WORDS AND STONES

The Politics of Language and Identity in Israel

DANIEL LEFKOWITZ

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2004

1

Negotiations and Identities

Many ethnographies begin with dramatic tales of the anthropologists' first—or last—encounter with "the field." This ethnography of language use in Israel, however, begins with a tale of the ethnographer at home, far from the field.

FAR FROM THE FIELD

I had been home nearly a year when Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, shook hands on the White House lawn as they signed what became known as the Oslo Peace Accords. This handshake seemed at the time to signal a remarkable watershed, as intractable enemies prepared to work together.

A few days later I received an email from an Israeli anthropologist, who wrote euphorically:

> *I [hope] everything you have to say about Israeli Arabs will have to be modified before you finish your writing — as language catches up with the incredible sociopolitical changes we're witnessing.*

As someone who had lived in Israel, whose relatives still live there, who had seen the terrible effects of violence, I too felt euphoric that peace might break out, at the prospect of a Palestinian state. But as a graduate student, working to finish my dissertation on the negotiation of Palestinian and Jewish identities in Israel, I felt shaken by the potential effect of this turn of events on my thesis. I had spent two eventful years in Israel, witnessing

the Gulf War, the Madrid Peace Conference, and the dramatic 1992 Israeli elections.[1] At home in the United States I felt distant from the ever-changing subject of my research—as if it were slipping away from me.

With the benefit of hindsight, I now see my feelings as the typical reaction of the ethnographer, rather than the unique experience of one who writes about the Middle East. Current events appear particularly dramatic in the Middle East—in part because they garner great media attention in the United States. The Middle East is so dynamic and so turbulent that "the present" rapidly becomes "the past." But all societies are constantly changing, and the ethnographic project is best understood as an attempt to capture culture as a process, rather than as an object. Anthropologists have come to recognize that ethnographic descriptions are always provisional, and this realization has coincided with new thinking about ethnographic texts. In abandoning the notions of an isolated and static ethnographic Other, ethnographers have also left behind writing styles that fix this Other by inscribing it in positivist texts.

But it is not only ethnographers who perceive reality as provisional. The provisional nature of identity was a recurrent theme among Palestinian Israelis I interviewed during my fieldwork in Haifa, Israel.[2] Many Palestinians constructed their own identities, for example, as dependent on the political situation. In one such interview, Stella, a Jewish Israeli research assistant, asked a group of three Palestinian Israelis about language use in their homes:[3]

Text 1.1. Hebrew Use in Palestinian Israeli Homes

Stella What language do you speak with the children? Hebrew or Arabic?[4]
Lisa No, only Arabic,
Samir Never, we don't speak any other language, ...
They know Hebrew well, very well, English too, ...
They speak only Arabic, but they know Hebrew,
Rhoda That is, they don't ... it's as if they don't dare speak, eh— ...
Stella What don't they dare speak?
Rhoda OK, ... my son too, ...
Television, neighbors,
But to come and speak [Hebrew] with him instead of Arabic, ...
He needs to know [Hebrew],
And it'll take root in him,
That ... Arabic is his mother-tongue,
And Hebrew is a language that can—
It may be that it'll be the language of the street,
But, not at home,
OK, good, and all, but not to feel that that— that it's equal, ...
Maybe, after there is peace, maybe there will be—
And the Jews, too, will learn [Arabic], ... (193B:2:20–5:20)[5]

Rhoda asserts that Arabic—not Hebrew—represents her own and her children's identity as Palestinians, but she ties these sentiments to the then ongoing official state of war between Israel and Palestinian political organizations. Did Rhoda's ideas about her own identity change dramatically after the signing of the Oslo peace accords? Did her ideas about language change? Did her own use of language change?[6]

