

## **Between Pity and Suspicion: Perceptions of Disability Rights as Special Rights in Israel**

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This article investigates the *law in action* in the lives of Israelis with disabilities. Specifically, it brings to light an important obstacle to implementation of disability rights law, namely public suspicion that disabled individuals may abuse their given rights to get an unfair advantage. Using a mixed-methods empirical approach, this article investigates this backlash against the relatively new rights discourse for people with disabilities from two complementary perspectives. First, using quantitative analysis of survey data, it shows that a fifth of a large sample of the Israeli population agrees with the statement “*we should be careful that people with disabilities do not take advantage of the robust support they receive from society and the state.*” Further regression analysis finds that these perceptions regarding abuse of rights are correlated with a perception of disability rights as “special rights.” Second, semi-structured interviews with Israelis with disabilities reveal that these perceptions of abuse and fakery have an impact on the ways they carefully navigate their rights in everyday life. The findings also demonstrate that discourses of pity and charity towards disability are still dominant, and that the rights discourse has not yet caught on among the Israeli public even over two decades after the enactment of the Equal Rights for People with Disabilities Law.