# Negev Bedouin and Higher Education

## At the Crossroads of a Community in Transition

**Sussex Migration Working Paper No. 41**

Janine Givati-Teerling[1]

Sussex Centre for Migration Research

February 2007

**Abstract**

This paper analyses the extent to which higher education serves as a tool of empowerment for the Negev Bedouin Arabs in Israel, in light of their dramatic transformation from nomadic desert dwellers into a landless sedentarized community within the Jewish immigrant state. Combining relevant literature with qualitative data drawn from in-depth interviews with Bedouin students and academics, an impression is given of the complex power relations affecting the role of higher education in the context of social change. The analysis shows how state control over the Bedouin forms a major barrier towards social change. Furthermore it shows how traditional values which characterized the Bedouin's former mobile lifestyle live on in their current immobile setting, preventing them from developing the sense of unity crucial for the empowerment of the collective. These two inextricably entwined factors block the way for collective solutions. The first step towards social change for the Bedouin community lays in suitable preparatory education, aimed at the creation of a sense of Bedouin identity. This basis will bring Bedouin into higher education who are truly able to lead their community towards social change; and thus transform state control into community power.

## INTRODUCTION

Mobile peoples in general - whether nomadic, semi-nomadic or in the process of sedentarization – have received rather limited attention from migration researchers. As Creswell (1993) emphasizes: 'Migration studies purport to be about movement but use the push and pull factors of points A and B as explanations. People leave point A because point B appears to be favourable. It is never the case that … the motion in between is the "pull" factor'. Having lived a pastoral nomadic lifestyle for thousands of years, 'the motion in between' was the 'pull' factor for the Negev Bedouin. Though mobility has always played a major role throughout the history of the Negev Bedouin, in recent years the term 'migration' has taken on multiple meanings for the community. From a lifestyle based on seasonal migration and deep-rooted tradition, as dwellers of a desert land with unbounded spaces and rights of passage based on tribal social structure, the Negev Bedouin were rapidly transformed into a landless community, settled in bounded and controlled areas, in a newly established, western oriented, Jewish immigrant state. Once in a position of immobility, those Bedouin actually underwent another process of migration, a process that yet has to be formally named in Migration Studies so far, at least as far as I am aware. Migration is usually perceived as the process of moving from one geographical area to another, in which the migrants have to adjust themselves – to a greater or lesser extent – to their new surroundings. The Bedouin, however, experienced the impact of migration in the most powerful way, without actually leaving the land that they considered to be theirs for the entire depth of their collective memory. With Jewish immigrants arriving and establishing their nation, the Bedouin suddenly found themselves living in a new country, surrounded by an alien culture, with borders and boundaries defined by the new inhabitants. Without being giving a choice, they became 'uninvited guests' in their own land, restricted in their mobility, freedom and culture. Hence, they arrived in a new and strange land without the physical journey. Involuntarily immobile, they underwent a motionless process of migration; a kind of static displacement.

One cannot analyze the situation of the Negev Bedouin community today, whether related to their health, economy, cultural life or education, without considering the migratory processes which have influenced and led to their current situation. Hence, it is essential to see the Negev Bedouin in the context of their past and recent history, which is a story of migration throughout.

Through forced alteration of their traditional lifestyle and the unnatural pace of sedentarization, the Bedouin lost control over their traditional spaces, livelihood and social structure. This resulted in what can be perceived as the disempowerment of their community. Today roughly 150,000 Bedouin are caught between the nomadic life that they have left behind, and an unstable life on the margins of modern Israeli society.

As claimed by many, educated people can bring about change in their communities and make up the critical mass of leaders needed to direct the collective towards empowerment; thus the key to a future as thriving members of Israeli society lays in education. However, the current position of the Negev Bedouin – a Palestinian Arab post-nomadic community in a state of static displacement – is not as clear-cut; thus neither is the role of education.

This paper addresses the complex and multiple power relations affecting the Negev Bedouin throughout and after their education. Through personal accounts of Bedouin students and academics, combined with a review of relevant literature, an impression will be given of the position of the Israeli establishment, the Bedouin individual and the Bedouin collective in the context of education and social change. The aim is to consider the extent to which higher educated Bedouin contribute to the empowerment of their community today.

## THE ARAB BEDOUIN OF THE NEGEV: A COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

The Arab Bedouin have inhabited the Negev, the desert in the south of what is now Israel, since the 5th century AD. Today they are a minority within the Jewish state and, like the Palestinian Arabs who remained in Israel after the establishment of the state in 1948, Israeli citizens (Maddrell 1990). The Bedouin of the Negev were a pastoral semi-nomadic community that primarily lived by herding and seasonal agriculture, moving in an annual cycle over 4,000 square kilometres of land (Dinero 2004). They were traditionally organized into tribes which were classed into three hierarchical categories according to their origin: firstly, the true Bedouin ('Arab), who claim descent from the ancient tribes of the Arabian desert, who made up the tribe's leadership class, and owned the vast majority of the lands; secondly, the peasants (Fallaheen), who

came from the cultivated areas bordering on the deserts and worked the land of the true Bedouin; and lastly, the group of so-called 'blacks' (A'beed), originally brought from Africa as slaves of the Bedouin (Marx 1967).

Estimates of the Bedouin population in the Negev prior to 1948 vary from 65,000 to 95,000, organized into 95 tribes. In the course and the aftermath of the 1948 war, the vast majority of Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled, which decreased the overall Palestinian population by roughly 80 to 85 percent, and by the early 1950s, only around 11,000 Bedouin were living in the Negev, made up by only 19 governmentally recognized tribes (Marx 1967; Falah 1989). Upon the establishment of the State of Israel, the remaining indigenous Bedouin found themselves in the insecure and confusing position of a non-Jewish minority in the Jewish state. Between 1940 and 1966 the Arab population was placed under military rule, which severely restricted their movement and not only isolated them from the Jewish population, but also caused the segregation of the Arab localities from one another (Marx 1967; Al Haj 1995). By that time, as stressed by Al-Haj (1995), forced internal migration was 'the only form of migratory movement that took place among Arabs'. The Bedouin were concentrated in the framework of a sedentarization plan imposed by the Israeli government, which severely disrupted their traditional life style and resulted in the localization of almost the entire Negev Bedouin population (Abu-Saad 2003; Yiftachel 2003; Falah 1989). Twelve of the nineteen remaining tribes were removed from their lands and the whole population was concentrated into a restricted area east of Beer-Sheva, referred to as a 'reservation', which represented only 10 percent of the territory they controlled previously (Marx 1967; Falah 1989; Maddrell 1990) and was known for its low agricultural fertility (Yiftachel 2003). At the same time the arrival of large numbers of new Jewish immigrants to the Negev was turning the Beer-Sheva region into an important regional urban centre. The lands once held by Bedouin were subsequently assigned to some fifty Jewish settlements, primarily small 'development towns' and kibbutzim and moshavim (communal rural villages) (Yiftachel 2003).

In sum, the Arab Bedouin lost their ability to maintain their traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle, and were forced to live on infertile and restricted land, as the State of Israel took control over most of the land in the Negev in order to facilitate the rapid settlement of Jews in the Negev.

*The Urbanization of the Negev Bedouin*

The Negev Bedouin undoubtedly suffered under the military government, possibly, as argued by Maddrell (1990), because of Israel's concern to populate the Negev with Jews and the Bedouin's inability to defend themselves against the authorities. Illiteracy and isolation from other communities may well have caused incapability of cohesive defence. At any rate, the loss of their lands along with their traditional livelihood brought dramatic changes upon the Bedouin community, and with the lifting of the military administration in 1966 the vast majority of the Negev Bedouin became dependent upon employment in the Jewish sector, primarily as unskilled workers (Abu-Saad 1997). Furthermore, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Israeli government began implementing their plans to resettle the entire Negev Bedouin population into urban-style settlements. Seven towns were established to which the Bedouin were supposed to relocate: Rahat, Laqiya, Hura, Tel-Sheva, Kseifa, Arara and Segev Shalom (Yiftachel 2003).The authorities' official reasons for the urbanization policies were the desire to 'modernize' the Bedouin and to provide them with better conditions, such as health, educational and welfare services (Litwick 2003). As the Prime Minister's adviser on Arab Affairs in 1978 declared:

> 'We want, as a democratic government, to give all citizens the modern services that a state should give its citizens ... Of course the government cannot bring roads, water, electricity, schools to all [small beduin settlements]. So the government is trying to get those who want to voluntarily come and live in townships' (Benjamin Gur-Aryeh in the New York Times, 11/4/79, quoted in Maddrell 1990).

However, many claim that in reality the objective was to prevent the Bedouin from settling and claiming ownership over the land and instead to enable the state to assume control over most of the Negev (Litwick 2003; Yiftachel 2003; Abu-Saad 2003; Falah 1989; Meir 1997). Furthermore, the Bedouin, once deprived of their traditional livelihood, provided an unskilled labour pool to support the industrial and economic growth of the Jewish immigrant towns in the South (Law-Yone 2003). The allure of modern services such as housing, schools, clinics, paved roads and electricity were used to draw the Bedouin into the government-built towns (Abu-Saad 2003; Yiftachel 2003). Moshe Dayan, Minister of Education at the time and a dominant force behind the urbanization

policy towards the Bedouin (Yiftachel 2003), expressed his point of view in a 1963 interview with the Israeli daily Ha'aretz:

> 'We should transform the Bedouins into an urban proletariat – in industry, services, construction, and agriculture. 88% of the Israeli population are not farmers, let the Bedouins be like them. Indeed, this will be a radical move which means that the Bedouin would not live on his land with his herds, but would become an urban person who comes home in the afternoon and puts his slippers on. His children would be accustomed to a father who wears trousers, does not carry a Shabaria [the traditional Bedouin knife] and does not search for vermin in public. The children would go to school with their hair properly combed. This would be a revolution, but it may be fixed within two generations. Without coercion but with governmental direction … this phenomenon of the Bedouins will disappear' (Quoted in Abu-Saad 2003).

Current reality shows that - in spite of the state's declaration to 'modernize' the Negev Bedouin through the settlement programme - those policies have been far from successful, if not, as many scholars attest, a failure. Rather than designed to be viable urban communities, the seven government towns are small and widely dispersed, with levels of public services, such as health and education, far inferior to those provided to Jewish towns (Litwick 2000). The towns lack infrastructure and many services such as local sources of employment, banks, post offices, proper sewage systems and cultural centres (Abu-Saad 1995). According to Litwick (2000), there is no other explanation for those gaps than a deliberate policy of discrimination, since most of these services are provided by the government, rather than privately. With 65 percent of the population living beneath the poverty line (Ghanem 1998), their inhabitants find themselves at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder of all Israeli citizens. They have half the per capita income, twice as many children and half the living space compared with the average Israeli household (Center for Bedouin Studies and the Negev Center for Regional Development 2004). The unemployment rates among Negev Bedouin are alarming, and in 1998 only 2.5 percent of all industrial jobs in the Negev were held by Bedouin. Those who are employed mainly work in low-status jobs such as construction, driving and unskilled labour (Litwick 2000).

