

# The Complicated Nature of Stigma

Realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation for Bedouins in the Negev, Israel

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Photo credit: Mark Williams. Water lines run along an open sewage canal in Um Batin, a Bedouin village in the Negev region of Israel.

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## **I. Introduction**

This paper addresses how stigma influences access to water and sanitation by Bedouins living in unrecognized villages in the Negev, a desert-like region in southern Israel. Unrecognized villages are settlements that are considered illegal under Israeli law; in contrast, the Bedouins believe that as an indigenous people with their own property ownership system that predates the formation of the State of Israel, they are the rightful owners of this land.

Section II draws on the sociological literature to define stigma. The concept incorporates many different elements, including labeling, stereotypes, separation, status loss, discrimination and power differentials.

Section III examines how Bedouins in Israel experience “existential” and “achieved” stigma; how they are “labeled” both by formal institutions of power and informally by society; how the concept of stigma relates to a perceived “identity threat”; how stigma incorporates loss of status, institutional discrimination and power differentials, without necessarily leading to victimization of the stigmatized; and finally, the role that language plays in promoting stigmatization of the Bedouins.

Section IV highlights how stigma has influenced access to water and sanitation by Bedouins in unrecognized villages. Israel does not provide household water access or sanitation services to Bedouins living in unrecognized villages because, as the government freely admits, it seeks to incentivize/pressure the Bedouins to move to urban townships established by the government. This paper suggests that stigma has contributed to the current government policy, which ties access to basic services to the underlying land issues, thereby institutionalizing disparate water and sanitation access.

Section V briefly summarizes measures being taken to address and overcome stigmatization of the Bedouins in Israel. These include political measures to resolve the underlying land issues and litigation that seeks to improve access to basic services. Notably, the Supreme Court of Israel recently invoked the human right to water under both Israeli and international law in a case brought by Bedouins living in unrecognized villages (Abadallah Abu Massad, et al. v Water Commissioner & Israel Lands Administration 2011). The authors of this report recently completed a working paper analyzing the implications of this legal decision; the findings of that report are incorporated (Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012).

In conclusion, Bedouins in Israel experience stigmatization, which manifests in different ways and prevents them from realizing the human rights to water and sanitation.

## **II. Defining stigma**

The term “stigmatization” derives from the ancient Greek word “stig,” which means “to prick” because the Greeks would tattoo their slaves with a pointed instrument that made a mark called a “stigma” (Falk 2001, 17). Modern “usage of the words ‘stigma’ and ‘stigmatization’ refers to an invisible sign of disapproval which permits insiders to draw a line around ‘outsiders’ in order to demarcate the limits of inclusion in any group. That type of demarcation permits ‘insiders’ to know who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ and allows the group to maintain its solidarity by demonstrating what happens to those who deviate

from accepted norms of conduct” (Falk 2001, 17). Indeed, “sociology of deviance is the systematic study of social norm violation that is subject to social sanction” (Henry 2009, 1).

Contemporary understanding of stigma derives from Erving Goffman’s classic 1963 book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity* (Major and O’Brien 2005, 394). Although there is not a single definition for stigma, the literature suggests an emerging consensus about its characteristics, which Major and O’Brien summarize as follows:

According to Goffman (1963, p. 3), stigma is an attribute that extensively discredits an individual, reducing him or her “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.” Crocker et al. (1998) proposed that stigmatization occurs when a person possesses (or is believed to possess) “some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (p. 505). . . . Importantly, stigma is relationship- and context-specific; it does not reside in the person but in a social context. . . .

In stigmatization, “marks” become associated with “discrediting dispositions” — negative evaluations and stereotypes (Jones et al. 1984). These stereotypes and evaluations are generally widely shared and well known among members of a culture (Crocker et al. 1998, Steele 1997), and they become a basis for excluding or avoiding members of the stereotyped category (Leary & Schreindorfer 1998, Major & Eccleston 2004). Although both powerful and powerless groups may stereotype and negatively evaluate the other, because the former control access to resources, their beliefs are likely to prevail (Fiske 1993, Link & Phelan 2001). Furthermore, members of high-status and low-status groups enter situations with different understandings of the position of their group in the larger society. Thus, members of high-status and low-status groups are likely to respond in dramatically different ways to being the target of negative stereotypes and/or discrimination, even though the immediate situation seems the same (Branscombe 1998, Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev 2000, Schmitt & Branscombe 2002, Schmitt et al. 2002, Sekaquaptewa & Thompson 2002). Without reference to power, the stigma concept becomes overly broad. In short, stigma exists when labeling, negative stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, and low status co-occur in a power situation that allows these processes to unfold (Link & Phelan 2001). Although each of these terms is often used interchangeably with stigma, stigma is a broader and more inclusive concept than any one of these processes.

