think it influenced me directly . . . I did hear though, and I did get something from them.

About 87 percent of the post-army survey sample and almost all of the interviewees indicated that they had to defend the Kibbutz against criticism from outsiders. Here, too, it must be noted that Kibbutz youth in the military have not experienced Kibbutz life in its completeness and seem to carry an idealized version of the Kibbutz. Upon return to the Kibbutz after their military service, some of this criticism "hits home,"

particularly as Kibbutz youth note the discrepancy between ideals and practice.

A twenty-two-year-old male commented as follows:

I started to see how much our society is closed . . . and I had to ask whether I wanted to live on the Kibbutz. Now I want to try something else and be sure that the Kibbutz is what I want.

b) As these interview excerpts suggest, the military experience starts a reappraisal of the world outside the Kibbutz. It is seen as having advantages that were not apparent previously. Friendships with outsiders are formed during this period, and these friendships facilitate the reappraisal. Eighty-seven percent of the post-army survey sample reported making at least one lasting friendship during the military period. As one reported:

I had some friends from the outside: I visited their place and found it different than I expected. I was surprised that some of the most interesting people were from outside: they thought about problems and they wanted to do something with their life.

The positive contacts and friendships formed during this period reinforce the tendency to explore life outside the Kibbutz—a tendency which is set in motion in adolescence and by the independence socialization which precedes it.

c) Kibbutz youth usually have very responsible positions in the military. About one-third are officers and most are in elite units such as paratroops and the air force.<sup>21</sup> Having these responsible positions eases the access to living outside if such a decision is taken. Even if a Kibbutz member does not continue in the military, his or her qualifications and training are good references for other jobs. If a Kibbutz member wishes to make a commitment to military life, combining it with the Kibbutz becomes awkward.

Most members return, however; but the post-military period is acknowledged as a very difficult one because, for the first time, those returning experience the full brunt of Kibbutz life—the work routine and a multigenerational environment in which the older generation (the founders) are very vital (some might say dominant) in decision-making. In some respects, the Kibbutz has the features of a prefigurative society, as described by Margaret Mead,<sup>22</sup> with authority flowing from the older to the younger generation. In part this is because of the special status of the older generation as pioneers of the movement. In most older

21. Y. Amir, "The Effectiveness of the Kibbutz-born Soldier in the Israel Defense Forces," *Human Relations* 22 (1969): 333-344.

22. M. Mead, *Culture and Commitment* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

Kibbutzim, those above age sixty-five constitute at least one-quarter of the membership, and in the two Kibbutzim that I studied, the proportion of older members was in excess of that. They are very active and tend to predominate at the Saturday night assembly when the Kibbutz makes many of its key decisions.

Thus Kibbutz youth, returning from the military in which they have held highly responsible roles in a one-generational society, enter into a multigenerational environment in which the older generation is very influential. In contrast to city youth, who are moving away from their families into their own homes, Kibbutz youth are moving back to their families to a position that, on the surface, is more dependent than their adolescence and military experience. Because this change flies in the face of their socialization, with its emphasis on independence, it creates tension. Many youth complained that the close physical proximity to their families presented problems for their social life.

One twenty-six-year-old male represented the problem as follows:

My mother would be very involved in my place: she would bring food and clean clothes and clean my place. She always had the key and she would come to visit and see that everything is OK and the fridge is full and I had cake and all that stuff . . . I'm not special. It's fairly common in the Kibbutz . . . It's only a few feet from my place to my mother's. And if sometimes I was with a girl and she knocked on the door, it bothered me a lot . . . In the city, when you have your own place, it usually is far from your parents. It's not like when they want, they come.

Several others indicated that they set visiting hours or made other arrangements with their families. But even with such arrangements, the ecology of the Kibbutz brings separate generations into each other's lives at times when it is not appreciated. It is virtually impossible for youth to find the privacy that is available in the city.