Despite all the pressures applied by the government, many Bedouin have refused to migrate into the seven planned towns and continue to live in spontaneous tribal settlements. Though the data provided by official sources reveal differences – according to the Central Bureau for Statistics and the Ministry of the Interior in the year 2002 there were 138,000 Bedouin residents in the Negev, while the Regional Council for Unrecognized Bedouin Villages claims there were 159,000 (Center for Bedouin Studies and the Negev Center for Regional Development 2004) – it is fair to say that slightly over one half of the total Bedouin population have moved into the urban settlements, while the rest continues to live in the unrecognized villages (Litwick 2003; Yiftachel 2003; Abu-Saad 2004b). The unrecognized villages (i.e. unauthorized and thus classed as illegal) do not appear on the official maps of the state of Israel and are 'virtually invisible in social terms' (PHR 2003). Those living in the unrecognized settlements are denied services such as paved roads, community health services, rubbish disposal, telephone service, electricity and in many cases running water (Abu-Saad, Yonah & Kaplan 2000; PHR 2003). All housing forms, other than tents, are considered illegal and subject to heavy fines and demolition proceedings (Maddrell 1990).

While, as Law-Yone (2003) argues, sedentarization of nomadic tribes is a natural historical proces, the forced alteration of nomadic space that was induced by the state of Israel was anything but natural:

> 'Hierarchies of space based on tribal social structure were replaced by repetitive lots of uniform size, shape and orientation. Gradations of proximity, enclosure, and openness of the desert were replaced by the spatial logic of European urban form. New and strange definitions of private and public spheres were grafted onto a society that had its own norms, which were no longer considered valid.' (Law-Yone 2003)

Through forced alteration of their traditional lifestyle and the unnatural pace of sedentarization, the Bedouin community lost power over their traditional spaces, livelihood and social structure. The setting in which their culture had been rooted for the entire depth of their collective memory was destroyed. The changes have led to instabilities in social structure, economic patterns, political dimensions and gender roles; forces which have had their impact on attitudes towards education and its role within Bedouin society (Abu-Saad 1997; Pessate-Schubert 2003; Meir 1997; El-Krenawi

2003; Abu-Rabia 2004, 2006). It has been claimed that education in general, and higher education in particular, is a crucial source of empowerment for the Palestinian citizens of Israel (Al-Haj 1995; 2003) and – as members of the Arab minority – for the Bedouin community specifically (Abu-Saad 1995, 1996, 1997).

'Presumably if we want to see people empowered we consider them to be currently dis-empowered' (Mosedale 2003). As Kratli (2000) emphasizes in his analysis of education provision to nomadic pastoralists, lack of education is often perceived to be a key reason for disempowerment. However, as he also stresses, 'in this way, the analysis of the causes of the marginalization of nomads is reduced to a tautology: nomads are disempowered by not being empowered (yet) by education'. When analyzing the marginalization of indigenous peoples – whether nomadic, post-nomadic, or settled – we have to consider the social, economic and political dimensions of past and current processes, i.e. the way that power relations have shaped this situation of disempowerment.

Before examining the significance of education as a tool of empowerment and the extent to which higher education can help the Bedouin community to regain control over their own development, I will first address approaches to empowerment and education relevant in the context of the Negev Bedouin.

*Higher Education as a Tool for Empowerment: Conceptual framework for the case of the Negev Bedouin*

The framework within which higher education as a potential tool of empowerment for the Bedouin community will be addressed here is based upon a discrepancy in power positioning. The boundaries of the individual power and the collective power within this traditional community in transition are intertwined with the power exercised by the state of Israel, which controls the development and opportunities of the Bedouin community. The different dimensions in which power can be exercised provide the context within which to examine the degree to which higher education serves as a tool of empowerment for the Bedouin community today.

Mosedale (2003) notes that 'within the social sciences power was first typified as 'power over', a term which she subdivides in three dimensions and defines as 'examples of a zero sum game', i.e. situations in which one party gets their own way against the interests of another party: (a) by

winning in open conflict; (b) by preventing their opponent being heard; or (c) by preventing their potential opponent from even realising that there is a conflict of interests.

Espanioly (2004) points out that in the empowerment approach there is no 'power over'. Instead of using 'power over' we must use: 'power within', 'power to' and 'power with'. Those different forms of power, in which one person's gain is not another person's loss, are respectively referred to by Rowlands (1997) as: personal, involving a sense of self-confidence and capacity; relational, entailing ability to negotiate and influence relationships and decisions; and collective, recognising that more can be achieved by a group acting together than by individuals alone. The core characteristic of empowerment is that it is a 'bottom-up' concept, described by Schrijvers (1991) as a '[t]ransformation which comes from within, which springs from inner resources of one's own as an individual or a collectivity, which moves bottom-up...' (Schrijvers quoted by Stromquist 1995).

After having identified empowerment as a process which cannot be bestowed from top-down and as relevant at the individual and collective level, we need to look at the relationship between empowerment and education. Following Al-Haj (1995, 2003), the different arguments regarding the relationship between education and empowerment may be grouped under: the positivist-functionalist approach and the conflict-critical approach.

The positivist-functionalist approach derives from the functionalist school, which asserts that there are independently existing truths to be known and taught (Lesko and Bloom 1998). Functionalists see their position as neutral and therefore believe that their assessment of situations is not influenced by their own standpoints and interests. Consequently they believe that education is neutral (Burrel and Morgan 1979). According to the positivist-functionalist approach the education system delivers the objective technical, administrative and scientific knowledge essential for the construction of modern institutions and economic expansion, oriented to train students to function properly in wider society (Al-Haj 2003). This approach, as emphasized by Al-Haj (1995), relates to education as a vehicle for social change, as it forms a central element in developing global orientations and is less tied to local and traditional identity and commitments. This view, however, disregards concepts of conflict and state control through education (Giroux 1981).

Unlike the positivist-functionalist approach, the conflict-critical approach, in line with Freire's (1970)

fundamental argument, does not see schools as neutral institutions. Rather it sees formal education as a mechanism of control and oppression by the dominant group (Al-Haj 2003; Freire 1985) 'which highlights state control and power relations in the wider society' (Al-Haj 1995). While from a positivist-functionalist perspective education is considered as one of the main systems for social change, it is seen as a factor for conservation from conflict-critical point of view. Apple (1979) argues that, through the preservation and distribution of culture, education can 'create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained'. Education, in this view, preserves the status quo 'by adopting mechanical routine, by providing apparent justification for the economic and social inequalities, and by giving recognition to the cultural heritage of the dominant group' (Al-Haj 1995).

Throughout the following analysis the above dimensions of power will be explored to see whether higher education can be considered as a tool of empowerment for the Negev Bedouin today.

## STUDY AND FINDINGS

*Methodology*

The material presented is based on a case study carried out in the Israeli Negev in summer 2005. A case study is particularly appropriate for someone conducting a small-scale study individually, as it gives an opportunity for a relatively in depth-study within a limited time scale (Bell 1999); in this case, an opportunity to draw full attention to the Negev Bedouin, a too often overlooked community within Israeli society. Furthermore, the case study approach is holistic (rather than focused on isolated factors), as it emphasizes the relationships and processes within a certain social setting and the connections between them (Denscombe 2003). This multidimensional approach is vital in the case of the Bedouin, as their viewpoints and experiences are shaped and influenced by a wide variety of political, social, cultural and economic factors. In an attempt to present a comprehensive picture of the position of Bedouin in higher education today, this analysis is made up of data collected through personal interviews combined with data extracted from relevant literature.

During the above period I conducted 14 in-depth interviews, with Bedouin students and academics. I collected their viewpoints and experiences on the role of educated Bedouin in respect of the empowerment of their community. The sample included: six Bedouin students (four undergraduate and two postgraduate); six academics; one Bedouin school principal; and one (Jewish) student who tutors female Bedouin students. Combining the purposive technique with the snowball method (Bell 1999), I first sought out a setting which best illustrates my area of study, which was Ben Gurion University of the Negev (henceforth BGU). This is the only university in the south of Israel and the main institution where Bedouin university students, who study in Israel, obtain their degrees. There I contacted a small number of individuals most likely to produce valuable data; they, in turn, put forward other suitable candidates for my study.

All interviews took place at the university campus, except one interview with a Bedouin school principal, which took place at his home. The university was found to be the most suitable setting for the interviews. First of all, it is a comfortable and familiar environment for the participants; and secondly, the university setting itself is closely related to the research topic and thus creates the right atmosphere for the conversation. Furthermore, conducting the interviews at the campus rather than in a private setting minimized possible cultural barriers, such as traditional ethics and codes of behaviour. In addition to the interviews, I was engaged in various conversations and informal meetings outside the university setting, and whilst visiting Bedouin settlements in the surrounding area. Those visits allowed me to get to know the Bedouin community from closer range and therefore draw a more complete picture.

All participants agreed to have the interviews tape-recorded. The students' names used in this paper have been changed. Though none of the academics requested confidentiality, their names are not used.[2] The interviews could best be described as semi-structured conversations. Aware of the key issue in question being 'higher education as a tool of empowerment for the Bedouin community' issues directly or indirectly related to the topic were raised and developed by the participant at his or her natural tempo; therefore the interview time varied from one to three hours. On the one hand, the interviews focused on the barriers and challenges encountered by Bedouin in higher education and on their personal viewpoints on the positions of 'educated' Bedouin. On the other hand, the accounts explored the roles of social structures and

---

[2] With the exception of Palestinian (non-Bedouin) Professor Majid Al-Haj, as his views expressed during our personal meeting (7/7/05) as well as his scholarly work on education, empowerment and control function as essential academic references in this paper

Bedouin traditions within the current post-nomadic setting. The multifaceted transition story of the Negev Bedouin resulted in detailed accounts on a wide range of issues which allowed me to develop a better understanding of the complexity of the situation.

Though the participants' mother tongue is Arabic, all conversations took place in English; five accounts with students were partly in Hebrew and partly in English. All academics I spoke with are male, solely for the reason that among the 885 faculty members at Ben Gurion University, there are only 11 Palestinian Arabs,[3] all of whom are men (Abu-Saad 2004a). However, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of female Bedouin students and in the last few years the female-male ratio among Bedouin undergraduate students has been roughly even. To balance the male and female voices presented, five of the six Bedouin students I interviewed are women, of whom four undergraduate and one post-graduate. However, it should be noted that, though gender relations are vitally important in the context of Bedouin society and are touched upon by the women throughout their narratives, this study does not address the women's emancipatory processes in particular. Rather it attempts to provide an impression of their perspectives as Bedouin in higher education.