(Major and O’Brien 2005, 394–395).

The stigmatization of certain minority groups can intentionally or unintentionally create a sense of community by the majority. Summarizing the work of Émile Durkheim, “one of the founding fathers of sociology,” Falk writes:

[T]he establishment of a sense of community is facilitated by a class of actors who carry a stigma and stigmatization and are termed “deviant.” Unity is provided to any collectivity by uniting against those who are seen as a common threat to the social order and morality of a group. Consequently, the stigma and stigmatization of some persons demarcates a boundary that reinforces the conduct of conformists. Therefore, a

collective sense of morality is achieved by the creation of stigma and stigmatization and deviance.

(Falk 2001, 17).

The next section highlights ways the Bedouins experience stigma in Israel, expanding on some of the sociological concepts used in the stigma literature.

### **III. Bedouins in Israel Experience Stigma**

#### **A. Existential and Achieved Stigma**

Bedouins living in the Negev region of Israel experience both “existential” and “achieved” stigma. Existential stigma “derives from a condition which the target of the stigma either did not cause or over which he has little control” (Falk 2001, 11). Achieved stigma applies to those “who have earned a stigma because of their conduct and/or because they contributed heavily to attaining that stigma” (Falk 2001, 11).

The Bedouins experience “existential” stigma because although they are Israeli citizens, the fact that they are Arab, Muslim and Bedouin sets them in contrast to the goals of the Zionist state. Understanding how stigma impacts the Bedouins living in Israel is complicated. The state of Israel was founded as a homeland for Jews in response to the tremendous stigma that Jews had historically experienced. “[T]he Jews living in Christian Europe were viewed for two millennia as stigmatized outsiders,” causing unending misery that culminated in the atrocities of the Holocaust (Falk 2001, 10, 32). Indeed, the yellow Star of David that the Nazis forced the Jews to wear during the Holocaust is a universally recognized symbol of stigma. Yet, many Zionists believe that the goal of having a homeland for Jewish people means that only Jews should own the land – some going even as far as saying that only Jews should be allowed to live in Israel; as a result, Bedouin ownership of land, and even their very existence in Israel, presents a fundamental conflict to the Zionist state: For example, “[i]n several of his essays, Rabbi Kahane wrote that the gates of heaven were opened wide in 1967 and that God was ready to instantly redeem the people of Israel. If only they followed the right path, returned to the faith, and kicked the Arabs out of the Land of Israel, the Jews could walk straight into the kingdom of Israel” (Sprinzak 1998, 123).

Currently, there are an estimated 193,000 Bedouins living in the Siyag region of the Negev (Abu Ras 2011, 7; Meallem, Garb, and Cwikel 2010). They comprise 20% of the total population of people living in the Negev, but they currently reside on approximately 3% of the land in Negev (ACRI 2011, 3). Approximately 50% of Bedouins in the Negev live in 35 villages that are not recognized by the Israeli government, while the other half have been relocated into townships planned by the Israeli government. There are also approximately another 10 villages that are in the process of being recognized by the Israeli government; they are part of the Abu Basma regional council (Shmueli and Khamaisi 2011, 113–114; Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012, 11–12).

The existential nature of the stigma that Bedouins in Israel experience is intertwined with the complexities of identity that underlie the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Bedouins are an indigenous group of semi-nomadic Arab tribes that have lived in the Negev (or Naqab in Arabic) since the fifth century (Abu-Saad 2011, 121; Meallem, Garb, and Cwikel 2010; Anaya 2011)(Anaya 2011). Bedouins are