Moreover, as the Kibbutzim have grown from one-generational youth societies (as in the pioneer period) to multigenerational, age-segregated societies, there is reason to believe that the tension between the generations has increased. For, like most other modern societies, new ideas and values touch the younger generation more than the older, and they have become socially apart.<sup>23</sup> It was quite common to hear Kibbutz youth make critical comments about the older people ("their lack of manners," "they don't know better").

While this generational tension may be viewed as inseparable from modern societies, in the Kibbutz it is compounded by the lack of physical separation between generations and the vitality of the older generation.

23. K. Mannheim, "The Sociological Problem of Generations," in B. McLaughlin, ed., *Studies in Social Movements* (New York: Free Press, 1966), pp. 252-270.

The Kibbutz family structure often is closer to an extended rather than a nuclear model. Arguments have been made about the social advantages of such an arrangement, particularly for the old. However, viewed strictly from the eyes of youth striving for self-definition and wishing to be independent, it does present some problems.

The work routine also seems to present difficulties for Kibbutz youth in the post-army period. Although the Kibbutz attempts to direct its young into interesting roles, they (like other new members of an organization) must "pay their dues" in the less skilled roles until they learn and exhibit promise—in contrast to their highly responsible army roles. This burden appears to fall most heavily on young women, because the sexual division of labor in the Kibbutz.

Kibbutz youth are well-prepared for Kibbutz work. From high school, they work ten hours a day and full-time during the holiday period. Many identify with the puritanical tradition of the Kibbutz, although it speaks to the needs of a society that no longer exists. The modern Kibbutz has a good standard of living, which objectively flies in the face of the sacrifice that is part of puritanism. Even though Kibbutz youth are inspired by the lore of the pioneers laboring from dawn until dusk beneath the hot sun, there is also questioning as to whether this tradition pertains to them. An existential crisis is set in motion which is exemplified by the slogan "eighty years of eight hours." It does not involve an outright rejection of the Kibbutz work tradition but a questioning of it and an intensification of the process of self-definition, particularly self-definition with respect to career.

This questioning is augmented by the transformation of the Kibbutz economy from one that relies on manual labor to one that requires technical training and higher education. With this change has come greater specialization and status differentials in jobs—with education weighing heavily in status.<sup>24</sup> Almost all Kibbutz youth now are interested in higher studies (only 9 percent of the post-army sample indicated otherwise). Higher studies mean being outside the Kibbutz for extended time periods. They also present a better opportunity to make career and social commitments that are incompatible with the Kibbutz.

Another significant change in the post-army period is that the peer group has weakened and has, to some extent, been supplanted by exclusive involvements—heterosexual pairing and self-selected friendships based on common interests. This extends a process that starts in adolescence. Moreover, two historical changes have augmented this tendency toward exclusive involvements. First, the Kibbutz has become

24. G. Adar, "Occupational Prestige in the Kibbutz," *Interchange* 13, no. 1 (1982): 45-54.

increasingly a family-oriented society,<sup>25</sup> with a concomitant weakening of communal functions. Second, the Kibbutz peer group—the prime carrier of Kibbutz values—has become more transient, completely dissipating in some groups. One leaver vividly portrayed this upon his return from military training:

Most of my group left the Kibbutz after the army: to travel, to live outside, for marriage or for another Kibbutz. Some are studying here in Jerusalem. I had no company. My friends had left.

This leaver's experience was extreme; in most groups, friendships extending from childhood are retained. However, the weakening of the community and the transience of the peer group accentuate the process of individuation that is under way. With the peer group's weakening, the individual is more independent and more free to make choices about career, a mate, and place to live. Kibbutz youth, true to their socialization, feel free to make such decisions. Although their families may indicate a desire for them to stay on the Kibbutz, the families usually accept their children's right to decide otherwise. In the 1960's, when there were few leavers among the Kibbutz born, there was more stigma attached to leaving and great pressure was exerted on the youth to stay. But with the increased number of leavers, this has changed. Families whose children stay on the Kibbutz still have more status, but as the leaving phenomenon has become so widespread, the stigma has been reduced, and the individual feels less constrained. In addition, parental pressure to stay conflicts with the value of independence that parents have stressed. As noted by Stanley Greenspan, Kibbutz youth receive a double message from their families: "be independent, but stay on the Kibbutz."<sup>26</sup> This double message is so transparent that it, in itself, is part of the youth culture; it is discussed and criticized.