Maybe. But social and cultural processes do not change as quickly as do political realities, and the discourse of peace that emerged from the Oslo Accords appeared to make more salient the ethnic, racial, national, and class divisions that comprise Israeli "identity." In the months immediately following the signing of the Israel-PLO agreement, for example, observers speculated that Israeli Arabs (i.e., Palestinian citizens of Israel) and Mizrahi Jews (i.e., Jewish Israelis whose families had emigrated from Arab and Middle Eastern countries) would constitute a cultural bridge between Israel and the Arab world. History unfolded differently, however. Israeli electoral politics were turned upside down by ethnic parties and identity politics (Lefkowitz 1997), and unprecedented numbers of Arabs and Jews were killed in renewed violence between Jewish settlers and Palestinian residents in the Occupied Territories.[7] Arguably, by blurring political and military boundaries, the peace accords pressured marginalized groups to negotiate social boundaries ever more vociferously. The dramatic political negotiations may well change the way in which Israelis negotiate their identities, but the negotiation itself remains central to an understanding of cultural process.

Negotiation

This book examines Israeli national identity, looking at the ways in which it is imagined (Anderson 1991) and at the ways various imaginings are deployed in the semiotics and politics of everyday life. I am interested specifically in the ongoing recreation, redefinition, and reapplication of nationalist imaginings.

This is not a historical study, though the history of identity constructions is crucial background for understanding their semiotics.[8] This study looks at the semiotics of national identity constructions by looking at the contestation over social identity in Israel. While specifically looking at Israel—where this struggle has high visibility and significance—I hope to provide more general insights into social transformation. The configuration of overlapping and inconsistent national, racial, ethnic, and class divisions found in Israel exists also in other parts of the modern world. Language is the lens I use to observe, clarify, and magnify the subtle processes involved in this struggle. I also hope to provide insights into how language itself is structured and how it is transformed.

To study society by studying language is at the same time to study language by studying society. This recursive perspective draws inspiration from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who defines the *habitus* as "both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification ... of these practices" (Bourdieu 1984:170). Actual instances of language use draw upon the meanings inherent in the abstract language system, while at the same time offering the possibility of rearranging

those meanings for future use. Such historical recursiveness coincides with a contextual recursiveness, as speech draws on the context of utterance for its meaning, even as utterances contribute to the definition of context (see Briggs and Bauman 1992; Goodwin and Duranti 1992).

To think about these recursive, dialogic relationships I employ the spatial metaphor of a spiral, which captures three key features of sociolinguistic symbols:

- The meaning of a symbol may change over time.
- The meaning of a symbol may differ for various socially positioned speakers.
- The meaning of a symbol at any particular time recalls earlier and differently positioned meanings.

Figure 1.1 represents these ideas schematically. The figure shows a spiral that expands rightward across (historical) time, while oscillating within a space defined by the orthogonal axes, labeled "symbolic value" and "social position." The spiral's rightward expansion represents the change in symbolic meaning over time. The spiral's oscillation within the space of symbolic value/social position represents the semiotic gaps that emerge between old and new meanings of a symbol on the one hand and between the meanings a symbol evokes for differently positioned individuals on the other. The spiral's tendency to return to proximity (though not identity) with earlier states suggests the dialogic connections new meanings retain with old.

These ideas can be explicated through a detailed look at figure 1.1. Figures 1.2–1.4 transform the three-dimensional diagram into two-dimensional images, projecting the spiral onto the plane constituted by the symbolic/social space. These figures present

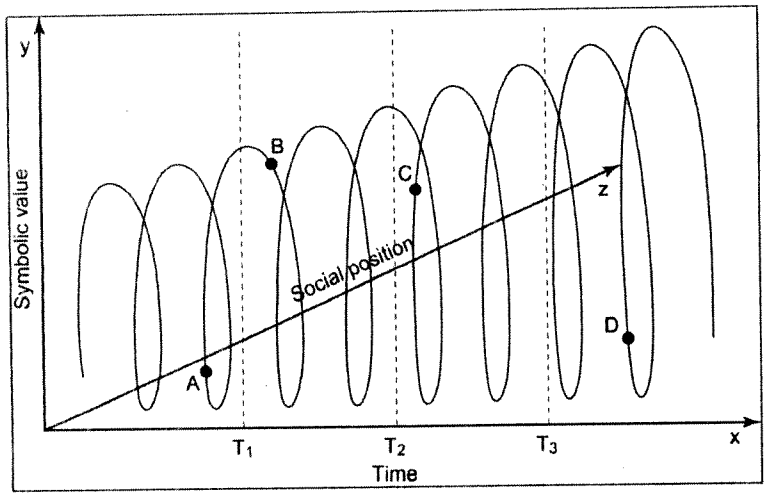

Figure 1.1. The Discourse Spiral.