Though the information presented is not statistically representative, the qualitative data are provided by a broadly representative sample of students and academics. Therefore, their narratives combined with relevant literature provides a plausible impression of the position of Bedouin in higher education today.

*Background of the Provision of Education to the Negev Bedouin*

Traditionally, most education was informal and not widely developed within the Bedouin community because, as a nomadic society, their way of life required other skills. Through the informal education system they developed, which was based on actual observation and participation in the process of day-to-day life, children received an education that suitably prepared them for the life they were to lead as adults. History, moral and religious values were passed on orally by respected elders, poets and storytellers. There was a very small number of boys, between the ages of 5 and 12, who were taught to memorize the Koran and learned reading, writing and the precepts of Islam.

Lessons were taught by elderly males (called Khatib), with moderate literacy skills, who would migrate as permanent guests of the tribe to which they were attached (Abu-Saad 1997). During the period of colonial British rule a few 'Western-style' schools were established in the Negev. However, such education was usually a privilege of the elite, i.e. the sons of tribal Sheiks who represented the future leadership of the society (Meir 1997). As their nomadic life and survival under the harsh conditions of the desert demanded other skills than literacy, the number of illiterate Bedouin remained very high for many years (Abu-Saad 1995). The establishment of the state of Israel, however, dramatically and abruptly changed life for the Bedouin community in the Negev. The loss of land and the restricted mobility reduced the viability of their traditional education, which was based on preparing children for a nomadic life. Nor was the education provided by the Khatib adequate to prepare for life and work in the modern, industrialized Israeli state (Abu-Saad 2003).

Under the new Israeli government, a law was passed (Compulsory Education Law of 1949), which formally guaranteed free compulsory education for children between the ages of 5 and 13 and established state responsibility for the provision of trained teachers, their salaries, facilities and the curricula. However, as argued by Maddrell (1990), Arab schools were not a priority as state institutions were occupied with the absorption of Jewish immigrants. As the Bedouin were seen as outsiders rather than an integral part of society, the educational services provided to the Bedouin were very minimal and no action was taken by the authorities to enforce the compulsory education law. Since this lack of interest on the authorities' side was matched by a general lack of interest in education among the Bedouin, student enrolments remained low and the government considered it inefficient to open schools in scattered settlements (Abu-Saad 1997). With the end of the military rule in 1966 the situation began to change. Bedouin were not only more exposed to modern Jewish society, they were also able to re-establish contact with relatives and tribesmen, whom they lost touch with after 1948. The realization that many of their counterparts were educated, while the majority of them remained illiterate, encouraged the Bedouin to begin sending their children to school. There was also intermarriage between those two previously separated segments, which resulted in the arrival of more formally educated women in the Negev. This higher demand for education led to the opening of more schools for Negev Bedouin (Abu-Saad 1991).

---

[3] Note: that is 1.2%, while BGU is located in an area where about 25% of the population is Palestinian Arab

Hence, over time, attitudes towards education have changed and Bedouin have gained better access to education. However, the quality and success rate of Bedouin education remains very low and the Bedouin face major barriers when it comes to the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of their education (Abu-Saad 1995).

*Education Provision and Access to Higher Education for Negev Bedouin: a Minority within the Minority*

'As in other developing societies, the educated among Israeli Arabs are considered agents of social change, fulfilling an important mission in directing the collective and leading the struggle for status improvement' (Al-Haj 1995).

'The new social reality facing the Bedouin community requires an educated populace who can produce sophisticated and innovative solutions to their development needs' (Abu-Saad 1995).

Though, as stressed by Abu-Saad (1996), literature on higher education and minorities emphasizes the importance of higher education in empowering minority development, little research has been done on the attainment and outcome of higher education among the Arab minority in Israel in general and the Bedouin community in particular. Beyond the studies of Al-Haj (1995, 2003) and Mar'i (1978), which concentrate on the wider Arab community in Israel, Abu-Saad's (1996) own study focused on the Negev Bedouin, and research conducted by Pessate-Schubert (2003, 2004), who addresses female Bedouin students, available information is scarce. A possible reason for the scarcity of research conducted on Bedouin and higher education is the fact that formal education is a relatively new phenomenon in Bedouin society. However, evaluation of the significance of higher education for the Bedouin community and an impression of the degree to which educated Bedouin are currently empowering their community are essential for the development of suitable future plans.

*Arab Education in Israel*

As emphasized by Abu-Saad (1995), Bedouin education must be seen within the wider context of Arab education in Israel. The state educational system in Israel is divided into two systems: a Jewish system and an Arab one. One's first impression might be that of educational pluralism; however, this was not the objective the government of Israel had in mind when launching the system.

Though the Arab citizens of Israel have a separate school system, it is controlled by Jewish officials and Arab authority over their own education is limited. Golan-Agnon (2004) - who, when hired by the Ministry of Education, devoted about two years to studying the way the education system aggravates inequality – points out how Arabs are not partners in the ministry's decision-making system, in policy-making, or in planning: 'There is no Arab district manager, no Arab administration head, and no Arab representation in the Ministry's management. Of the thousands of people who work in the Ministry's administrative headquarters, not even ten are Arab, and most of them work in the cafeteria'. This lack of recognition of the Arab community as a cultural and national minority is clearly expressed in the 1953 Law of State Education which specifies the following aim for education in Israel:

'to base education on the values of Jewish culture and achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the Jewish people, on practice in agricultural work and handicraft [labour], on pioneer training and on striving for a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance, and love of mankind.' (Quoted in Mar'i 1978)

Following the establishment of Israel, the state implemented a so-called 'controlled-segregation strategy' in the Arab education system, aimed at emptying Arab education of any Arab national content while legitimizing the state's ideology (Al-Haj 1995). This separation and control policy is carried out through tight control of curricula, staff and resources (Golan-Agnon 2004; Al-Haj 1995) and is reflected in all aspects of the education system, as shown throughout this paper.

Furthermore, this segregation in the education system extends beyond the institutional separation between Arab and Jewish schools. The government deliberately tried to reinforce the religious-cultural component instead of the Arab-national component by splitting the Arab minority into a number of smaller groups based on religious (Moslem, Christian, Druze) or geographical distinction (the northern 'Galilee'; the central 'Triangle'; and the southern 'Negev'). This treatment was aimed at fragmenting the Arab collectivity and differentiating citizens' rights according to communal affinity (Lustick 1980; Al-Haj 1995; Hajjar 1996; Abu-Saad et al. 2000). Dr. Hershberg, the Ministry of Religions' director for Muslim Affairs in the 1950s,

emphasized that the Arabs in Israel should be treated as

> 'Israeli citizens of several religions groups and sects ... and not simply Arabs. In other words we do not have in front of us one problem of Arabs, but rather problems of different groups and nations, and we have to solve each separately. We should emphasize and develop contradictions between different groups including the decrease of Arabism. By this way they (Arabs) will forget that they are Arabs and will recognize that they are Israelis of several kinds.' (Quoted in Al-Haj 1995)

The way the Israeli government has treated the Bedouin Arabs provides a typical example of this policy. 'It deliberately intensified the differences (in geographical location and lifestyle) between Bedouin and sedentary Arabs in an effort to make the Bedouin into a distinct ethnic group' (Abu-Saad et al. 2000). The authorities sought the use of education as one of the means of accomplishing this mission (Al-Haj 1995).

Hence, when studying educational provision for the Negev Bedouin and the degree of accessibility and effectiveness of their education, one has to consider the issues surrounding the Arab educational system as a whole, as the Bedouin are part of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel. However, in addition to the difficulties affecting all Arab citizens, the Negev Bedouin face other problems that derive from their unique position, as a displaced community in a radical state of transition, caught up between government policies and their own deep-rooted tradition. The combination of those factors places the Negev Bedouin on the periphery of the minority population, a unique position that calls for unique attention.

*The Road to Higher Education: 'A Series of Sieves with Sequentially Finer Holes'*[4]

Like minority groups in other societies, many Bedouin youngsters are unable to pursue higher education, due to the quality of their preparation at the elementary and secondary school levels, as is true for the rest of the Arab minority in Israel (Abu-Saad 1996). First of all there is a wide gap in conditions, facilities, resources, teaching hours and budgets between Arab and Jewish schools. Golan-Agnon (2004) notes that a study with the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics revealed severe inequality in annual budgets available to Jewish

schools and Arab schools: 'We found that for each Jewish student, schools have an average of 4,935 NIS a year (some $1,097) for each Palestinian-Israeli 862 NIS ($191). In the south [i.e. the Negev], for each Palestinian Israeli child there are some 270 NIS ($60) ...'. Though the Israeli government bodies have acknowledged spending more on Jewish students than on Arab students (Human Rights Watch 2001), how much the Ministry of Education actually invests in Arab youth in Israel is hard to figure out and the discrimination it reveals is hard to explain. What makes the differences even harder to comprehend is the additional distribution of support funds to associations and non-governmental organizations sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Though Arab students represent over 20 percent of the children in Israel, of the 1.3 billion NIS (some $350 million) that the Ministry of Education gave to associations working on behalf of education, less than 1.5 percent went to Arab associations (Golan-Agnon 2004). How much actually went to Bedouin schools in the Negev is hard to say, but the impression given by the above numbers speaks for itself.

Bedouin children attend schools in both permanent settlements (i.e. the seven townships) and in unrecognized settlements. Although the Negev Bedouin fall under the Arab education system, the Israeli government has, since statehood, provided them with even fewer educational services than other Palestinian Arabs (Human Rights Watch 2001). With regard to physical resources in the Negev Bedouin educational system, Abu-Saad (2003) points out that facilities and equipment are insufficient, especially in the unrecognized villages, where buildings are inappropriate, schools lack indoor plumbing and were supplied with generator-powered electricity only in 1998. Schools in permanent settlements are in better physical condition and provided with basic amenities, but they lack equipment such as sufficient libraries, sports facilities or teaching material, and the level of crowding is very high. Research (such as Maddrell 1990; Abu Saad 2003, 2004b) has suggested that the poor provision and maintenance of educational services and facilities in the unrecognized villages are part of an official government policy to encourage the Bedouin Arabs to move into the government-planned townships. The schools classified as permanent are located in the planned towns, which include elementary, secondary and all of the high schools. Though a small number of elementary schools are located in unrecognized villages, the vast majority of which

---

[4] A term used by Human Rights Watch (2001) to describe the Arab school system in Israel.

were established before the government built the seven towns, most of the villages lack a school. When talking to academics and students at BGU, many of them identified the fact that students from the villages have to travel long distances to reach schools in nearby settlements as a major challenge. As most of the unrecognized villages lack paved roads and public transportation, children have to walk long distances along unpaved paths to school or to a bus stop (Abu-Saad 2003). As put by postgraduate student Amir I interviewed:

> '... the student comes home and there is no electricity, no water. He lives far away from the village, he has to walk a long way, he leaves school and it takes him two hours to get home. For example in the winter, let's say he leaves school at three thirty, but at four thirty it is already dark. So when he arrives home his day is over. How will he be able to study [in the dark]?'