often described as a separate ethnic group, distinct from other Palestinian Arabs. This is partly a political construct because the “Bedouins, unlike the Arab population, had not been considered a national enemy” by Israel (Shamir 1996, 238). For example, a seminal Israeli government report on the Bedouins, known as the Goldberg Report, notes that the Bedouins have “demonstrated identification with, and loyalty to the State, primarily by massive enlistment in the security services and [Israeli Defense Forces]” (Goldberg 2009, para. 17). However, others suggest that Bedouins “are distinct because they inhabit desert lands, but this should not infer a unified racial, ethnic, or national group with a homogeneous style of life” (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, and Al-Krenawi 2003, 241). Bedouins have “coterminous belongings” with a variety of identities including “the tribe, the region, Israel, the Palestinians in Israel, the wider Palestinian people, and the Arab and Islamic worlds” (Yiftachel 2009, 249); others suggest that the designation of Bedouins as a separate ethnic group in Israel is designed to create differences by a hegemonic state (Jakubowska 1992). At the same time, there is some evidence that Israel’s policies towards the Bedouins are encouraging them to identify more and more with the broader Palestinian and Islamic causes (Yiftachel 2009, 250–251). Identity, race and ethnicity are complicated subjects that are based both on biology and social construct (Falk 2001, 173). Nevertheless, the fact that the Bedouins are not Jewish means that their very existence contributes to “existential” stigma in a Zionist state.

The Bedouins also experience “achieved” stigma because their lifestyle and their refusal to relinquish land claims contribute to the perception in Israel that they are different and that they are rule-breakers. The current situation in the Negev can only be understood by recognizing that there are two competing narratives:

From the Israeli Government’s perspective, the current disputes over land in the Negev/Naqab Desert stem largely from the fact that most Bedouins did not register their land with the governing authorities prior to 1948. From the perspective of the Bedouins, the dispute is caused by the fact that the Israeli government does not recognize their traditional land claims. The extent to which the lack of official document matters is a hotly contested subject, and the story is further complicated by the displacement of Bedouins that occurred after the state of Israel was created.

(Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012, 9).

The concept of “achieved stigma” is most applicable to the Bedouins living in “unrecognized villages.” Yiftachel refers to these informal settlements as part of the “gray space” of planning and development, which is “between the ‘lightness’ of legality/ approval/ safety and the ‘darkness’ of eviction/ destruction/ death” (Yiftachel 2009, 243). Although quietly tolerated, these informal “gray” settlements are subject to “derogatory discourses about their putative ‘contamination’, ‘criminality’ and ‘danger’ to the desired ‘order of things’” (Yiftachel 2009, 243). The Bedouins’ persistence in maintaining their pastoral lifestyle in unrecognized villages that do not have basic amenities contributes to their stigma as being uncivilized and backward people.

During interviews with academics, government officials, non-governmental organizations and attorneys in Israeli during December 2011, it was clear that for the Bedouins, the “existential” and “achieved” nature of stigma operates in a feedback loop. Bedouin identity and hierarchy is tied to land (Shamir 1996, 235). Their refusal to relinquish their land claims and their attempts to preserve their traditions are symbols of *sumood*, an “Arabic term denoting perseverance, patience and quiet determination” (Yiftachel 2009, 249). However, many Israeli Jews with whom we spoke could not understand why the

Bedouins in unrecognized villages continued to live in sordid conditions, without access to basic services like water, sanitation and electricity, when there were “modern” apartments available in the urban Bedouin townships with access to municipal services.

## **B. Formal and Informal Labeling**

The stigma that the Bedouins of the Negev experience is also the product of deviance “labeling,” which means that individuals “possess potentially discrediting characteristics because negative judgments are imposed on them” (Falk 2001, 20–21). Labeling is considered “formal” when a formal agency of social control, such as the police or the courts, uses its legal and bureaucratic power to enforce the label. In contrast, “informal” labeling occurs as a result of interpersonal responses that lead to the imposition of perceived characteristics, such as “aggressive,” “hysterical,” or “promiscuous” (Falk 2001, 26–27).

The Bedouins in the Negev are subject to formal labeling because the Israeli government has developed separate committees, laws and agencies for the Bedouins. For example, the Israeli government has historically created numerous committees to resolve the Bedouin land disputes, including the Goldberg Committee, which was established in 2007 and was headed by former Supreme Court Judge Eliezer Goldberg (Goldberg 2009). To implement the Goldberg Report’s recommendations, the Israeli government formed a new committee headed by Ehud Praver, former deputy chairman of the National Security Council and current head of the Policy Planning Department in the Prime Minister’s Office (Prime Minister Office 2011a). This Committee released its report in September, 2011, known as the “Praver Plan,”<sup>1</sup> which is forming the basis of a new, controversial law (Prime Minister Office 2011b; Adalah 2011).