cross-sections of the spiral taken at three points in time, T_1, T_2, and T_3. Figure 1.2a illustrates a common semiotic phenomenon, namely a gap in meaning across social space. Here the same symbol encompasses divergent meanings for two social groups. The word *bad* offers a simple example, since it means "not-good" for most White speakers in the United States but can also mean "good" for African-American speakers.[9] Figure 1.2b illustrates another common phenomenon in the social life of symbols, namely a change in meaning. Here the same symbol assumes different meanings over time for the same social group. The word *gay* demonstrates this phenomenon, since it once meant "happy" but has come to mean (also) "homosexual."

Figures 1.1–1.4 can be applied to more complex semiotic processes, such as the debate in the United States over the meaning of the "Confederate battle flag." During the 1990s several southern state legislatures voted to modify state flags so as to remove

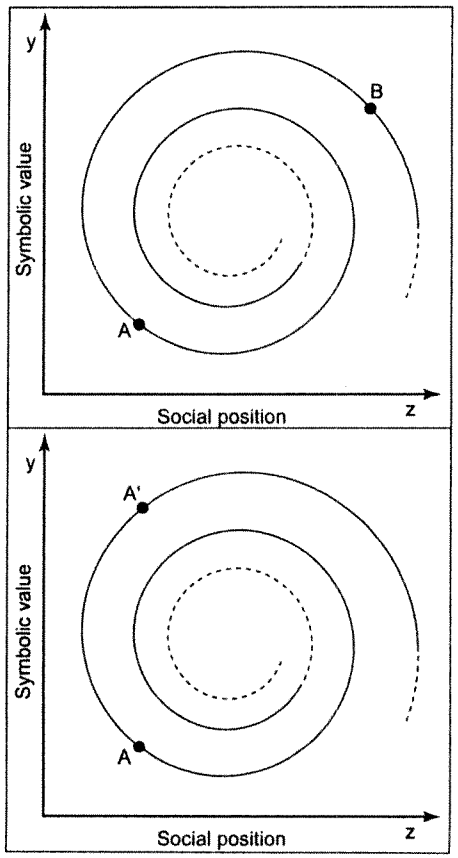

Figure 1.2. The Discourse Spiral Projected onto the Symbolic/Social Plane at Point T_1.

(or reduce) the Confederate symbols they contained, while other states voted not to make such changes (Webster and Leib 2001). This acrimonious debate hinged on what the flag meant—and to whom. To White Southerners the Confederate flag is a potent symbol of self-reliance and states' rights. To African Americans the Confederate flag is a potent symbol of slavery and hatred. Figure 1.2a can represent this social difference in meaning: the difference in symbolic value between points A ("self-reliance") and B ("discrimination") corresponds to a difference in social positioning (White/Black).

What is often omitted (or obscured) by the debate over symbols of the Confederacy, however, is the symbol's history. The recent debate was precipitated by actions taken in the 1960s, when many southern state legislatures inserted the Confederate symbols as a statement against the civil rights legislation being imposed upon them at the time (Webster and Leib 2001:272). Figure 1.3 schematically represents this meaning space in the 1960s. This cross-section of the spiral from figure 1.1 at time T_2 includes a third point, labeled C. Point C has approximately the same coordinate for "social position" as point A, representing the meaning of the flag for Whites in the 1960s. Point C also has approximately the same coordinate for "symbolic value" as point B, representing a situation in which Whites and Blacks agreed that the flag meant "race."