The poor educational infrastructure takes its toll on student retention, particularly for girls,[5] since Bedouin parents tend to be reluctant to send their daughters to school, especially over long distances (Abu-Saad 2003). Another problematic issue faced by Bedouin schools and their pupils, as pointed out by both students and academics, is the lack of skilled teaching staff. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Bedouin education has gone through an officially oriented process of separation imposed on the Arab citizens of Israel. Yet, as noted by Al-Haj (1995), one of the major problems obstructing this separation was the shortage of qualified teachers in the Negev. Therefore, it became necessary to recruit Arab graduates from the central and northern regions of Israel. Though in 1976 the ministry opened special classes for Bedouin at the local teachers' college in Be'er-Sheva, the number of graduates remains too low to keep up with the demand. Accordingly, approximately 50 percent of the teachers are not local and the turnover rate is very high, as teachers from outside the Negev return to their own communities as soon as teaching positions open up there (Abu-Saad 2003). The Ministry of Education District Office reported that 23 percent of teachers in Negev Bedouin schools lack basic training and are uncertified (1998 Katz Committee report, cited by Human Rights Watch, 2001). Hence, the teachers in the Negev have less experience and poor qualifications. As one of the students remembers his English teachers:

> 'When I was in high school my English teacher was not qualified, he was a history teacher. And during elementary school our English teacher only knew very basic English'.

When I talked to a Bedouin lecturer at BGU, he emphasised the importance of a stable, committed student-teacher relationship in the preparation for the Bagrut (matriculation exams) and how such a relationship is hard to develop when 'guest teachers' are coming to the south for a short period of time.

However, the Ministry of Education's concern regarding the 'guest teachers' from central and northern Israel seemed to be of a different nature. It was claimed that the ministry's hastened teacher training among the Bedouin was based on the fear that these Arab teachers would bring about nationalistic feelings among the Negev Bedouin (Meir and Barnia 1987, cited by Al-Haj 1995). Additionally, the shortage of qualified teachers is even further aggravated by the state control over the hiring of teachers, principals and supervisory staff. In order to qualify for a teaching job, Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel must undergo a security check, and receive approval of the Shin Bet (General Security Services). The aim of this security check is to ban Arab educators based on their political views and affiliations, such as activism in Arab student committees or any other action for equal rights (Al-Haj, personal communication 7/7/05; Abu-Saad 2003; 2004c). Attempts to cancel the Shin Bet's position in the ministry have been unsuccessful (Ha'aretz 2005). That this situation creates fear and a lack of trust among the Arab teachers and principals was evident in one of my conversations with a principal of a Bedouin primary school. After clearly feeling reluctant to talk about the education system and curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education, he expressed his uneasiness by stating that:

> 'politics is a dangerous place ... I will never allow myself to enter this point because it will cause many problems for me. I will be asked ... "how did you let yourself to come to be in [this situation]?" You can speak about other things, but politics for education people, it is a dangerous thing.'

This 'security check' is the first barrier blocking teachers, and therefore students as well, denying them the right to express and explore a wide range of viewpoints, especially those connected to their own heritage. Once the first barrier has filtered out those who form a potential political threat, there is

---

[5] For a critical analysis of the high drop-out rates among Bedouin girls and the role of the Israeli school system, see articles by Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder (2004, 2006)

a second barrier. Educators who were found to be suitable to teach, and thus 'politically correct', are expected to follow curricular goals which are, indeed, specifically developed for the Arab students. However, these goals are once again part of the denationalization of Arab education, as emphasized by Al-Haj (1995). Rather than emphasizing Arabic culture, language and background, the Arab curriculum stresses the foundation and acceptance of Zionism. Students are expected to acquire intensive knowledge of Hebrew culture, language and Jewish values, whereas Jewish students have little exposure to Arab culture and are not required to study Arabic. Arab students devote more hours of classroom study to Torah than to Arab religious studies, and are examined on Judaism but not on Islam in the matriculation tests (the same goes for Christian Arabs and Druze). Furthermore they are assigned to read Zionist literature and poetry instead of Arabic or Palestinian (Adalah and HRA 1998; Jabareen 2004). To strengthen these objectives, already enshrined in the law as mentioned earlier, the Likud government formulated additional educational guidelines, which state that

> 'Education will be grounded in the eternal values of the Jewish tradition, Zionist and Jewish consciousness, and universal values. The Book of the Books, the Bible, the Hebrew language, and the history of the Jewish people are the foundation stones of our national identity, and will take their rightful place in the education of the young generation.' (Quoted byAdalah and HRA 1998)

When I was hosted by a Bedouin family in one of the unrecognized villages in the Negev, one of the children proudly showed me his schoolbooks. I was surprised to see that even in the 'less politically charged' textbooks Hebrew names and references such as Jewish holidays and traditions are used as examples, rather than those of Arabic nature. Two female undergraduate students at BGU explained to me why they believe that the studies of Bedouin should be related to their own society and culture, both the Bedouin and the wider Arab society. They emphasize that they like to study, but that certain subjects are hard to relate to.

> 'We are studying something that I don't like to study. Not because I don't like to study, but because it is not interesting for me to know. I don't [understand], there are some things that we must learn, as Tanach [bible] ... I think it is better for Jewish

students to study Tanach and for Arab students to study Koran.' (Aisha)

> '[T]hey don't teach us about the Arabs here in this country. I think they should [teach us], because this is our history. They teach us about Europe during the 1st and 2nd world war and about how Israel was established, but not about our history.' (Selima)

Amir, who used to be a history teacher before taking on a PhD position, describes the uneasy situation in which he would sometimes find himself when teaching:

> '[I]n high school you study Tanach [bible], what has it got to do with the Bedouin? When we studied history in high school we studied the history of Medieval Europe and we didn't study the history of the Middle East ... I think it is good we are studying about our neighbours, the Jews, but there are things that are not related [to the Bedouin culture], for example when I was teaching history, the [Bedouin] students were asking me "why do we need to know all of this?" and I was in an uncomfortable situation ... It is all about and for the Jews, the Arabs are not being discussed at all, they are not mentioned ...The students asked me lots of questions, which I sometimes just could not answer, for example they ask about when [the Jews] came here: "why won't you mention who used to live here?" But we can't because the curriculum won't allow us.'

This curriculum, which places much more emphasis on Israeliness and Zionism than on Arabic culture and history, is found to be alienating for Arab students, which contributes to high drop-out rates (Abu-Saad 1996; Al-Haj 1995; Mar'i 1978). Al-Haj (personal communication 7/7/05) points out the important role the curriculum plays in minorities' education and how its content is crucial for the development of students' aspirations, their identities and their will to continue their education. He describes those students as 'push-outs' rather than 'drop-outs', as they develop an estrangement towards the imposed curriculum and are unable to identify with the system.

Though the curriculum is a problem faced by the wider Arab community in Israel, the Negev Bedouin drop out of school at higher rates than other Palestinian Arabs. Of the Bedouin students who completed high school in 2000, only 16.8 percent

passed the Bagrut (matriculation exams), as compared to 45.6 percent of Jewish high school graduates. Those who do pass the Bagrut are less likely to qualify for university admission, as many are eliminated by the psychometric entrance exam. Many Arab intellectuals, Al-Haj (2003) and Abu-Saad (2004a) among others, identify the psychometric exam as the main obstacle blocking Bedouin, and Arabs in general, from entering institutions of higher education. They claim that it functions as a gatekeeper, excluding Arab students from admission, or from entry to the prestigious subjects that require high exam scores. They describe the exam as culturally biased, designed primarily for students with a Western cultural background. Bedouin students and academics at BGU agree that the psychometric exams are not a reliable reflection of the intellectual level of Bedouin students. An academic at the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development emphasizes this cultural bias by explaining that '[the] psychometric exam has a lot to do with the place you were born, which newspaper you read, which TV programmes you watch, who your parents [are]'

> 'The quality of the education system and also the psychometric exams are very cultural biased, which is based not only on the Jewish way of thinking, [but] on the Ashkenazi [European] Jewish way of thinking. And if you don't have this kind of knowledge ... this limits you. And today there is lots of criticism about it, that it is not a very good factor in deciding if you are intelligent or not.' (Lila, female post-graduate student)

As the psychometric exam is designed for students with a Western orientation, some Jewish students from non-Western cultural backgrounds, i.e. the Mizrahim (Jewish immigrants from Asian and African countries), are likely to encounter difficulties when taking the psychometric exams (Al-Haj 2003). Therefore, in order to make universities more accessible to youth from the social periphery of Israel, the Israeli universities and the Ministry of Education instituted a policy change in 2003. They abandoned the psychometric tests and decided to base the requirements for university admissions on high school matriculation exams. However, when the universities discovered that the new admissions system benefits Arab candidates, rather than Jewish youngsters from low-income towns, they reverted back to the old admittance policy, based on the scores of the psychometric exam (Sa'ar 2003).

> 'The universities did little yesterday to conceal the fact that admissions policies are being altered to benefit Jewish candidates. "Admissions policies based on [high school] grades do not make studies moreaccessible to [Jewish] students from the periphery. The opposite is true," declared the committee of university heads. In its statement, the committee was careful not to use the words "Jews" and "Arabs," but its intention was clear. In a euphemistic idiom, it wrote: "since the number of places available in university enrollment has not risen, the acceptance of one population [that is, the Arab students, R.S.] nudges out another population [Jews, R.S.]' (Relly Sa'ar, Ha'aretz 23/11/03)

Even when the education policy-makers refer to 'populations in the periphery', this is based on biased orientation, as they exclude the truly marginalized population: the Palestinian Arab population of Israel. Where do the Arab citizens find themselves - in 'the periphery of the periphery'? And where does this leave the Bedouin? This hierarchy is a matter of policy, and not a matter of chance, as both Abu-Saad (2004a) and Al-Haj (1995) point out. This viewpoint is shared by Human Rights Watch, who claim that discrimination throughout the course of Arab education ejects the larger proportion of Arab children, while those who do continue are channelled away from the prospects of higher education (HRW 2001). Thus it seems that little has changed since Uri Lubrani, the government's advisor on Arab Affairs from 1960 to 1963, spoke these words:

> 'Were there no Arab students perhaps it would be better. If they would remain hewers of wood perhaps it would be easier to control them. But there are things which do not depend upon our wish. There is then no escape from this issue, so we must be careful to understand the nature of the problems involved and to devise appropriate strategies.' (Quoted in Lustick 1980)

Hence, a wide range of inequalities and gaps have critically affected the academic success rate and university entry of Bedouin students. While some of those factors are applicable to the Arab population as a whole, such as the separate education system with its tightly controlled goals, curricula and budget allocations, the conditions of the Negev Bedouin, especially of those who live in the unrecognized villages, lag even far behind those of

other Arab citizens in Israel. Furthermore, problems deriving from their unique circumstances as an impoverished community in socio-economic transition, subjected to government policies specifically designed to transform their lifestyle, push them even further to the margin. Most of the aforementioned factors and barriers have been pinpointed by a selected group of scholars concerned with the Negev Bedouin, particularly by Ismael Abu-Saad, who has devoted the largest part of his studies to the education of the Bedouin and is a strong believer in higher education as a tool of empowerment for his community. However, the impact of those Bedouin who do manage to obtain a higher degree, i.e. the effects of their achievements, remain rather untouched. Furthermore, there are important influencing factors, which arose during my conversations with staff and students at BGU, which are related to the distinctive social and cultural structure within the Bedouin community. Those issues are crucial for the formation of a complete picture and will be addressed in the remaining parts of this paper.