In the main, the youth culture of the Kibbutz supports the younger generation in a prolonged period of self-definition. The young plan their travels and discuss their career plans and their romantic involvements. Rather than making the individual dependent on the Kibbutz, the youth culture turns the individual in the opposite direction—toward a serious exploration of independence from the Kibbutz. Some definitely decide to leave at this point. Most are noncommittal; they want to explore life outside more fully, and then decide.

*Step 4—Extended Youth: Moving Away.* All Kibbutz youth experience the army and almost all experience the return to the Kibbutz after the army. The decision to live away after the army is, however, a voluntary

25. Y. Talmon, *Family and Community in the Kibbutz* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

26. S. Greenspan, "Leaving the Kibbutz: An Identity Conflict," *Psychiatry* 35 (1972): 291-304.

extension of the period of youth—as described by Kenneth Keniston.<sup>27</sup> Although some leave permanently, for most it is an opportunity to test themselves further before making commitments. Ironically, the opportunity to live outside and travel was originally encouraged by the Kibbutzim. The older members were confident their children would return, and they preferred them to make a knowledgeable choice. Doing so was consistent with the child-centered philosophy of the Kibbutzim.

A decrease in the retention rate of the younger generation has paralleled the policy of encouraging the young to take time away. Knowing to what extent the policy *per se* has caused this decreased retention rate is problematic insofar as pressure from the younger generation has encouraged the policy. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that prior to the 1970s, the decision to leave occurred at a later age and less gradually than at present. Now, consideration for that decision starts in adolescence and is supported by an institutionalized moratorium—so that youth can test the waters gradually before making their commitments. Although this policy does not directly cause youth to leave, it does seem to increase the probability—if only by increasing, and indeed supporting, the opportunity to make outside commitments.

Recognition of this has occurred among the older generation. Originally they supported the time-away policy because they felt that the Kibbutz was so superior to the alternatives that their young would return. One older member at Kibbutz Aleph summed up the matter as follows: "I understand why they want to leave. They have lived in a small community and they want to get out and see the world. But I find it hard to understand why they don't come back."

With a decrease in the retention rate and with the recognition that incompatible commitments are being made during the moratorium period, many Kibbutz members have openly expressed regret about the time-away policy. However, changing the policy at this point would be difficult because having an extended period of noncommitment has become a norm. Moreover, given the resourcefulness of Kibbutz youth, the confidence and contacts they have gained during the army period, and the success of leavers, it is doubtful whether a change in the time-away policy would be effective. It might dissuade some from leaving; it might also force some noncommitted youth to make a permanent break with the Kibbutz.

The decision to take time away from the Kibbutz does not directly cause Kibbutz youth to leave. Most enter this period expecting to return. However, the experiences of this period interact with the process of

27. K. Keniston, "Youth: a new stage of life," *American Scholar* 39 (1970): 631-654.

self-definition that is underway. The openness to new experiences that is an outgrowth of Kibbutz socialization permits a serious exploration of alternatives. Some quickly decide that they prefer city life. Typical was the following response of a twenty-five-year-old female leaver:

After the army I was sure I would be a Kibbutznik . . . I worked hard and organized all the social events for the Kibbutz. I was so busy that I forgot myself. I liked these duties; they were difficult. Then I asked for a year's leave, like everyone. I was sure I'd return after the year, completely sure. I wanted to try living in town, see what was happening outside, how I'd feel in another kind of life . . . Then, after two weeks in Jerusalem, I was sure I wouldn't return to the Kibbutz. I understand how important it was to be free—to do what I really wanted, not to do what others expected.