Finally, figure 1.4 represents the situation in the mid-1990s. This cross-section at time T_3 of the figure 1.1 spiral includes a fourth point, labeled D. Point D represents the meaning of the flag to Whites in the 1990s. Its symbolic value coordinate is close to that of point A, reflecting the fact that the modern deployment of the symbol rhetorically evoked its earlier meanings of "self-reliance" and "states' rights." This dialogism (see Bakhtin 1981) is represented in figure 1.4 by the dotted lines connecting points A and D, as well as points B and D. Discourse often represents such historically separated reincarnations of a symbol (i.e., points A and D) as if they were the same—

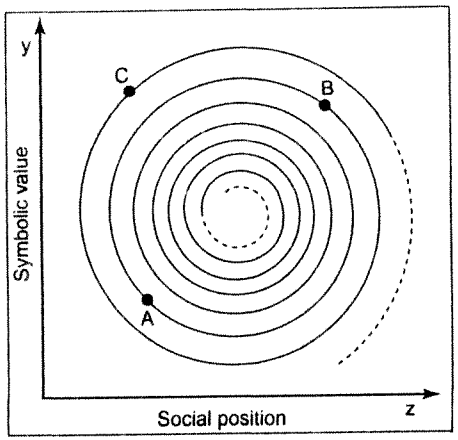

Figure 1.3. The Discourse Spiral Projected onto the Symbolic/Social Plane at Point T_2.

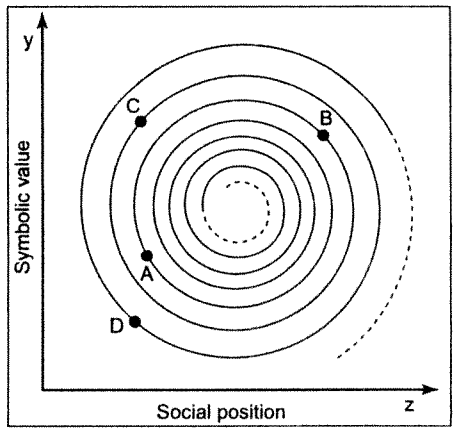

Figure 1.4. The Discourse Spiral Projected onto the Symbolic/Social Plane at Point T_3.

but they are not identical. Symbolic processes revisit prior meanings without returning to them. Utterances draw on dialogic resonances, both historical and social, while inflecting them with new settings. Current meanings evoke earlier meanings, but are not defined by them. The spiral metaphor helps conceptualize recursiveness as a projection forward in time, in which symbols accumulate layers of historicized meaning as they become richer, more complex, and ever more significant.

The linguistic symbols used in Israeli negotiations of identity behave as if they were points on the spiral in figure 1.1. Old prestigious forms give way to newer vernacular forms in the Jewish community at the same time that they are adopted by Palestinian Israeli speakers of Hebrew. And the multivocal social meanings of the forms adopted by Palestinian Israelis are associated both with the high prestige of standard Israeli Hebrew and with the low prestige Israeli discourse attributes to symbols inflected with Arabness (see chapter 7). The dynamic that drives the dialogic spiral is the negotiation of meaning.

The most prominent division in Israeli society—between Arab and Jew—stands in opposition to a lower-profile division between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews.[10] In turn, the latter division will be explicated with reference to the important dichotomy of Mizrahi Jew and Palestinian Arab. One site of such negotiation is the day-to-day, face-to-face interaction between individual social actors.

The Visa Office Language Ballet

The visa office is in a stately part of town, next to a public park on the flanks of Mount Carmel, with a magnificent view of Haifa harbor and the Mediterranean Sea. The office occupies an old British colonial building, one of many still used more or less in their old capacities. Inside the stateliness ends, supplanted by drab walls and narrow hallways overflowing with impatient petition seekers.

As an American visitor needing only the periodic renewal of my tourist visa, I glide past most of the lines. Interior Ministry buildings all over Israel are packed these days because of the huge influx of Russian immigrants. These recent arrivals need to stand in lines for hours.

My wait is no more than twenty minutes. I watch carefully for my turn, then push through the crowds to get into the office. Inside, three women sit behind cluttered desks, facing computer terminals. Their desks are surrounded by walls of old cardboard files, mountains of old documents. The office suitably represents Israel's awkward position between first and third worlds: the computers lay claim to a modernity that the walls of dusty files contest.