The Bedouins in the Negev are subject to the authority of special agencies, including the Authority for the Formalization of Bedouin Settlement in the Negev. The Israeli Water Authority also has a special water policy for the unrecognized villages and a “water committee,” which exists only to assess requests for water connections that are brought by Bedouins in unrecognized villages.

The term “nomad” is a label used formally and informally, which contributes to the Bedouins’ stigmatization. Nomadism is often emphasized by those who seek to minimize the Bedouins’ legal claims to their land (Shamir 1996, 235–237). For example, the Goldberg Report acknowledges that the Israeli government is fearful of the Bedouins “as a nomadic society that threatens the territoriality of the new State” (Goldberg 2009, para. 17). However, the term “nomadism” is a label that contributes to stigma because it is “associated with chaos and rootlessness [and] is the perfect mirror image of modern law, which assumes and demands the ordering of populations within definite spatial and temporal boundaries” (Shamir 1996, 237). Indeed, the stigma associated with nomadism could be understood as a form of “societal deviance,” which “refers to a condition widely perceived, in advance and in general, as being deviant . . . and a violation of norms or social expectations” (Falk 2001, 22). “Nomadism becomes a deviance that modern law cannot but attempt to correct” (Shamir 1996, 237). In fact, the tribes in the northern Negev were *semi-nomadic*, cultivating crops in the northern Negev, while also moving around with their herds in a circuitous pattern (Abu-Saad 2011, 121; Meallem, Garb, and Cwikel 2010). Tribes that lived farther south in the heart of the desert had a more nomadic lifestyle, but they

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<sup>1</sup> The Praver Report is officially titled “Recommendations of the Committee for the Implementation of the Goldberg Report for Formalization of Bedouin Settlements in the Negev.” The name “Praver” is sometimes translated into English as “Praver.”

tended to follow the same annual routes (Shmueli and Khamaisi 2011, 111). Today, the Bedouins that formerly lived in southern Israel have mostly been relocated to a region in the northern Negev known as the Siyag and they are sedentary for the most part (Shmueli and Khamaisi 2011, 113). Nevertheless, “nomad” is an informal label that contributes to stigma because a Bedouin nomad is perceived to be “a trespasser, a lawbreaker or, at best, a creature taking its first steps toward socialization” (Shamir 1996, 237).

Bedouins living in unrecognized villages are also formally labeled as rule-breakers. For example, a recent Israeli Supreme Court decision that invoked the human right to water in a case brought by Bedouins in unrecognized villages stated:

The illegal settlements of the Bedouin throughout the Negev have become a national problem par excellence, whose implications are widespread in all areas of life. These settlements greatly damage the laws of planning and construction and the protection of property; they are a case of a “group of people making a law unto themselves,” and choosing, at their own discretion, when and how to settle, with total disregard to state laws, including basic planning regulations . . . .

Over and above all, the phenomenon of illegal Bedouin settlement is an expression of deep disregard for the governance of law, and of principles of public order that bind all citizens. A civilized and well-managed country cannot accept a situation where a group of people make a law for themselves, which opposes the rules of public order and law, and exceeds the realms of a normal society.

(Abadallah Abu Massad, et al. v Water Commissioner & Israel Lands Administration 2011, para. 42).

The formal label of the Bedouins as nomadic rule-breakers contributes to the host of informal labels that are also attributed to the Bedouins. Many of the government officials and some of the academics with whom we met could not understand why the Bedouins persisted in living in unrecognized villages that presented such challenging living situations. That they were willing to live in harsh conditions, frequently without electricity, running water or other municipal services that are expected by and provided to most Israeli citizens, contributed to the perception of Bedouins as a backward, uncivilized people.