In some respects, this leaver was atypical, because the change in her thinking was so abrupt. For most, this is not the case. Rather there is a cautious exploration of society outside the Kibbutz, with a careful weighing of the advantages of one as opposed to the advantages of the other.

This exploration is facilitated by the weakening of political ideology in the Kibbutz movement—the lack of political interest. Stayers tend to be more committed to the socialist values of the Kibbutz than leavers.<sup>28</sup> Even though there is a relationship between youth leaving the Kibbutz and lack of commitment to the socialist values of the Kibbutz, the relationship is not sufficiently strong to predict a large part of the variance. According to this same study, about 40 percent of youth remaining on the Kibbutz also lack a commitment to socialist values, and 34 percent of leavers identify as socialists but find that this outlook is better expressed outside the Kibbutz.

A more important result of the lack of politicization of Kibbutz youth is that the interests of the Kibbutz and its future as a movement are not the prime factors in forming commitments. Yet it is commitments—social and career—that heavily influence the decision to leave. If the commitments are compatible with the Kibbutz, then people are likely to make the Kibbutz their home; if the commitments are incompatible, it is more likely that they will leave.

Most Kibbutz youth have social contacts with outsiders when they take time away. These contacts may be other Kibbutz youth living in the city, relatives, or friends that they have made through the army or in other interactions with outsiders. Most Kibbutz youth make a very good social adjustment, and many establish intimate relationships with outsiders.

If a Kibbutz member marries an outsider, the probability of his or her leaving the Kibbutz increases greatly. In two major surveys of leavers,

28. U. Leviatan and E. Orchan, "Kibbutz Ex-members."

marriage to an outsider was the variable that best differentiated the leavers from stayers. In the Leviatan and Orchan study, 77 percent of leavers married outsiders, whereas only 21 percent of stayers did the same.<sup>29</sup> The Nathan, et al., survey shows a similar pattern, although there is a somewhat different pattern for male and female leavers who marry outsiders. Among Kibbutz males, 82 percent of leavers and 52 percent of stayers are married to outsiders. Among Kibbutz females, 78 percent of leavers and only 32 percent of stayers are married to outsiders. Nathan, et al., explain this differential pattern, by suggesting that women have a greater tendency to move to their husband's community than vice-versa.<sup>30</sup>

Two factors confound the interpretation of these data: first, it is not clear what proportion of leavers meet their spouse or spouse-to-be prior to leaving and are influenced to depart from the Kibbutz by that relationship; second, since the samples in both of these surveys are in their late-twenties, some stayers marrying outsiders will, in all probability, be influenced by their spouse to depart after trying the Kibbutz. If the explanation of sex differences in Nathan, et al., is correct, one might speculate that with time a greater proportion of males who have married outsiders will leave, and that eventually the sex difference for Kibbutz leavers married to outsiders will disappear.

Evidence of this possibility was indicated among several couples at Kibbutz Bet. One Kibbutz male who was about to be married to an outsider describes his feelings as follows:

She wants the kids to be with her . . . Well probably have some problems with it. And then, we'll have to decide whether to go to a Moshav or the city or stay here and try to live with the problem.

Thus, although the influence of marital choice on the decision to leave is in need of further research, the evidence suggests that it is an important factor—perhaps the most important factor. In fact, this has long been recognized.<sup>31</sup> However, this factor cannot be viewed in isolation from Kibbutz socialization or the changing relationship of the Kibbutz to the world around it. The inclination to prefer outsiders as marital partners can be linked to an outward-looking socialization.<sup>32</sup> As many members noted, "we know each other too well for there to be any marital attraction." It also can be linked to the declining importance of political ideology

29. U. Leviatan and E. Orchan, "Kibbutz Ex-members."

30. M. Nathan, A. Schnabl, and H. Paskin, "Together and Alone: A 10-year Follow-up Study of 1969 High School Graduates," *The Kibbutz* 8 (1982): 105-115.