### Bedouin Students in Higher Education: Impacts and Challenges

> 'Most [Bedouin] students come to the university straight from high school, they don't get to see the world, there's not much self confidence, it is difficult for [us] to encounter a new culture, to study in Hebrew, to use English as a third language. There's no transition period between high school and the university.' (Selima, 1st year undergraduate student)

With major barriers blocking the way to higher education, only a tiny fraction of the Bedouin community have gone on to obtain a university degree. Between 1998-2003, 219 Bedouin students completed their studies at BGU (Center for Bedouin Studies and the Negev Center for Regional Development 2004) and there are approximately two university graduates per 1,000, which is far below the Israeli national average of over 100 per 1,000 (Abu-Saad 2003). Those Bedouin students who make it to university, encounter a number of difficulties that make it hard for them to adjust. Bedouin and Jewish students do not start on an equal footing, the disparities between them, which start from the day they were born and continue to grow through elementary and secondary education, are reflected at university. The first problems mentioned by tutors and students are language related. The language of instruction, Hebrew, is the Jewish students' first language, while it is a second

language for Bedouin students. This makes English, the language in which much of the academic material is presented, their third language. Though Bedouin and Jewish students finally meet at university, after separate education has kept them apart, they don't meet on equal ground, as Israeli universities are mainly designed to serve the Jewish population. One of the lecturers brings up the languages used on campus: 'Look around you! Arabic is an official language in Israel, but nobody uses this language ... people use the Russian language in this university more ... you even don't see the names of the buildings in Arabic!' Al-Haj's (2003) argument that such an atmosphere contributes to the alienation of Arab students is spelled out by Amir when he says: '[we] come from a Bedouin school where [we] speak Arabic, everybody is a stranger here'. This feeling of estrangement among Bedouin students fits flawlessly in the everyday reality of Israeli society, where Arab citizens are viewed as outsiders, or at best as 'foreign guests', who should mould themselves according to the dominant structure. That this viewpoint is widely internalized in the most natural way is demonstrated during an informal group discussion about the language barriers encountered by Bedouin students, when one of the (Jewish) Israelis present, trying to indicate his understanding, says to one of the Bedouin present: 'but it's like that all over the world right? If you go to study in the United States or in England, the first problem is the language', unaware that with this very expression he unwittingly places the Bedouin in the context of a 'foreign student' rather than a fellow citizen.

The very small number of Bedouin students who studied in Jewish high schools, as their usually better-off parents made a well-considered decision to send them there, have a clear advantage upon their entry to university. Yasmin, a Hebrew Literature student from one of the unrecognized villages, expresses her frustration when she says that 'the disturbing [thing] is that you have Arab students who studied in Jewish schools and their [level of] education is higher and it is much easier for them in university.' Like Lila, one of the post-graduate students I spoke with, who explained to me that she is 'not a classical example for a Bedouin': 'I come from a specific family that allowed me to continue my studies'. Her father became one of the first highly educated Bedouin and, unlike most Bedouin, she grew up in Be'er-Sheva: 'I studied in a Bedouin school until the fifth grade, after that we all moved to an Israeli school, so we

could have a better education and go to the university in an easier way ...'

However, most Bedouin students are not as well prepared for university and are limited in their study options. The psychometric exam not only determines one's eligibility to go to university, but also one's possible fields of study. Therefore, roughly three-quarters of the Bedouin students are concentrated in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, leaving only a tiny handful in the fields of Natural Sciences, Health Studies, Management and Engineering. Unfortunately, the Centre for Bedouin Studies & Development has not done any graduate follow-up thus far, nor do they keep statistics of the careers taken up by Bedouin after graduating from university. Yet, from conversations with both students and academics, and from observations made by others, it seems that the majority of Bedouin university graduates return to their communities to pursue a teaching career. Female students not only see very few employment opportunities besides teaching, they generally also find it the most suitable career as 'it is good to combine with a family and children'. Nawal, a first-year undergraduate, said:

> 'One of the major reasons is that the Bedouin woman has no other area to work in. Even in the family, the father and the mother and the husband, support the woman to teach so she will have enough time for the family. I think it is the most suitable job for the Bedouin woman; she can suit herself to her home, to her children. Let's say I would have another job and I would come home at 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening, when would I be with my children? ... I see that all the girls that study here prefer to be teachers; there is no other way for them. The men, [when] they obtain the academic degree, some of them [become] teachers and some not ...'

I agree with Abu-Saad (1996) when he claims that most Bedouin students are directed into limited career fields as 'the use of the psychometric exam may consign students to certain career paths on the basis of cultural differences rather than ability, and prevents others from pursuing their chosen careers'. However, my impression, from the interviews I conducted at BGU, is that many students truly do aspire a teaching career, even if they consider continuing for a post-graduate degree. One of the Arab Palestinian academics who - though not a Bedouin himself - has been very active in the Bedouin community for many years, explains:

> 'It very interesting that the overwhelming majority of the Bedouin graduates will always look to be teachers, not more than that. I [even] know several who finished their degree in communication, but [they] are going back to be teachers. It is good for economic security, it is a monthly salary ... for themselves, it is very close to [their] home ... if they're going for something higher than that, they will go for a master degree, but then come back again to their own community and not more than that. I know several Bedouin friends here, who have master degrees, but still they are teaching in elementary schools close to their homes.'

Thus, it seems that students are not only prevented from accessing other career fields, but that the surrounding environment is such that their ambitions do not reach far beyond that. These graduates are going back to their communities, to the understaffed and poorly equipped schools, where they will be teaching the same curriculum that they were taught in primary and secondary school themselves. That this vicious circle has become so anchored in the natural structure, is illustrated by the Bedouin school principal who believes that in the end the current curriculum is the most suitable base as 'it is the best preparation for the [high school] students who will go to the teachers colleges since, as future educators, they will be instructed [there] to teach the same curriculum'. This conflicting standpoint of perceiving the curriculum, as taught in primary and secondary schools, as inappropriate for the Bedouin - since it ignores their roots and their culture - while at the same time, and most naturally, seeing higher education as the best tool enabling one to pass on this very same curriculum, is something I observed in my interactions with Bedouin students and some of their tutors. When Aisha is asked if she believes that the curriculum, which she defines as unsuitable for her <u>culture</u>, contributes to the high drop-out rates she replies: 'No, it does not [contribute to the high drop-out rates]. There are lots of reasons; we live in a society where lots of people are not interested in studying. Their <u>culture</u> at home is not encouraging education'. In line with Freire's (1970) theory, this exemplifies how the ideology of the ruling authority is implanted in the minds of the oppressed to the extent that they comply with their own oppression. Hence, one cannot simply assume that education perse is automatically a tool of

empowerment; one has to consider the environment prior, during and after the education and question whether this environment is empowerment-encouraging.

One of the aims of the Centre for Bedouin Studies and Development at BGU, which was established in 1998, is to encourage and increase the enrolment of Bedouin students in higher education. Thanks to the support of various funds, more Bedouin students, especially females, are now able to receive financial and academic support, with the result that the number of Bedouin graduates has tripled since the establishment of the centre (Center for Bedouin Studies and Development 2005). However, the lack of students enrolling in the fields of engineering and sciences causes great frustration among the Bedouin (and non-Bedouin) Arab academics: 'Please ask in the Bedouin Centre now how many students are studying Hebrew literature, why Hebrew literature? Who needs Hebrew literature? ... We have a problem; we don't encourage enough [Bedouin] students to go to engineering, natural sciences, other sciences' (Palestinian Arab academic at BGU). Postgraduate student Lila emphasizes the limited options: 'but what can they study? ... History, Hebrew, you know those kinds of things that they can teach; not engineering, not pharmacy ...'. In order to increase the number of students qualifying for a wider range of programmes, the Bedouin centre has recently introduced special preparatory programmes designed to meet the requirements of each faculty. An academic at the Bedouin centre explained that until recently the only way to get Bedouin students with low psychometric scores accepted was by personally trying to convince the respective programme head. Now they have three courses, one for humanities, one for engineering and one for health sciences, where Bedouin students take half of the standard number of credits. After successful completion of this course, they could be accepted on the degree course.

However, efforts to increase the number of Bedouin students in higher education are not left uncriticized by some of the academics within the Bedouin community. A Bedouin academic in sciences describes the jump in the numbers of Bedouin students reaching academia as 'superficial', because the easier acceptance of students with lower achievement and the provision of additional tutoring and financial aid do not improve the basic quality of the education provided to the Bedouin. He emphasizes that 'the education ministry wants to get numbers to be able to [say]: "look, we increased the numbers ... we are putting more

efforts", but this isn't done by honest means'. He adds that the admission of people for the sake of statistics will not change anything, 'in my opinion this contradicts with education'. Himself active in community education projects for the Bedouin, he is a strong believer that more Bedouin should be involved in engineering and technology, because 'empowerment through education with no economical empowerment will vanish within one decade'. However, it is important to bear in mind that the returns of a degree in engineering or sciences are probably not straightforward for a Bedouin graduate. Al-Haj (2003) shows that educated people in the wider Arab community in Israel face very limited opportunities of finding suitable employment. In the absence of an economic base in their own communities, the Arab graduates are economically dependent on jobs in the Jewish sector. However, 'many positions are closed to them because in one way or another they are connected with the army or matters of national security'. As a result many Arab graduates who do have a degree in sciences still find themselves in teaching jobs. Furthermore, university graduates working in blue collar jobs are far more common in the Arab sector than they are among Jews.