The labels and stereotypes that are often affixed to the Bedouins are based on facts; however, as will be discussed later, what makes them stigmatizing is that the labels are associated with a loss of power and status within society. For example, Bedouins have large families and “one of the highest birth rates in the world” (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, and Al-Krenawi 2003, 242). Gender roles are strongly defined, with patriarchal communities and polygamous family structures (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, and Al-Krenawi 2003, 242, 245). Moreover, many Bedouins lack formal schooling, do not have marketable job qualifications and rely to a certain extent on state welfare to support the large families. As a result, the Bedouins are often informally labeled as uncivilized, polygamous, having too many children, ‘freeloading’ off of state welfare, uneducated, etc. In one academic article, the Bedouins, along with other Arabs, are denounced for “suck[ing] the marrow from the bones of the shrinking middle class;” and, the article states that payments by the state of Israel to Bedouins based on family size “have encouraged many Bedouin quite simply to ‘produce’ children, pure and simple, as a source of income” (Bystrov and Soffer 2008, 69, 82–83). Although these labels might be based on facts that have some element of truth, they are used as derogatory stereotypes. Moreover, they are attributed to the community as a whole, without regard to



individual circumstances. As a result, “the real indicator of stigmatization is *imputed* deviance, not actual behavior” (Falk 2001, 26) (emphasis in original).

### C. Identity Threat

The “identity threat model of stigma” proposed by Major and O’Brien help explains how stigmatization has negatively impacted Bedouin communities by threatening their very identity:

This model posits that responses to stigma-relevant situations and circumstances are a function of cues in the immediate situation, collective representations of one’s stigma status, and individual characteristics. These combine to affect appraisals of the significance of the situation for well-being. Identity threat results when an individual appraises the demands imposed by a stigma-relevant stressor as potentially harmful to his or her social identity, and as exceeding his or her resources to cope with those demands. Identity threat leads to involuntary stress responses such as anxiety, vigilance to threat, and decreased working memory capacity, and motivates attempts at threat reduction through coping strategies such as blaming negative events on discrimination, identifying more closely with the threatened group, and disengaging self-esteem from threatening domains. These involuntary stress responses and voluntary coping efforts have implications for important outcomes such as self-esteem, academic achievement, and health.

(Major and O’Brien 2005, 411–412).

For the Bedouins, moving to the townships often results in a breakdown of the traditional way of life, the family structure, and economic independence. The Bedouins have historically had a subsistence level of living, surviving off of the land through agriculture and animal husbandry. Most Bedouins give up their agricultural occupations when they relocate to the townships. The townships do not provide alternative employment opportunities because they are generally not near factories or other industries, resulting in high unemployment (Goldberg 2009, para. 57). “Discriminatory employment practices and peripheral location have contributed to the deterioration of Israel’s most impoverished towns, wracked by unemployment, youth crime, theft, property damage, prostitution, and the like” (Shmueli and Khamaisi 2011, 113).

The transition from the rural lifestyle to the urban townships has been the most difficult for women. Bedouin women traditionally had a significant economic role, responsible for herding, handicrafts, raising the family, etc. (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, and Al-Krenawi 2003, 242). But, because of cultural gender norms, it is difficult for women to work outside the home. Some evidence also suggests that domestic violence is more common in the townships than in the unrecognized villages (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, and Al-Krenawi 2003, 247).

At the same time, Bedouins who remain in unrecognized villages experience significant hardships that can lead to mental and physical health problems:

Bedouins who reside in these “unrecognized villages” face major legal and bureaucratic problems. The Israeli Master Plan, prepared in accordance with the Planning and Building Law of 1965, designates the northern Negev for agriculture, industry, military

and related purposes, and prohibits residential construction in these areas. As a result, Bedouins in unrecognized villages have no ability to legally obtain building permits (ACRI 2011, 4). Because the houses in the unrecognized villages do not have the requisite permits, the residents live under constant threat of home demolition. Moreover, because of the constant demolition threat,<sup>2</sup> most buildings consist of non-permanent structures made with relatively inexpensive materials, such as tin walls and roofs that can easily be replaced; these materials do not provide adequate living conditions, and result in the houses being too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer (COHRE 2008, 5). The villages also do not have access to basic infrastructure facilities and services, such as electricity, household water, roads, health care, and schools (Almi 2006).

(Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012, 12).

In an interview conducted in December 2011, Thabet Abu Ras, who heads the Negev office of Adalah and who also teaches at Ben Gurion University, offered an interesting observation that helped explain the relationship between stigma and identity. Abu Ras suggested that the government of Israel does not seem to realize that for the Bedouins, there can be “modernization without urbanization.” He noted that although Israel is a largely urban country, its identity is tied to land and to an agricultural way of life, as epitomized for the Jews by the kibbutz and the moshavim. He suggested that the Bedouins wanted to modernize: they wanted access to education, services and modern technology; however, they also wanted to maintain their traditional, rural way of life. Yet, the conflation of “modern” with “urban” underlies the stigma that the Bedouin experience in Israel.