31. Y. Talmon, *Family and Community in the Kibbutz*.

32. L. Tiger and J. Shepher, *Women in the Kibbutz* (New York: Harcourt, 1975), argue that the preference of Kibbutz young for outside marital partners is because of an incest taboo. However, they provide no evidence for this explanation.

on the Kibbutz. Kibbutz members—often those wishing to stay—choose their spouse-to-be on the basis of individual compatibility, not on their commitment to the Kibbutz.

One leaver who considers returning described his wife-to-be's views as follows: "She wouldn't live on the Kibbutz . . . But, she didn't say 'no' forever." The question as to whether his wife-to-be would live on the Kibbutz was not an issue in his making a commitment. However, once he had made a commitment to her, the likelihood of his returning to the Kibbutz was reduced greatly.

In addition to Kibbutz socialization, the changing relationship of the Kibbutz to the world around influences the decision to marry an outsider. Previous to the 1970's, the primary source of marital partners was from other Kibbutzim. With the increased interaction between the Kibbutz and outside world, the trend toward outsiders has increased, and the probability of incompatible commitments with the Kibbutz also has increased accordingly. Kibbutz youth do not go searching for these incompatible commitments; rather they are open to them. But once they occur, a die is cast which increases the probability of leaving.

Career commitments also coalesce during this period and affect youth's compatibility with the Kibbutz. Because of the industrialization of the Kibbutz and the concomitant work specialization, there is a greater tendency to think of an individual career than in the past. In addition, during the 1970's the Kibbutzim increased their commitment to higher education, reversing a tradition which downplayed its importance and limited the number of participants.<sup>33</sup> The change in policy to higher education was in part a response to the industrialization of the Kibbutz. Given the egalitarian values of the Kibbutzim and the desire to avoid creating a privileged class, the opportunities were extended and demanded at a level that exceeded rational economic needs.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, virtually all Kibbutz youth wish to partake in higher education.

The Kibbutz economy isn't sufficiently varied to provide outlets for everyone who wished to be a professional. Attempts are made to accommodate the aspirations of as many as possible through rotating positions, having people work outside, or having split careers (for example, half-time as an artist and half-time in kitchen work). But these arrangements often are awkward and create bickering, which can in time, lead people to leave.

33. U. Leviatan, "Higher Education in the Israeli Kibbutz: Revolution and Effect," *Interchange* 13, no. 1 (1982): 68-82.

34. Z. Gamson and M. Palgi, "The Over-educated Kibbutz: Shifting Relations between Social Reproduction and Individual Development on the Kibbutz," *Interchange* 13, no. 1 (1982): 55-67.

In choosing a career, some Kibbutz youth are guided by the economic needs of the Kibbutzim. Many, however, are guided by their own interests and treat the Kibbutz as a secondary consideration. Again, this attitude may be seen as derivative of Kibbutz socialization.

To ensure that their vocational aspirations are not frustrated, an increasing number of Kibbutz youth have chosen to support their own studies, thereby cutting any obligation to return to the Kibbutz. Their willingness to do this reflects the growing confidence of Kibbutz youth in managing by themselves.

Studying for a career usually involves an extended period outside the Kibbutz and the development of a social circle from outside the Kibbutz. It increases the probability of outside marital commitments and of incompatible career commitments. All these factors increase the probability of leaving.

It should be noted that the possibility of extending the youth moratorium beyond the time-away period also exists. Many youth return to the Kibbutz still uncertain about whether they want to make it their home. This was true of persons in their late twenties and thirties. When asked whether they would stay on the Kibbutz, a typical answer was "that depends." Much like youth in the West, Kibbutz youth prefer to keep their options open for as long as possible. It gives them more opportunity to travel, to experiment with different work possibilities, and to experiment with different personal relations.

Their decision to live on the Kibbutz is pragmatic. Even though they live on the Kibbutz and therefore they are more likely to make compatible commitments than those who live outside, their attitude often is non-committal, and they deliberately maintain it as long as possible. This may be contrasted to the pioneers who were politically committed to building the Kibbutz, often with great sacrifice to their careers, health and safety. Their sense of collectivity hasn't been realized in the younger generation.