*Educated Bedouin as Agents of Social Change: Outlooks and Boundaries*

As emphasized by Kratli (2000), literature on the impact of education on (post)nomadic peoples refers mainly to what education is expected to do. This observation also seems relevant with regard to studies on the Negev Bedouin. It is of great importance, however, to look at what education actually does (or does not) do. So far, we have seen that Bedouin encounter many problems within the education system, problems that form major barriers through all stages of their education. The notion of 'power' is at the root of those problems and can be clearly classified as power over. Despite those problems, higher education is still expected to play a fundamental role in the development of the Bedouin community, as it is expected to produce the critical mass of leaders able to direct the collective towards social and economic change (Abu Saad 2003). As pointed out earlier, the aim of the empowerment approach is to transform power over to forms of power that move bottom-up, from inner resources. In order to examine the extent to which educated Bedouin are contributing to the empowerment of their community it is crucial to question how power is viewed, used and distributed among the Bedouin. The first issue to consider is at the personal level, which is the way wherein higher

education generates a sense of power from within, a feeling of self-confidence and capacity. The Bedouin students, especially the females, describe how their self-esteem increased during their studies. It is important to note, though, that this sense of confidence and independence is always seen in the framework of the Bedouin society, rather than the university context where Bedouin students generally seem to lack confidence. Though modern education places great emphasis on individualism and achievement, the existence of strong tribal affiliations and social commitment to traditional concepts should not be underestimated. The students' strong sense of connection and loyalty to their communities, in combination with the new and more personal value system of the university and wider Israeli society, creates a reality that can be confusing and sometimes difficult to balance. Aisha expresses her awareness of her position as an educated woman, in relation to her self-worth as well as to her community:

> 'At the beginning many people [in the village] used to get angry and tell my father "why do you send your girls to study, what for?" At the beginning it used to be very difficult, and also now it is difficult, but people are looking at us now with respect, like modern people, like people who come from the United States or something like that. My sisters and I are looked at differently, we are walking [freely] and my sister drives a car … I know the Bedouin community; I know the people, the society and the girls around me. I know who is more open [minded] and who is closed, that's the way it is in our society. I didn't change my opinion about them but I feel there is a gap, between [me] and another girl. Not all the girls are coming from a modern family such as mine. This is the gap that I am seeing. I don't know exactly how to explain it …'

Lila, the post-graduate student who earlier defined herself as 'not a classical example for a Bedouin' – which is a very valid description considering her dress style, background and sharp-tongued arguments – expresses how even a modern independent woman as herself cannot simply shake off the strong influence of the traditional Bedouin social structure:

> 'I am really independent … but we do have our challenges. When it comes to marriage [for example], then the patriarchal rules of the Bedouin are imposed on us, in a very

hard way … You know there is a hierarchy here … there are very respectable families [true Bedouin] and less respectable families [Falah], [at least] in the eyes of the Bedouin … So, when my sister wanted to marry a man from another [less respected] family, the whole family and all the other families opposed it and said "no, you can't". It's historical, it is not an easy act … then [she is] not an independent [woman], [but] part of X family. My sister struggled for three years, my father also struggled within his family, and in the end they got to this compromise … So, [then] I wanted to get married. I met a very nice man, my husband, [who] is an Arab Muslim from the north, but not a Bedouin. So they said "our rules also apply to him" but because he is not a Bedouin, he doesn't threaten the system as he is from far away. So they accepted him … [But usually there is not much flexibility] Within our family there was a specific situation, that they allowed us because of my father's approval … they thought that we would get married to our cousins, this is the traditional way … So, they [the family] thought "ok, you are living in Be'er-Sheva, you are living an independent life, but in the end you are part of us, you are part of the family" …'

The above account illustrates how deeply traditional principles and tribal affiliations are rooted within Bedouin society. When assessing higher education as a tool of empowerment for the Bedouin, and moreover as a generator of well equipped leadership, the power of centuries-long tradition cannot and should not be ignored. I do respect the sensitivity of this issue and its complexity, which goes beyond the scale of this study and certainly beyond my insights as an outsider. However, as traditional customs and tribal structures were repeatedly identified as major influences within the Bedouin community, exclusion of those accounts would produce an incomplete and misleading picture. Furthermore, one has to bear in mind the density of the problems of today's Negev Bedouin and how all aspects involved are inextricably entwined. One cannot look at education without considering the longstanding issue of landownership in the Negev. This issue, which is a major thorn in relations between Negev Bedouin and the State, has resulted in a counter-ideology on the side of the Bedouin, who – excluded from the new state's nation-building and identity-building process – pinned much of their own collective identity on the

land, thus making them even more attached to their ancestors' land and traditions (Yiftachel 2003). These issues - which have been intensively studied by others and are too comprehensive to be thoroughly addressed in this paper - affect Bedouin's approach to education, as is illustrated by one of the academics who describes an encounter that he and his colleague had with a Bedouin man in one of the unrecognized villages:

> 'The Bedouin claim that once the tribes are exposed to modern life, they will leave the land, so they don't want them to be educated … [We] were visiting [this man] who said "I don't want my children to get educated". When we asked "why?" he said "Because when they get educated they will change their [way of] life, they will move on to the towns and settlements, and they will leave the lands…"'

However, others do encourage their children and are more positive about the possibility of gaining an education while remaining truthful to one's own community and tradition. Here are two female students, who both live in an unrecognized village:

> '[My father] works in Dimona with Jews. He has friends [there] and they always tell him that he should allow us to study. He encourages us the best way possible, and so does my mother … There are people who, once they are studying, turn their backs to the [Bedouin] society. I want to go back to my society. I got to know the two societies and in this way it is easier to integrate in both [societies] … Maybe I am not going to behave like a woman who didn't study, but I am participating in my community. The things that I gained at university, I will use them.' (Yasmin)

> 'I am interested in the Bedouin community, the community from which I come  … and it is important to contribute to my community … I always knew since I was a child that I would go to study in the university, my family was behind it and my father was really pushing me to study … My family is a family of academics. This is my family, but there are not many [such families], it is a shame not all families are like that.' (Aisha)

Though accounts like these reflect students' ambitions to contribute to their own communities, the influence of the educated Bedouin of today and the extent to which they play a role in the empowerment of the collective is largely perceived

with ambivalence. I identify a number of factors contributing to this feeling of doubt, though the weight attributed to each of those factors and the depth of the discussion varies per individual. These factors are: (a) the extremely low percentage of Bedouin obtaining higher education; (b) the true will of the individual to make a difference; (c) the ability of the individual to make a difference; and (d) the powerful traditional and tribal structures that strongly influence the first three factors.

Many express their doubts as to whether the percentage of higher educated Bedouin is significant enough to make a change. This is not surprising as their annual population growth is one of the highest in the world (Litwick 2003) and, as shown earlier, their academic success rate is by far the lowest in Israel. This problem is emphasized by Lila:

> 'You know about the polygamy here? People come from very large families. Educated and uneducated men marry two or three or four women. They don't marry them by the Israeli law, they marry them by the Muslim law … and they usually have ten children, at least, from each woman .Most of the families here include at least forty children. So, they make a selection between them who will go to school and who will not …'[6]

The above narrative entails another interesting point, which is how both educated and uneducated men might hold on to the tradition of polygamy. Similar points made by others indicate that education does not automatically cancel out tradition. Those points challenge the widespread argument that education naturally triggers transformation, i.e. modernization. Selima explains why she believes that educated Bedouin do not necessarily contribute to social change in her community:

> 'I think that the educated men are still very religious and traditional. Can I give you an example? There is this person I know who is a social worker, he works in his profession and helps people, but when he goes back home he is a primitive person, as they call it. He believes that women

---

[6] It is important to note that this is a subjective comment which refers to polygamous families and does not apply to the Bedouin community as a whole. Polygamy features in around one-fifth of Bedouin marriages (Borkan, Morad and Shvarts 2000). As for the Bedouin society as a whole, the average number of children per family is more than eight (Litwick 2000).

shouldn't go to school and that boys and girls should get married at a really young age.'

Al-Haj (personal communication, 7/7/05) argues that many educated people in developing societies fail to be a source of empowerment because they are either mostly concentrated on themselves rather than on their community, or because the returns of education are too minor - in economic, social and political terms – to enable them to contribute to the development of their community. This leads to a situation of modernization at the individual level rather than at the community level, which he refers to as partial modernization. The latter is something identified by many of the individuals with whom I discussed the case of the Negev Bedouin. Jasmin's response to the question whether she believes that the educated Bedouin of today are making a change within the community is as follows:

> 'I don't think so. Maybe I have a negative view, [but] many of them don't come back to live in their community, they go to live in Be'er Sheva, Dimona or other such [Jewish] places. Most people are concerned with their own business, their own money and are not bothered with other peoples' business. There are maybe just a few [who contribute].'

To the question whether she thinks she will be able to make a change at the community level, as an educated woman, she responds by saying: 'you cannot take care of everything. But in the Koran there is a saying, for a man to change his society, he should first change himself. I am changing myself; I would then change my family, and then change my community'. One of the academics explains that he also believes that all empowerment starts from the individual, wherefrom it will naturally lead to empowerment at the community level:

> '... maybe [the educated person] can contribute here and there, but eventually has his own well-defined job, and does his job with the maximum he can, or she can ... I am selfish in terms of having good things for the entire community. I am selfish in having a very good school, because I want my child to get the best education ... In order to have the best education for my child I want the entire school to have high [level] education. I want the best teachers; this doesn't mean that I have to get the teachers who are my uncles ... '

The last sentence of the above account refers to this particular academic's dislike for the powerful tribal connections within the Bedouin community, which he believes are a major barrier in the development of urban benefits, such as education. Litwick (2000) points out that the longstanding identification along tribal lines and factionalism within the Bedouin community are reflected in their new urban setting today. He argues that those internal divisions have prevented clans/tribes from seeing their common interest and blocked the way for collective solutions. That this fragmentation may block educated Bedouin from using their positions as a tool for social change was revealed during several of my encounters. One of the academics opened the discussion on this issue in the following way:

> 'This is one of the real problems. Everywhere, in every group, in every nation, you will find [that] the educated people are leading; they call [upon] changes in their community. Here among Bedouin those academics are not social change agents'.

When I asked him whether he sees a gap between those Bedouin who are educated and those who are not, he explained how he believes that there is a gap between them when they are acting outside the context of the Bedouin society. However, it appears that Bedouin academics are commuting between two realities, rather than bringing those two realities closer together, as a whole different set of rules applies within the Bedouin society. Those rules, he explains

> '... have nothing to do with education, even the educated people still have to follow the Sheikh's orders, they don't really argue... they will argue but they don't go against the Sheikh's decisions. One of our problems is that we have today a group of academics, educated within the Bedouin communities, but those educated people just have certificates, degrees, they don't influence what is going on with their own communities ... [T]hose people when they are going back to their community, they just become like everybody else. You cannot imagine, I can give you a number of principals of schools who are getting married to second wives, lawyers, doctors, how come?! They have certificates, they have degrees, they are academics, but this is not reflected in the social change within their community ... While we know academics, people with degrees,

should lead their community, should be [like] "follow me". They have to be social change agents, but they are not ... So they [have] a double standard ... I have several friends from ... I was talking with them a few months ago about the upcoming elections for local government there, I said "hey, you are the leaders", [they said] "hah, we are not leaders, we maybe leaders in the university and the whole Israeli community can give us prestige and give us credit, but nobody is giving us credit in [own] our community, we are not leaders there.'

