ABSTRACT
THE EXPERIENCE OF MOTHERHOOD IN THE KIBBUTZ AS EXPERIENCED BY THREE GENERATIONS OF MOTHERS AT THE END OF THE 90’S

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This study aims to explain the meaning of motherhood to mothers of three generations in kibbutzim belonging to the Kibbutz Artzi movement at the end of the 90s.

The starting point of the study is interpretational and tries to examine the ways and meanings in which the subjective motherhood experience is constructed in connection to the collective identity of the changing kibbutz social reality.

The theoretical foundations on which this study rests are feminist approaches that refer to the social structuring of motherhood. Three trends can be distinguished in these theoretical foundations:

1. The radical stream, focusing on the female body and tending to negate the biological birth processes, claiming that motherhood is a patriarchal trap, the source of male control and suppression of the female body (Beauvoir, 1953; Firestone, 1970; Oakley, 1974; Pierce, 1976; Allen, 1986; Rich, 1991).

2. The liberal approach, dealing more with the social and organizational institutionalization of motherhood. This approach encourages women to motherhood and to develop identities additional to that of motherhood. (Dinnerstein, 1976; Chodorow, 1978; Ruddick, 1980; Hirsch, 1981; O’Brien, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Langer, 1986; Rich, 1989; Allen, 1992).

3. The third approach represents linguistic feminists, who connect language, gender and motherhood. They claim that existing language cannot express the experience of motherhood with its complexities and power (Cixous, 1975; Kristeva, 1980, 1982, 1997; Irigaray, 1986; Glenn, 1994).

The subjective and collective structuring of motherhood in the kibbutz is presented via three interconnected circles of content: the cooperative education (Golan, 1953; Plotnick, 1992; Levin, 1997), the family in the kibbutz (Talmon-Gerber, 1972; Rosner et. al., 1978; Ben-Raphael and Witman, 1986; Rosner and Getz, 1996), with the third circle describing the developments in the status of women in the kibbutz (Talmon-Gerber, 1972; Levitan, 1976; Mednick, 1983; Palgi and Adar, 1997).

The research approach is characterized by the interpretive-phenomenological point of view that analyses reality from the perspective of those who experience it. The interpretive analysis of the narrative offered by the statements by the research population employed Grounded Theory, according to the approaches of Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and of Denzin and Lincoln (1994).
30 mothers were interviewed in order to obtain the information, all members of Kibbutzim belonging to the Kibbutz Artzi movement. Ten represented each generation: the founding generation, aged 75-85, the second generation of the kibbutz daughters aged 45-60 and the third generation of kibbutz women aged 27-40.

Three research questions were formulated using theoretical material and a pilot study. The first aims to extract the personal meaning, provided by these women, of the experiences of motherhood to their lives. The second question seeks the generational characteristics in the motherhood experience regarding each of the three generations studied. The third question aims to discover the characteristics of the motherhood experience in the kibbutz beyond the generational aspect.

The issues discerned in the interviews are presented on two axes:

1. The ideological kibbutz axis that presents the attitudes of the speakers towards the kibbutz ideology, towards organizing cooperative schooling, children’s houses, the role of the child nurse and the children’s sleeping arrangements.

2. The mother-gender axis that represents the attitudes of the speakers to their maternal identity, their female identity, to employment, education, their link to their parents’ homes and in particular to their motherhood. The junction of these two axes spreads the multi-voiced mosaic of the motherhood experience, in the encounter between the public voice and the private voice. Together with the personal expression of the research population, exists the potential for changing the reality by its redefinition.