I take a seat at one of the desks but find I am interrupting a Russian man's desperate plea for the official's attention. The official prefers to deal with me and my straightforward visa renewal, but the Russian man is aggressive and insistent. He is also talkative. From our accents it is clear where each of us comes from. Although I have been in Israel for a year and speak Hebrew well, I have not lost my strong American accent. The Russian man has been in Israel only a few months, and he speaks Hebrew haltingly and ungrammatically. The woman official is a native speaker of Hebrew.

As my visa application is processed, a negotiation over language unfolds as a choreographed ballet. I address the Israeli official in Hebrew, and she responds to me in English. The Russian man, apparently pleased to meet an American, starts a conversation with me in English. I answer him in Hebrew, but he returns to English. Meanwhile, the Russian man's dialogue with the Israeli official becomes quite heated. They conduct their struggle in Hebrew, despite his rudimentary skills in that language and his evident preference for English.

These language choices constitute a negotiation of identity, as power is being won and lost in a simple language game. The native-Hebrew-speaking Israeli insists on English with the American and Hebrew with the Russian, while the Russian insists on English with the American and accepts Hebrew with the Israeli. Multiple negotiations are playing out simultaneously: the Russian man is negotiating over the official's attention and assistance; he deploys his English knowledge via a conversation with me, as part of this struggle. I am negotiating a position in Israeli society by insisting on Hebrew despite the eagerness of others to use English (which is an easier language for me). The official is negotiating her authority—as native Israeli, as gatekeeping power broker, and, not insignificantly, as a woman in conversation with two men.

Hebrew is the pride and joy of the (Jewish) Israeli people and the primary socializing force in integrating the Russian immigrants (see chapter 5). The Israeli official must therefore insist on Hebrew, despite the man's displayed preference for English. Yet with the American, the negotiation is over status, not national identity, and competence in English is the key to this contest. The fact that both the Israeli official and the Russian immigrant insist on English with the Hebrew-speaking American tourist reflects a deep-seated linguistic insecurity (see Labov 1982a) that pervades modern Israeli life.

Yet the full extent of this negotiation can be explicated only with respect to a much broader social context. The triangular nature of this language-use struggle stems from the particular social situation in Israel. My ethnographic research coincided with a massive immigration to Israel of Jews from the then Soviet Union. During the latter part of 1990 as many as two thousand immigrants were streaming into Israel each day, taxing the country's material resources for providing housing, employment, and social services (Siegel 1998). Perhaps more crucially, the influx taxed Israel's ideological resources. Israeli socialization efforts converged on the teaching of Hebrew to the incoming Russians.

American Jews, on the other hand, have a different status in Israel. Lumped together with Jews from Britain, South Africa, and other English-speaking countries as *anglo-saksonim*, "Anglo-Saxons," Americans have both a superior symbolic status and a certain irrelevance. High status stems from their relative wealth; their prominence in academic, professional, and business elites; their association with the United States, Israel's major benefactor; and, not least, their mastery of English. Yet they are irrelevant because they are considered nonmainstream Israeli. Indeed, popular stereotypes construct "Anglo-Saxons" as *frayerim*, "suckers," in contrast to the more aggressive Israelis (Bloch 1990). And the Americans' disproportionate association with left-wing, peace-camp politics adds to their marginalization.[11] At one political demonstration, an Israeli-born right-wing protester shouted (in Hebrew) "Learn Hebrew first!" at an American left-wing demonstrator who had lived in Israel for forty years without shedding the telltale accent.[12]

But, so far, this discussion has glossed over an essential part of the story—Arabs and Arabic. The struggle over identity in Israel is most spectacular between Arab and Jew, and yet this struggle is in many ways silenced. Perhaps it is the vehemence of the struggle that silences it, for the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories so dominates Israeli and world attention that the struggle between Jew and Arab within Israel almost is lost in the shuffle.

The Ethnographer

"The Visa Office Language Ballet" also highlights the role I played, as ethnographer, in the processes I was observing. As an American, my interactions with Israelis unavoidably implicated my own identity and brought my language, English, into the negotiation.