#### **D. Power, Status Loss and Discrimination – But Not Helpless Victims**

Stigma is not simply the result of existential/achieved differences, labeling and stereotyping, but also the product of status loss, discrimination and differentials in social, economic and political power (Link and Phelan 2001, 367). “[W]hen people are labeled, set apart, and linked to undesirable characteristics, a rationale is constructed for devaluing, rejecting, and excluding them. Thus, people are stigmatized when the fact that they are labeled, set apart, and linked to undesirable characteristics leads them to experience status loss and discrimination (Link and Phelan 2001, 370–371). Status loss is an “almost immediate consequence of successful negative labeling and stereotyping is a general downward placement of a person in a status hierarchy. The person is connected to undesirable characteristics that reduce his or her status in the eyes of the stigmatizer” (Link and Phelan 2001, 371).

Status loss is manifested in two ways in the Bedouin communities. First, in the relationship between the Bedouins and Jewish Israeli citizens, the informal and formal labels ascribed to the Bedouins, such as being rule-breakers, clearly results in a loss of status in mainstream Israeli society. Indeed, to pressure the Bedouins to relinquish their land claims and move to the townships, the government largely denies unrecognized villages access to basic services, like electricity, water and sanitation, and authorizes demolitions of entire villages on a semi-regular basis. Yet, stigmatization also exists in Bedouin society

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the village of El Arakib, which is west of Route 40, has been demolished approximately 32 times since the summer of 2010. In addition, while the research team was in Israel, several villages received demolition orders and the villagers, along with their legal advocates, filed emergency motions in court to try to halt the demolition orders.

itself. Bedouins who moved to the planned townships generally had less status in Bedouin society because they had no claims to land in the Siyag (Shmueli and Khamaisi 2011, 113). Without land claims, they arguably had no choice but to accept the Israeli government's offer of housing in the established townships; these Bedouins may have wanted to maintain their traditional way of life, but the possibility of doing so was remote. Those who remain in unrecognized villages have held firm to their land claims and maintain pride in their way of life and in their ancestral land claims. They are willing to endure numerous hardships, including lack of access to electricity and appropriate water and sanitation facilities, in order to remain on their land and to maintain their traditional lifestyle. To do otherwise, would be a loss of status within the Bedouin society.

Bedouins living in unrecognized villages in the Negev are subject to policies that result in discriminatory impact. For example, unlike other Israeli citizens who live in legal towns and villages, the Bedouins in unrecognized villages do not have access to household water connections but must rely on water access points near the roadside (Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012). Even if this is not intentional discrimination, at the very least, it can be understood as a form of "structural discrimination" or "institutional racism," which "refers to accumulated institutional practices that work to the disadvantage of racial minority groups even in the absence of individual prejudice or discrimination" (Link and Phelan 2001, 372).

A constant and powerful symbol of the Bedouins stigmatization in Israel are the power lines and bulk water pipes that are frequently visible from the unrecognized villages; yet the Bedouins living in these villages are denied access to these services. Thus, they are forced to live without power, and collect water through non-modern and demeaning ways. For example, during a research trip to Israel, the authors spoke with Bedouin leaders who stated that they frequently purchased water from their Jewish neighbors and paid an inflated price with no guarantee that it would be sold to them the next time they needed it. In these transactions, the diminished status of the Bedouins clearly impacted their bargaining strength and negotiating power.

Finally, it is clear that the Bedouins are not a powerful constituency within Israel and thus, they are at a power disadvantage. Although the Goldberg Committee had included some Bedouins during the process, many Bedouin advocates complained that they were not consulted by the Prawer Committee before the plan was issued (Adalah 2011).

Although there is a tendency to portray stigmatized groups as helpless victims, Link and Phelan explain how this phenomenon can be mitigated by recognizing signs of resistance and understanding power dynamics:

One of the most troublesome issues in the study of stigma emerges when social scientists seek to articulate the real constraints that stigma creates in people's lives, and in doing so they end up portraying members of the stigmatized group as helpless victims (Fine & Asch 1988). Ironically, this produces more lines in the list of undesirable attributes that form the stereotype about the stigmatized group—they are additionally "passive," "helpless," or "acquiescent." Because of this, there are from time to time articles that remind us that people artfully dodge or constructively challenge stigmatizing processes (e.g. Reissman 2000). These are very important reminders, and the message they deliver needs to be incorporated into our understanding of stigma. At the same time, the simple fact that these forms of resistance exist suggests there is something out there to avoid and that there are powerful constraining forces at work.