*Step 5—Making a Commitment to Leave.* The decision to move away from the Kibbutz often comes during, or immediately following, the time-away period—although for many it comes later, after an extended period of experimentation. The willingness of the Kibbutzim to accept back their young whenever they desire, eases the transition to another lifestyle. Even though a Kibbutz leaver may feel definite about his move, he can proceed with the comfort of knowing that he can return to the Kibbutz. The insecurity about leaving is reduced.

In the past, this was not the case. A Kibbutz leaver was a pariah, who had burned his bridges. The change was more fundamental and was fraught with greater insecurity. Given the present policies of the Kibbutzim, it often is difficult to discern the differences between the moratorium and a permanent change.

If asked, youth who decide to make a permanent break with the Kibbutz will give one or many reasons for doing so. Many allude to the desire to raise their children at home; some allude to the lack of privacy on the Kibbutz; some allude to the lack of freedom and the routine; some single people—particularly single women—refer to the difficulties of living in a family-oriented society with a limited number of single adults. However, most Kibbutz leavers have positive feelings about the Kibbutz and defend it against criticism. Of twenty-five leavers that I interviewed, only three expressed a strong dislike of the Kibbutz. Many leavers also were very critical of various features of city life (such as the materialism, noise, and pollution), although noting things that they liked better (such as greater freedom). With but few exceptions, most seemed capable of living in both worlds—Kibbutz and outside—and expressed uncertainty about which was better suited to their needs:

I like the Kibbutz. In some ways I feel that I belong to the Kibbutz more than Haifa. I didn't tell them I'd be back, but I might be . . . I had a good relationship with the Kibbutz and I like the people. It's nice to go home and be there for a while. It's different to live there and give them the opportunity to take part in your life. As long as I am studying and going further, it's good for me to be free without any commitments. But there are some advantages which other communities don't have. It's more productive, life is simple, more real.

Almost all the interviewees entertained the idea of returning to the Kibbutz but acknowledged that this became less likely with the passage of time.

An important reason that returning becomes less likely is the success of their adjustment outside the Kibbutz.<sup>35</sup> The evidence suggests they establish professional careers quickly, they have good incomes, are married with children, and are relatively satisfied with their new life. This adjustment is assisted by the independence and resourcefulness they learn on the Kibbutz and the respect which employers in the city accord to Kibbutz-born. Again, this seemingly successful adjustment is not the cause of their leaving. It does, however, increase the probability that their outside commitments will be maintained; it reinforces them.

Most leavers keep in touch with their former home, making regular visits to their family and friends. However, with the passage of time, there is a distancing from the Kibbutz as their social ties in the city assume greater importance. This weakening of ties to the Kibbutz is facilitated by the mobility within the modern Kibbutz and the emphasis on the family. The circle of friends that the leaver grew up with is frequently scattered. In addition, many Kibbutz leavers have surprisingly few close attachments, even to former peers. This seems to support the view that

35. U. Leviatan and E. Orchan, "Kibbutz Ex-members."

Kibbutz peer group relationships often lack the emotional intensity of friendships in the city—which are more selective.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the weakening of social ties to the Kibbutz, there is a psychological distancing. Initially, many leavers maintain a strong emotional identity with the Kibbutz, defending it against criticism. Even though they may want to live outside, they identify as "Kibbutzniks." Many attempt to integrate with their new life those aspects of Kibbutz life that they appreciate; often they plan to live away from the city and express a desire for material simplicity. In essence, there is an effort to take part of Kibbutz life to the city and there is regret about having to leave other parts behind.