A Ship's Chandler

A research assistant and I were invited to the home of Louis, a Palestinian man who worked in the Haifa port as a ship's chandler.

From his stories I gather that Louis enjoys his work, and from the comfort and grace of his home I gather that he does it well. He seems a comfortable man.

His Hebrew is fluent and colloquial, but every so often he misses a word, or pauses to reflect on how to express his thought in this—his third—language. At one point he stumbles over an irregular Hebrew plural. He tries out one form, then another. Finally he looks for help to my Jewish

Israeli research assistant, the only native speaker of Hebrew in the room. She nods her approval to the first form.

Stella, the research assistant, is quiet tonight—more so than usual. In these interviews I present myself as the main researcher, and I usually begin by asking the questions. My strategy, though, is for the research assistant to gradually take the initiative, so that the discussion becomes one between Israelis. With Stella silent, this strategy fails.

Louis seems to be contributing to Stella's silence. When he searches for a word he sometimes provides an English equivalent. At one point, he does this to help me out, when I don't understand the Hebrew word for "chandler." But I'm not familiar with the English word either, so he explains in Hebrew what he does. He frequently switches into English, though, a language that Stella doesn't command.

Louis seems proud of his English. It has a fluent, American sound to it. His English is better than my Hebrew, but aside from up-to-sentence-length fragments—code-switches—he sticks with Hebrew. There is a subtle American coloring to his Hebrew, too. Hard to pinpoint—maybe a retroflex /r/, or a diphthonged vowel.[13] I find myself questioning his sincerity because of his accent.

In this negotiation of identities, Louis combined narrative and style to navigate a complex course among the various currents of social identity available to him. His use of English, his affecting an American accent in Hebrew, even his use of an English first name[14] indicated an orientation that distanced him from his official status as a citizen of Israel.[15] This orientation toward English simultaneously constituted a strong claim for status within the interview context. Since English is a language that he shared with the primary researcher and that excluded the research assistant, he was able to define his status in terms of the primary researcher. Indeed, I interpreted both his accent and much of his searching and stumbling for Hebrew words as a strategic move within the negotiation over status.

But many of the narratives he told during our interview contested the indifference toward Israeli identity that the style of his language expressed. He frequently positioned himself, for example, as a defender of Israeli society and of his position within it. At one point he told us about setting American sailors straight: that although he is an Arab, he doesn't hate Jews.

Social Identity

This book focuses on the strategic manipulation of linguistic variation and the pragmatic effects of such manipulation on social interaction. Language-use can be called strategic in two important senses. First, speakers use language to create—as well as reflect—their social identities. Second, language-use constitutes social action, which has material consequences for social relations.

The idea that language and identity are related has a long pedigree in Western thought. Its origins are conventionally associated with the eighteenth-century German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, who proposed that each folk, or people,

had its own set of characteristics, traced ultimately to the influences of geographic location (Berlin 1976; Wilson 1973). Over time, these folk characteristics influenced cultural domains, such as dress, traditions, and—most important—language.

Herder's philosophical writings achieved enormous popularity and influence in his own time (Wilson 1973) and gave rise to several important fields of scholarship, including folklore and historical linguistics.[16] His work buttressed mainstream efforts in eighteenth-century Europe to consolidate nationalities—under the rubric of national language groups. The unification of Germany, for example, was based on the construction of a language, "German," posited to be common to all the peoples encompassed by the proposed territory. The task demanded great feats of abstraction, since dialect diversity was extraordinarily great at that time in middle Europe. A national language was posited as a central tendency, and dialects were posited as variants on this tendency.

This theoretical structure was very useful for the emerging science of linguistics, but it also had wide-ranging political consequences. Herder's ideas gave impetus to the emerging political philosophy we now call romantic nationalism, and they were transformed by some of nationalism's more virulent streams to buttress essentialist political doctrines. Essentialist interpretations of Herder's work are problematic, however, for theories that link language and identity, since the actual relationship is extremely complex (see Lucy 1992a, b). Dell Hymes (1984), for example, argues that since the boundaries for a "language" are as flexible as those for a "people," the relationship between languages and peoples takes on a variety of forms. Whereas linguists see Serbian and Croatian as the same language, Serbs and Croats see them as two different languages.[17] Similarly, Hymes provides examples of languages that are constructed as "the same" by their users, despite significant objective differences.