How can we reason about these contrasting images and portray constraint and resistance in research about stigma? Here, our emphasis on the importance of power differences in stigma and our observation that stigma is a matter of degree are helpful. Specifically, these allow us to see issues of constraint and resistance in the context of a power struggle. We can see that people in stigmatized groups actively use available resources to resist the stigmatizing tendencies of the more powerful group and that, to the extent that they do, it is inappropriate to portray them as passive recipients of stigma. At the same time, to the extent that power differences exist, resistance cannot fully overcome constraint. The amount of stigma that people experience will be profoundly shaped by the relative power of the stigmatized and the stigmatizer.

(Link and Phelan 2001, 378).

The Bedouins' continued residence in the unrecognized villages, despite the lack of access to basic services and in the face of the constant threat of demolition, is a form of resistance, or *sumood*, which challenges the idea that they are helpless victims. Moreover, the Bedouins are also becoming more politically active, as illustrated by a recent protest in front of the Knesset against a proposed government policy that could result in significant relocation of Bedouins from the unrecognized villages (Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012, 13–16).

#### **E. Language**

Finally, language may also contribute to the stigma that the Bedouins face in Israel. The Bedouins' first language is Arabic; most also speak Hebrew, but with an Arabic accent. In contrast, most Jewish Israelis do not speak Arabic. As Falk writes:

The existence of stigma and stigmatization depends largely on language as Edward Sapir has shown. . . . Together with his colleague Benjamin Whorf he developed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which holds that we know the world only in terms that our language provides. Therefore, those who speak different languages live in different worlds. Sapir called stigma and stigmatization-producing language "inventive thought," which means that people who have little or even no experience will nevertheless express opinions on a subject they do not know by using language which then constructs the reality that is thereafter perceived (Falk 2001, 22).

During a research trip to Israel, the authors met individuals who described the Bedouin townships as if they were desirable places to live, even while acknowledging that they actually had never visited such a township and did not have any firsthand knowledge. Indeed, the Hebrew word that was sometimes used to describe the Bedouins literally translates as "invaders."

#### **IV. How Stigma Influences Access to Water and Sanitation**

The Israeli Water Authority does not provide household water access or sanitation services to Bedouins living in unrecognized villages because it seeks to incentivize/pressure the Bedouins to move to established townships. The unrecognized villages are considered illegal under Israeli law, but the

Bedouins believe that they are the rightful owners of this land. Attempts to resolve the underlying land disputes have been ongoing for decades; a new law on the subject has just been introduced into the Knesset (Prime Minister Office 2011b).

Israel's current water policy forces the Bedouins to make a choice that goes to the heart of the nature of stigma. On the one hand, Bedouins who persist in living in unrecognized villages are stigmatized by mainstream Israeli society for being backward and uncivilized because they refuse to move to urban townships with basic services. Despite the significant social and economic problems associated with the Bedouin townships, the fact that the townships are urban means that they are perceived as modern and civilized. In effect, the stigma associated with the traditional Bedouin lifestyle facilitates a policy that ties access to basic services to the underlying land dispute, which results in a water and sanitation policy that institutionalizes disparate access for the Bedouins.

On the other hand, moving to the townships represents a form of stigma within Bedouin society. In general, those who already moved to the townships did not have valuable land claims; historically more nomadic, they have wound up sacrificing many elements of the traditional lifestyle that are central to their identities as Bedouins. Moreover, life in the townships is difficult and does not represent a more civilized life: there are no jobs, there is a breakdown in the family structure, there is rising crime and a growing disenchantment and disillusionment by the youth who grow up there. The current water and sanitation policy seeks to pressure Bedouins to move to townships and effectively relinquish their traditional, pastoral and rural way of life. This policy not only forces the Bedouins to give up claims to land that is more valuable than a government-provided home, even one with modern amenities, but it also challenges their very identity as Bedouins.