Respecting the sensitivity of the subject and the anonymity of the people concerned, I will refrain from discussing the personal accounts in great detail. It appears that there are several large gaps and contradictions within the world of the Bedouin academics. There is the gap between their positions as intellectuals in the Israeli university setting and their positions as Bedouin in their local setting. This gap is complexly connected to the tribal divisions which characterise the Bedouin community. I have been given examples of individuals who have climbed high up the academic ladder but do not receive acknowledgement for those achievements within the Bedouin community, because they do not belong to a large tribe or to the highest hierarchical category. There is the hierarchy of the academia and there is the hierarchy of the Bedouin community, each one functioning according to its own standards. Hence, the intellectual's power to influence relationships and decisions is extremely limited. That tribal status receives greater appreciation than intellectual or education achievement is emphasized in all the interviews. One lecturer explains that

> 'maybe in a kind of fantasy they would like to see more educated people, [it is] nice to talk to them, and to be proud that we have a doctor or a lawyer in our family, in our tribe, but when it comes to practice, to decisions, they [the educated people] are not influential'.

Amir shares his insights:

> '[A] person with a big family can win the election. An educated person will be promoted in a small circle, such as the [direct] family, because he is educated, but the larger Bedouin society as a whole is not concerned with the status of academics. There are two fundamental basics [in the Bedouin society], the tribe and the religion. I don't think that the Bedouin academics

are playing a big role in the Bedouin society, as the results show educated people who are running for the city council never win, while uneducated people do. I will give you another example, the former mayor of ... couldn't read or write, he was elected because he has a lot of money and he comes from a very large family.'

Many scholars argue that it is in the interest of the state, in line with the desire to exercise control, to maintain and exploit those divisions. The government's traditional role of providing handouts to local elite, particularly to traditional tribal leaders, has contributed to sustain the factionalism (Abu-Saad et al. 2000, Litwick 2000). When asked why the state would be interested in maintaining this, one of the academics answers: 'because it is easy to control ... easy to sustain a lower class society ... [intellectually] strong people would demand a fair share of their income, a fair share of their land, a fair share of everything'.

It is stressed by many that the lack of unity in the Bedouin community has been a barrier for young educated Bedouin leading towards social change. Only by recognizing the strength of the collective – by using power with each other – can common interests be promoted. Thus, suitable leadership cannot be achieved without unity and vice versa. Overcoming those well-established tribal divisions within the Bedouin community lies at the core of the route towards collective empowerment. However, as empowerment is a process that moves bottom-up, the fragmentation has to be resolved from the base. Unity is shaped through the acknowledgement of common traditions, historical grievances and future interests, and education is the tool that should be utilized to reach such common ground. It is crucial then that education is perceived to be useful within the community, i.e. education that is adapted to the community's needs and culture. As Brous (2004) argues: 'if education instills a sense of continuity with the past, it can serve to inspire a socially and economically viable future'. The fact that the positions held, and the decisions made within Bedouin society largely rely on tribal affiliations – regardless of the fact that the state is interested in sustaining this – proves that traditional values are still of great importance. Therefore, only through education that includes those collective traditions, can academic attainment be improved and the unity, essential for empowerment, achieved. The appreciation for traditional Bedouin values and knowledge is emphasized by Nawal, a female undergraduate student, when discussing the respect attributed to

intellectual and academic achievement and the respect attributed to tribal values and traditional leadership within Bedouin society:

> 'Of course the traditional leadership [gets more respect]. It is not that the traditional leadership is a negative leadership, on the contrary. I tell you, I meet lots of people, from outside the Bedouin community, who view the traditional leadership as negative. As for myself, and I assume that this is the opinion of every Bedouin, I see the traditional leadership as good enough, if not the best, for the Bedouin and especially for the women ... I am aware that there are things that need to be changed within Bedouin society, but there are a lot of positive things, especially all the traditional laws, because they protect the dignity of women.'

After describing the Sheikh as an unfailing source of wisdom, which reaches far beyond knowledge gained through academic studies, and explaining how he is able to 'solve all problems according to the Bedouin laws', she stresses: 'You have to know, you don't become a Sheikh just like that!'

The above account is another example which challenges the claim that education naturally transforms traditional values. Furthermore, it emphasizes the misconception that modern knowledge, and thus education, replaces traditional and indigenous wisdom. Kratli's (2000) argument that knowledge is tied to social structures and that the source of this knowledge and how it is produced are crucial to its status, appears to be valid in the case of the Negev Bedouin. Hence, as long as education equals establishment-oriented knowledge while traditional Bedouin knowledge is not perceived as valuable within formal education, empowerment will linger at the level of the individual rather than spread to the collective.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

*To what extent does higher education serve as a tool of empowerment for the Negev Bedouin?*

Throughout history the Negev Bedouin have been exposed to various forms of migration. Traditionally pastoral nomads, they were forced to undergo an unnaturally accelerated process of sedentarization, which virtually ended their mobile way of life. From nomadism based on seasonal migration, the Bedouin found themselves migrating into the government planned townships or settling in one of the many unrecognized villages: the 'uprooting' of a

deeply rooted mobile lifestyle. Once settled, the land as they had known it and relied on for centuries, and which formed the traditional frame of reference and the foundation of their culture and knowledge, rapidly transformed into a Western, industrialized immigrant state; a process earlier referred to as static displacement. The complex migration processes to which the Negev Bedouin have been exposed during the last decades have dramatically changed the role and meaning of education for their community. With the loss of their traditional livelihood and mobile freedom, their traditional education system – intended to actually prepare children for this lifestyle – became practically irrelevant. Furthermore, the transition from being Arab desert dwellers surrounded by a broader, solely Middle Eastern oriented environment, to an isolated cultural minority within the modernized Jewish settler state, called for education enabling them to deal with their new reality. More exposed to and dependant on Israeli society, the Bedouin community developed a need for suitable tools in the form of education. However, the provision and utilization of education have been shown to be far from straightforward.

While the Bedouin community gradually became more exposed to formal education, in the sense that, as citizens of the state, they are entitled to free compulsory education, the provision of suitable education to the Bedouin, enabling them to cope with their sudden state of immobility and cultural transition, was not part of the establishment's agenda. In accordance with Al-Haj's (personal communication 7/7/05) argument that 'the main question is whether education is a source of empowerment or a mechanism of control', the aim of the establishment-oriented education provided to the Negev Bedouin is not to be utilized as a tool of inquiry and social change, but rather to change the Bedouin's perceptions and control their options. Throughout the history of the State of Israel there has been an emphasis on changing the Negev Bedouin according to the state's agenda, while there has been no attempt to accommodate this change through truly suitable education. The reason appears to be quite simple: the policies were designed primarily to meet the needs of the state and not those of the Bedouin. Caught between their traditional setting and the ruling establishment, they are now provided with the poorest education in terms of facilities, staffing and infrastructure. Supplying a curriculum irrelevant to their history, culture, customs and experiences, Bedouin schools are reinforcing the current social structure of the establishment rather than raising critical awareness

and producing fruitful ground for empowerment. Thus, rather than a neutral enterprise functioning as a vehicle for social change, education turns out to be a highly political project controlled by the state. Such a situation, as argued by Apple (1979), forces the educator to be involved, whether consciously or not, in a political act. This challenges the questions as to whether Bedouin educators contribute to the empowerment of their students and whether educated Bedouin can be considered true agents of social change. The small group that manages to cross the hurdles of primary and secondary education are forced to conform to the rules and expectations of the establishment-oriented education system, a system based on beliefs and values that not only go against those of Bedouin culture, but are also deliberately designed to suppress them. How can education be considered as a source of empowerment for the Bedouin community if this education is not in the hands of the Bedouin but in those of the dominant power? It is true that efforts have been made to increase the number of Bedouin students enrolling in higher education. However, despite the commitment of the people involved – tutors, counsellors, advisors at the Bedouin centre – this increase too seems to be controlled by the political agenda. Rather than addressing the problem at the base – by developing improved primary and secondary education that is both relevant and useful to the Bedouin and therefore likely to raise levels of attainment and awareness – affirmative action upon university entry is applied, allowing a student increase in particular fields of study, while maintaining the status quo. This situation is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of higher educated Bedouin turn to teaching positions within their own communities; whether due to limited study options, lack of other career opportunities, or out of the true desire to teach. The main problem here is not that so many Bedouin students aspire to be teachers, after all there is a significant shortage of teachers in their communities, but that they will return to support the same cycle of education which oppressed them. This way the options of the next generation will remain limited, thus the status quo maintained.

Though the Bedouin's dramatic lifestyle transition calls for suitable education, which generates opportunities towards social and economic empowerment, current reality proves to be different. A community cannot be empowered through an educational model imposed from the top down. As Freire (1970) suggested, the chosen models should not be those of the oppressors: 'the oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption'. The educated Bedouin of today, i.e. the ones to take on the role of agents of social change, have reached their position through an education that represents the imposing power structure and not the Bedouin society. The gap between the education system and Bedouin society has resulted in academics travelling back and forth between 'the home of their academic knowledge' and 'the home of their Bedouin knowledge', unable to bring these two worlds closer to each other.

Thus far, education among Negev Bedouin seems to generate empowerment of the individual rather than the collective, whether it is the academic unable to utilize his knowledge for the sake of his own community,[7] the teacher who secures a family income while keeping up the current education system, or the social worker whose professional standards differ from their private ones. However, the aim of attaining social change is rooted in collective action. Yet, to be able to recognize the strength of the collective, there first of all needs to be a notion of the collective. This notion can only be achieved through the acknowledgment of a common culture, history and future interest, in the context of the current setting.