Although Hymes eloquently deconstructs a deterministic Herderian interpretation of the relationship between language and identity, he does not argue that the connection is unimportant. Rather, he argues that precisely because the relationship between language and identity is indeterminate, variable, and mutable, it is crucial to anthropology. Indeed, the politics of the language/identity nexus is no more determinate than the linguistics. This nexus has been used to buttress resistant ideologies and subaltern identities, even as it is used to reproduce dominant identities. French in Canada, Gaelic in Scotland, and Hebrew in Palestine are prominent examples of political resistances fought with the help of language symbolism (see Handler 1988; Harshav 1993; MacDonald 1997).

Modern approaches to the study of language and identity owe much to the work of William Labov. Labov showed that variable phenomena in language (such as the pronunciation of vowels in New York City) were, in fact, rule governed—the rules made reference to social categories, such as ethnicity, gender, and class (Labov 1982a). His study of language change on the island of Martha's Vineyard, in Massachusetts (Labov 1963), for example, linked changes in dialect form to changes in social identity.

While Labov's work focuses on an analysis of language form and describes language in terms of social structure, John Gumperz (1982b) worked in the opposite direction. Taking linguistic structures as analytic points of departure, Gumperz applies them to help explain social phenomena, such as discrimination, bias, and other forms of social conflict. He studied service encounters in a British airport cafeteria, for example,

where most of the servers were female immigrants from India and Pakistan, and most of the patrons were male airline workers born in England (Gumperz 1982a:173–174). A problem arose when customers complained that the servers were "surly and uncooperative" and servers complained of unpleasant working conditions. Gumperz argued that servers and patrons miscommunicated: the intonation contour servers used in asking a question (e.g., "Do you want gravy?") was often interpreted by customers as statement-intonation, leading them to feel that servers were behaving rudely. Because such miscommunication occurred in the context of an encounter with the Other—immigrants in Britain from India and Pakistan—it generated patterned perceptions, or bias (see van Dijk 1984).

Through careful attention to the ethnographic details of face-to-face interactions and a focus on the linguistic cues speakers use to frame and thereby contextualize their utterances, Gumperz and his colleagues have vastly increased our understanding of language and interethnic conflict. One of the important contributions of this work is that Gumperz treats speakers as intentional agents who use language as social action. Yet by assuming that cases of communicative disharmony constitute failures of communication, this approach downplays the degree to which ethnic groups in conflict may, in fact, negotiate to miscommunicate.

Moreover, the work of Labov and Gumperz share a common, or complementary, shortcoming. By assuming either social (Labov) or linguistic (Gumperz) categories as analytic points of departure, these scholars place the dynamic relationship between language and society beyond the scope of their research. The view proposed here entails a strategic approach to social and linguistic categories, in which notions such as class, gender, and ethnicity are seen as resources used in the active construction of social identity, and linguistic structures, such as phonological variables and intonational contours, are creatively deployed in innovative ways.

More recent work in linguistic anthropology has begun to unite these two perspectives within a framework that looks at conversation as a contestation over identity and recognizes that the social construction of both communication and miscommunication need to be studied. Carol Myers-Scotton (1983), for example, has shown that speakers in multilingual communities negotiate their respective rights and obligations through their choice of language. Similarly, Penelope Eckert (1989) has shown that students in an American high school construct the opposed social identities of "jock" and "burnout" by adopting opposing values of phonological variables that are in the process of change (Eckert 1989). These scholars build on the work of Gregory Bateson (1972) and Erving Goffman (1974, 1983) in focusing on the playful or dramaturgical aspects of social interaction.

Concurrently, social theorists have begun to view categories such as class, gender, and ethnicity as themselves socially constructed, and have turned their attention to the processes through which specific identities are created, transformed, and redefined. This focus on process has led to a growing interest in discourse and in how language can structure social interaction, bringing about an intriguing convergence of interests between sociolinguistics and social anthropology.