## **V. Measures Being Taken to Address and Overcome Stigmatization**

The government of Israel is currently attempting to engage in some steps that potentially could lessen the stigma that the Bedouins in unrecognized villages face. The Goldberg Report was generally regarded by the Bedouin community as an important step in the right direction because it recognized the Bedouins' historical land ties and recommended the recognition of as many unrecognized villages as possible. The Praver Plan, which is meant to implement the Goldberg recommendations, has not been favorably received by the Bedouin community and their allies. Indeed, there was a huge protest in front of the Knesset in early December with many demonstrators holding signs that read simply "No to the Praver Plan" (Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012, 13–16).

From a human rights perspective, the Israeli legal system has offered some limited possibilities. Given that it could be many years before the underlying land issues in the Negev are resolved, the Bedouins in unrecognized villages have brought legal challenges that attempt to improve access to basic services, such as access to education, health clinics, and water. The cases have had limited success in decoupling access to services from the underlying land issues. Notably, in June 2011, the Israeli Supreme Court case handed down an important decision that invoked the human right to water in a case brought by Bedouins living in six unrecognized villages (Abadallah Abu Massad, et al. v Water Commissioner & Israel Lands Administration 2011). The Supreme Court determines that even though the Bedouins are living in "illegal" villages, they have a right to water under Israeli and international law. The Court also holds, however, that this right must be balanced against the rights of the State to enforce its laws and development planning vision. In a prior working paper, the authors analyze this legal decision and conclude that to realize the human right to water, the Israeli government should change its current

policy and improve access to water for the unrecognized Bedouin villages (Murthy, Williams, and Baskin 2012).

The *Abu Massad* decision only addresses the human right to water, but sanitation is another significant issue. While in Israel in December 2011, the research team saw that the unrecognized villages and the Abu Basma villages (which are in the process of being recognized) had some basic sanitation facilities, usually consisting of squat toilets in outhouses; the availability of water to flush down the waste varied, but if any water connections existed, they would have been installed by the Bedouin villagers. Most waste in the villages is not treated but held in aging septic tanks that have a tendency to leak. In one of the ten Abu Basma villages, Um Batin, the research team witnessed an open river of sewage flowing through the village, which apparently came down the mountain from the nearby city of Hebron. The Bedouin village Um Batin, had brought a lawsuit to stop the flow of untreated sewage but it had not yet produced any results. As a result of another lawsuit, a wastewater treatment plant was built near the village. However, it did not have sufficient capacity to treat all of the waste, and primarily treated waste coming from a nearby kibbutz. The Bedouin villagers also complained that they were unable to use the treated wastewater for irrigation because it was being pumped back to the kibbutz's fields. The need for improved sanitation facilities and wastewater treatment in the Bedouin villages is clear.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Bedouins living in the Negev in Israel experience stigma, which can be defined as occurring when the “elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold.” (Link and Phelan 2001, 367). Stigma impacts their ability to access basic services. In particular, Israel does not provide Bedouins in unrecognized villages with household water access or sanitation services because it seeks to incentivize them to move to established townships. The accepted definition of stigma supports a conclusion that the Bedouins in the Negev experience both “existential” and “achieved” stigma, which results from governmental policies that apply only to Bedouins in Israel, as well as the Bedouins’ unique ethnic, cultural and religious identities and traditions. Furthermore, through economic and social realities, Bedouins are predominantly uneducated without marketable skills, and poor with very large families -- all attributes that result in stigmatization by Israel society as a whole. Bedouins living in unrecognized villages suffer from a loss of power in governing their daily lives because in order to obtain basic municipal services like water and sanitation, they are forced to relinquish their land claims and move to villages established by the Israeli government where these services are available. If they choose to remain on land with disputed ownership claims, they are deprived of household water and sanitation access, despite the fact that this infrastructure is often plainly visible from their unrecognized village.

Nevertheless, there are steps being taken to recognize and remove at least some of the stigmatization being experienced by the Bedouins in the Negev. Whether the Goldberg Report and the Prawer Plan fulfill that promise remains to be seen. Significantly, the Israeli Supreme Court in the *Abu Massad* decision, recently invoked the human right to water under Israeli and international law to underscore the principle that the Bedouins have a right to live in dignity and have reasonable access to water and sanitation services, despite a countervailing government policy. Hopefully, the *Abu Massad* decision, along with other policy steps being taken, will positively guide the Israeli Government’s efforts to develop policies that ensure that *all* citizens of Israel, including the Bedouins, have access to adequate amounts of affordable and safe water and sanitation services.

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