In that respect, the Kibbutz leavers are analagous to other minority groups in a modern society. Their special habits, and the fact that others treat them as different, tend to reinforce their identity as Kibbutzniks. But with the passage of time, this identity weakens—because the conditions that foster it also weaken. The behavior of the Kibbutz leavers becomes less different than that of other outsiders, and other outsiders cease to relate to them as Kibbutzniks. Those who remain on the Kibbutz also change their attitude toward leavers. Initially, they treated the leavers as members of the Kibbutz and encourage them to return. But, with time, this too changes; the leaver is seen as an outsider and treated as such. The last link to the society of their birth eventually becomes severed, and the leavers' emotional identity parallels their location—that is, they cease to be Kibbutzniks.

### 3. *A Concluding Note*

The phenomenon of youth leaving the Kibbutz can be seen in the context of structural and cultural changes in the Kibbutz. The Israeli Kibbutz is a unique mixture of a traditional community which values the collective interest and a modern, industrial society which respects the individual. In the initial phase, the interests of the community received priority, and communal ideology was supported by the social structures of the Kibbutz. Work was manual, requiring the coordinated effort of teams of people; private amenities were few, because the standard of living was low. As such, people shared communal facilities. Contact with outsiders was limited, because transportation was poor and communications were relatively primitive. Most importantly, individual sacrifice was seen as serving a higher ideal, because the pioneers believed that they were creating a blueprint for socialism in Israel and, perhaps, internationally.

36. B. Bettelheim, *The Children of the Dream* (New York: Avon, 1969).

An important facet of this blueprint was an improved standard of living, which required that the economy have the technical efficiency to become economically competitive. But the modernization of the Kibbutz economy—like modernization throughout the world—has presented a fundamental challenge to its communal fabric. Work has become more industrialized, with the relationship to the machine assuming high priority. Work is more specialized, requiring lengthy periods of training that separate the individual from the community. To prevent a privileged class from forming, the Kibbutz has had to extend higher education to everyone, ironically separating more individuals from the community. Increased affluence has led to more individual amenities—TVS, larger apartments, automobiles—that also separate the individual and the family from the community. A common scene each night at Kibbutz Bet was the individual family watching TV in its individual apartment. This change, which has been made possible by greater affluence, is symbolic of a weakened community. Modern communications have also brought the outside world into the Kibbutz, weakening the communal culture. Ideas that are alien to the Kibbutz and its continuation have found a responsive audience among youth seeking self-definition. Similarly, modern transportation has facilitated greater interaction between Kibbutz members and outsiders. From a tightly integrated community preoccupied with its own development, the Kibbutz has been transformed into an outward-looking international village that is a stop-over for youth throughout the world. *Ideology has increasingly become externally-controlled.*

In addition, the Utopian fervor that inspired the collectivism of the pioneers has dissipated. (The Greeks define Utopia as "no place," and one might speculate that a Utopian initiative—even though relatively successful—inevitably leads to some disillusionment.) The Kibbutz has not been the lodestone to outsiders that the pioneers anticipated, and socialist history—which once was a major part of the curriculum—has been eliminated from the regular school program.<sup>37</sup> Kibbutz young, like youth throughout the world, are not very political—viewing the Kibbutz as a home rather than a political cause. Symbolic of this change, is the fact that Kibbutz youth movement—once the lifeblood of the Kibbutz movement's growth—has ceased to be a major influence for the younger generation.

All of these structural and cultural changes have swung the pendulum away from the community to the individual. Official collective ideology notwithstanding, the individual and his needs are the most salient aspects of the modern Kibbutz. In childhood and adolescence

37. J. Quarter, "Socialism among the Younger Generation of the Kibbutz," *The Kibbutz* (forthcoming).

this is expressed in the child-centered philosophy and progressive education. Once the message of the individual's importance is introjected, it becomes the *raison d'être*. This type of socialization *per se* does not cause people to leave the Kibbutz, but it causes Kibbutz young to look at life in terms of "what suits me" and to explore alternatives that otherwise would not have been considered. For some, this exploration leads to commitments that are incompatible with the Kibbutz.