The traditional lifestyle of the Bedouin entailed much more than merely the seasonal migration in an annual circle over the desert land. Their unique mobile existence was made up by a combination of distinctive laws, traditions, rights of passage, hierarchies and customs. The elimination of their mobility, however, did not mean the elimination of all the elements connected to this mobility. The conversations and literature discussed in this paper show that the values and traditions followed in the pastoral nomadic setting remain dominant in the current immobile semi-urban lifestyle. The fact that half of the Negev Bedouin population still lives in the unrecognized villages, partially dependent on their traditional forms of livelihood though without the freedom of movement, only reconfirms this powerful connection. The traditional tribal structures and factionalism that characterized centuries of nomadism are still reflected in this new setting. This fragmentation blocks the road towards collective action, a situation that only serves the state's interest. However, those traditional values

---

[7] The masculine form is used here because – though a number of Bedouin women are currently rising in academia – at present, as mentioned earlier, all Bedouin holding faculty positions at BGU are male.

are a vital part of Bedouin society and collective action cannot be realized without consideration of those values. Just as empowerment cannot be achieved via top-down establishment-oriented education, this fragmentation cannot be resolved by introducing educated Bedouin as leaders of social change from the top down. Again, this is an issue that has to be addressed at the base, by educated Bedouin developing culturally appropriate primary and secondary education, whereby, as Brous (2004) emphasizes, 'reclaiming the power from a neo-colonialist educational system and choosing what dose of modernity is suitable for their needs'. The inclusion of traditional values and wisdom in Bedouin education creates a sense of a collective past and therefore shapes a vision of a collective future. Schools that are committed to recovering traditional knowledge whilst preparing students for a viable future in the current setting will raise collective awareness. This will change the role of higher education, from merely being a provider of limited individual opportunities, to a source of agents of social change. Obviously, this kind of change entails a comprehensive policy that combines the issues addressed throughout this analysis. However, a realization of such policy requires more voices to speak for this community and, as Litwick (2003) stresses, 'for the Bedouin, if there is occasionally a solidarity voice crying in the wilderness, it will not be enough to change matters'.

A nomadic way of life is not an option for the Negev Bedouin anymore, regardless of whether or not the generation of Bedouin growing up today would at all aspire to such an existence. However, many elements that once characterized their mobile lifestyle still characterize their settled lifestyle of today. Through suitable education that utilizes and acknowledges this culture whilst critically reflecting on it, a new collective identity can emerge: a collective identity that is not build from a position of static displacement, but from a dynamic interaction of tradition and modernity.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABU-RABIA-QUEDER, S. (2004) Feminism and Post-Colonialism in the Arab Educational System. In: CHAMPAGNE, D. and ABU-SAAD, I. (Eds.) Indigenous and Minority Education: International Perspectives on Empowerment. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, pp. 217-234.

ABU-RABIA-QUEDER, S. (2006) Between tradition and modernization : understanding the problem of female Bedouin dropouts. British journal of sociology of education, 27 (1), 3-17.

ABU-SAAD, I. (1991) Towards an Understanding of Minority Education in Israel: the case of the Bedouin Arabs of the Negev. Comparative Education, 27 (2), 235-242.

ABU-SAAD, I. (1995) Bedouin Arab Education in the Context of Radical Social Change: what is the Future? Compare, 25 (2), 149-160.

ABU-SAAD, I. (1996) Provision of educational services and access to higher education among the Negev Bedouin Arabs in Israel. Journal of Education Policy, 11 (5), 527-541.

ABU-SAAD, I. (1997) The Education of Israel's Negev Beduin: Background and Prospects. Israel Studies, 2 (2), 21-39.

ABU-SAAD, I. (2003) Bedouin Arabs in Israel between the Hammer and the Anvil: Education as a Foundation for Survival and Development. In: ABU-SAAD, I. and CHAMPAGNE, D. (Eds.) The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development. Los Angeles: UCLA Press, pp. 103-120.

ABU-SAAD, I. (2004a) Education and Identity Formation among Indigenous Palestinian Arab Youth in Israel. In) Indigenous and Minority Education: International Perspectives on Empowerment. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, pp. 235-256.

ABU-SAAD, I. (2004b) Education as a Tool of Expulsion from the Unrecognized Villages.) Adalah's Newsletter. December 2004 ed.

ABU-SAAD, I. (2004c) Separate and Unequal: the Role of the State Educational System in Maintaining the Subordination of Israel's Palestinian Arab Citizens. Social Identities, 10 (1), 101-127.

ABU-SAAD, I., et al. (2000) Identity and Political Stability in an Ethnically Diverse State: a Study of Bedouin Arab Youth in Israel. Social Identities, 6 (1), 49-61.

AL-HAJ, M. (1995) Education, Empowerment and Control: the Case of the Arabs in Israel. New York: SUNY.

AL-HAJ, M. (2003) Higher Education among the

Arabs in Israel: Formal Policy between Empowerment and Control. Higher Education Policy, 16 (3), 351-368.

APPLE, M. W. (1979) Ideology and Curriculum. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

BELL, J. (1999) Doing Your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

BORKAN, J. M., et al. (2000) Universal health care? The views of Negev Bedouin Arabs on health services. Health Policy and Planning, 15 (2), 207-216.

BROUS, D. (2004) The Uprooting: Education Void of Indigenous "Location-Specific" Knowledge. In: CHAMPAGNE, D. and ABU-SAAD, I. (Eds.) Indigenous and Minority Education: International Perspectives on Empowerment. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, pp. 257-265.

BURREL, G. and MORGAN, G. (1979) Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis. London: Heineman.

CENTER FOR BEDOUIN STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT (2005) Bedouin Students Marching Forward. Newsletter, 5, Spring 2005

CENTER FOR BEDOUIN STUDIES AND THE NEGEV CENTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (2004) Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

CRESWELL, T. (1993) Mobility as resistance: a geographical reading of Kerouac's "On the Road". Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, (18), 249-462.

DENSCOMBE, M. (2003) The Good Research Guide. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

DINERO, S. C. (2004) New Identity/Identities Formulation in a Post-Nomadic Community: The Case of the Bedouin of the Negev. Negev' National Identities, 6 (3), 261-275.

EL-KRENAWI, A. (2003) Cross-Cultural Psychotherapy with Indigenous Peoples: The Bedouin Arab Case. In: ABU-SAAD, I. and CHAMPAGNE, D. (Eds.) The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development. Los Angeles: UCLA Press, pp. 153-174.

ESPANIOLY, H. (2004) Education as a Tool for Empowerment. In: CHAMPAGNE, D. and ABU-SAAD, I. (Eds.) Indigenous and Minority Education: International Perspectives on Empowerment. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, pp. 42-46.

FALAH, G. (1989) Israeli State Policy towards Bedouin Sedentarization in the Negev. Journal of Palestine Studies, 18 (2), 71-90.

FREIRE, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum.

FREIRE, P. (1985) The Politics of Education. London: Macmillan.

GHANEM, A. (1998) State and Minority in Israel: the Case of Ethnic State and the Predicament of its Minority. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 21 (3), 428-448.

GIROUX, H. A. (1981) Ideology Culture & The Process of Schooling. London: Falmer Press.

GOLAN-AGNON, D. (2004) Inequality in Education and Discrimination against Arab Students in Israel' Empowerment. In: CHAMPAGNE, D. and ABU-SAAD, I. (Eds.) Indigenous and Minority Education: International Perspectives on Empowerment. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, pp. 201-214.

HA'ARETZ (2005) Keep security and education separate. Ha'aretz Daily (online version), [cited: August 10]. Available from http://www.pcdc.edu.ps/seperate_security_education.htm.

HAJJAR, L. (1996) Making Identity Policy: Israel's Interventions among the Druze. Middle East Report, (200), 1-6+10

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2001) Second Class: Discrimination against Palestinian Arab Children in Israel's Schools. New York: Human Rights Watch.

ADALAH and THE ARAB ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (HRA) (1998) Equal Rights and Minority Rights for the Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel. A Report to the UN Human Rights Committee on Israel's Implementation of Articles 26 & 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Nazareth: Adalah The Legal Center

for Arab Minority Rights in Israel and The Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA).

JABAREEN, Y. (2004) Law, Education and Social Change: the Case of Palestinian Arab Education in Israel. In: CHAMPAGNE, D. and ABU-SAAD, I. (Eds.) Indigenous and Minority Education: International Perspectives on Empowerment. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, pp. 107-135.

KRÄTLI, S. (2000) Education Provision to Nomadic Pastoralists. Brighton: Institute for Development Studies.

LAW-YONE, H. (2003) From Sedentarization to Urbanization: State Policy towards Bedouin Society in Israel. In: ABU-SAAD, I. and CHAMPAGNE, D. (Eds.) The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development. Los Angeles: UCLA Press, pp. 175-183.

LESKO, N. and BLOOM, L. R. (1998) Close encounters: truth, experience and interpretation in multicultural teacher education. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 30 (4), 375-395.

LITWICK, H. (2000) An Urban Development Strategy for the Negev's Bedouin Community. Beer-Sheva: Negev Center for Regional Development and the Center for Bedouin Culture.

LITWICK, H. (2003) Urbanization Policy for Indigenous Peoples: A Case Study of Israel's Negev Bedouin. In: ABU-SAAD, I. and CHAMPAGNE, D. (Eds.) The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development. Los Angeles: UCLA Press, pp. 184-204.

LUSTICK, I. (1980) Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority. Austin: University of Texas.

MADDRELL, P. (1990) The Beduin of the Negev. London:

MAR'I, S. (1978) Arab Education in Israel. New York: Syracuse University Press.

MARX, E. (1967) Bedouin of the Negev. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

MEIR, A. (1997) As Nomadism Ends: The Israeli Bedouin of the Negev. Boulder: West View Press.

MEIR, A. and BARNIA, D. (1987) Spatial aspects and structural changes in the education system of the Bedouins in the Negev. Hevra Verevaha, (2), 157-167.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2002) Statistics of the Matriculation Examination (Bagrut) 2000 Report. [cited: August 10]. Available from: //www.netvision.net.il/bagrut/netunim2000.htm.

MOSEDALE, S. (2003) Towards a framework for assessing empowerment. IARC Working Paper Series, (3), Manchester: Impact Assessment Research Centre.

PESSATE-SCHUBERT, A. (2003) Changing from the Margins: Bedouin Women and Higher Education in Israel. Women's Studies International Forum, 26 (4), 285-298.

PESSATE-SCHUBERT, A. (2004) The sky is the limit: higher education, gender and empowerment in the Bedouin community in the Negev in Israel. Compare, 34 (3), 329-340.

PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (PHR). (2003) No Man's Land: Health in the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev. PHR Report. July 2003.

ROWLANDS, J. (1997) Questioning Empowerment. Oxford: Oxfam.

SA'AR, R. (2003) Universities return to aptitude exams to keep Arabs out. Ha'aretz. 11 November 2003 ed.

SCHRIJVERS, J. (1991) Women's Autonomy: From Research to Policy. Amsterdam: Mimeo.

STROMQUIST, N. P. (1995) The Theoretical and Practical Bases for Empowerment. In: MEDEL-ANONUEVO, C. (Ed.) Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathways towards Autonomy. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education.

YIFTACHEL, O. (2003) Bedouin-Arabs and the Israeli Settler State: Land Policies and Indigenous Resistance. In: ABU-SAAD, I. and CHAMPAGNE, D. (Eds.) The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development. Los Angeles: UCLA Press, pp. 21-4