The sequential model presented to analyze the leaving phenomenon does not lend itself to predicting each individual's behavior. Too many factors enter into the equation, including the element of chance—an artist who values individual expression, for example, may find more support for his work on the Kibbutz than elsewhere. However, this mode of analysis does predict aggregate change. Having a socialization that emphasizes the individual and his needs does increase the probability of Kibbutz youth making outside commitments, especially where opportunities are available. Modern culture produces an outlook that makes the individual view change as positive. For that reason, this type of sequential model may have general utility in analyzing life change.

Even when Kibbutz young do make their life on the Kibbutz, their individualistic outlook is placing pressure on the Kibbutz's communal structures to change. These pressures are taking the direction of having children sleep at home,<sup>38</sup> thereby weakening communal childrearing; and having normative evaluation in schools,<sup>39</sup> thereby weakening collective education. Matters such as differential payment for work have been discussed (albeit without broad support as yet), and this would weaken collective consumption. Put simply, the communal fabric of the Kibbutz has not been able to withstand the modern dynamics that are embedded within it. Although communal ideology has slowed and resisted the individualism of modernization, the pressure for change is increasing. Moreover, with the passing away of the pioneers—the prime carriers of collective thinking—and the exodus of the young in increasingly large numbers, the trend toward the individual is accelerating.

At the time of this study (1980-81), a crisis atmosphere existed in the Kibbutzim, with many wondering whether the Kibbutz as a communal society would survive. Without the manpower of the younger generation, the Kibbutz would have to hire more outsiders, thus destroying one of its most fundamental principles of "independent labor." The increasing number of leavers also has led to a system of compensation, which is a form of implicit equity and a small step from a pattern of cooperative ownership with explicit equity as opposed to the present communal ownership.

38. L. Tiger and J. Shepher, *Women in the Kibbutz*.

39. J. Quarter, "Kibbutz Education."

This tension between communalism and modernization is not particular to the Kibbutz. Rather it is part of the development of many traditional societies. However, within the Kibbutz, this tension is striking, because unlike traditional societies, the Kibbutz has been able to attain a good standard of living while, at the same time, maintaining communal ownership of the means of production and communal consumption together with egalitarian distribution of goods and services. It is not a society that has had to abandon its communalism to develop. Yet, in spite of this, the process of modernization that has occurred within the community has weakened the community, and has transformed it from a commune to a community of families. Much of the economy is regional (inter-Kibbutz) and the pattern of social relationships increasingly extends beyond the boundaries of the individual Kibbutz, thereby challenging the principle of Kibbutz autonomy.

Given the economic success of the Kibbutz, its future is not imperiled. However, the array of social influences which are increasing the mobility of the younger generation are forcing a rethinking of the Kibbutz structures. As a volunteeristic society, the Kibbutz has to adapt to the needs of its members. Currently, this is leading to "private sleeping arrangement," as more parents insist that their children sleep at home rather than in the children's house.

It would be folly to attempt to predict where these individualistic pressures will lead. However, the historic trend towards a less cohesive community shows no sign of abating.<sup>40</sup>

40. In retrospect, it might have been useful to take sex differences into account in the analysis of the data. Part of the reason for not doing this was there were no "obvious" sex differences in the issues for which I collected data. There was a variety of reasons that people gave for leaving the Kibbutz. At first glance, the patterns did not strike me as sex-specific. Rather, the common features were a general willingness to explore alternative lifestyles and the development of incompatible commitments (for example, marriage and career). I am aware that other researchers such as Michal Palgi and Menachem Gerson attribute the rate of leaving among women to dissatisfaction with their roles on the Kibbutz. In general, most of the former Kibbutz members that I interviewed did not give dissatisfaction with the Kibbutz as their primary reason for leaving, and the tendency to express dissatisfaction did not appear to be stronger among women than men. In spite of a degree of dissatisfaction with the Kibbutz and with their current milieu, the predominant reason for leaving was a willingness to experiment and the development of commitments that were incompatible with the Kibbutz. This seemed to be the case for both women and men.