"Nation, Not Race!" 1

> In Israel I found myself conducting research on a topic that did not exist. Whichever way I phrased my project, Israelis would fail to recognize some part of it.
>
> I once told two Israelis that I was researching "race" and "ethnicity" in Israel, but they recoiled at the word "race." The Arab-Jewish difference in Israel, they said, is one of "nation," not "race."
>
> When I phrased my topic in terms of "ethnicity," however, Israelis took it to be historical in focus, and my interest in Palestinian Israelis was missed. "Ethnic" differences between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews are widely felt to have disappeared, while Arab Israelis are not thought to participate in "Israeliness" enough to constitute an "ethnicity"—they are officially termed a "minority."
>
> If I phrased my work in terms of "nationhood," Israelis assumed I was looking at Arab-Jewish relations, and my research was instantly politicized and placed beyond the borders of Israel: Real Arab-Jewish relations occur in the Occupied Territories, not in Israel. Again, Palestinian Israelis were rendered invisible.
>
> Finally, when I phrased my project solely as a study of "dialect changes in Israeli Hebrew," it was suggested that I study the Israeli military, whereby both Jewish-Jewish "ethnicity" and Arab-Jewish "nationality" were obscured behind the dimension of age and the vitality of youth culture.

My difficulty in articulating the aims of my research in a way that Israelis understood stems, in part, from a mismatch of terms. The Hebrew words corresponding to "ethnicity," "nation," and "race" have taken on very specific, constrained meanings in Israel. For example, the Hebrew word *eda* (plural: *edot*) is usually translated as "ethnic group," but its application is restricted in actual usage to Mizrahi Jews. Thus, Moroccan Jews and Yemeni Jews are considered *edot*, but parallel groups of Ashkenazi Jews, such as German Jews and Polish Jews, are not. The Hebrew term for "ethnicity" therefore fails to encompass the struggle between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews over Jewish Israeli identity; rather, it refers to a conundrum of Oriental behavior that is ideologically held to have vanished from Jewish Israeli society. Nor is *eda* used to refer to Arabs: *mi'ut* is reserved for this purpose. The literal meaning of *mi'ut* is "minority," but its use is restricted to Palestinian Israelis—not to any of the Jewish groups that might be held to constitute a minority.[18] The Hebrew word for "nation," *l'om*, is used as an official designation on Israeli identification cards, distinguishing *Jew*, *Arab*, and *Druze* as legal categories. Finally, Hebrew *geza*, "race," is rarely applied to Israeli social groups at all, although the derived form *giz'anut*, "racism," is a frequent descriptor for Arab-Jewish relations, and a common, though less frequent, descriptor for Ashkenazi-Mizrahi relations.

Thus the social phenomenon of identity is neither fully determined by the linguistic structures for referring to it nor completely independent of them. Rather, the meaning and consequences of talk about identity are effects of discourse. *Eda* means less than "minority group" because of the constraints on its use; it means more than "minority group" because of the ideological backdrop to its deployment. The gap between *eda*

and *mi'ut* signals a parallel gap in the Israeli ideology of identity between discourses of inclusion and discourses of exclusion (see chapter 6). Zionism, the Jewish romantic nationalist movement that emerged in Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century, sought to supersede traditional Jewish identities by creating a "New Jew" (Almog 2000) in Israel. The model for the new "Israeli" Jew erased vast differences of culture, language, and history among nineteenth-century Jews living in places as disparate as Yemen and Germany. *Eda* includes the ideologically weighted meaning of "heritage," which, in turn, implies anachronism. At the same time that Zionism constructed its discourse of inclusion with respect to Jewish difference, it established a discourse of exclusion with respect to Arab difference. Zionism never theorized the presence of the resident Palestinian (Arab) population in Palestine when it theorized the Jewish return to Palestine. *Mi'ut* therefore includes the ideologically weighted meaning of "absence," which implies irrelevance.

This study draws on recent theorizing of discourse to explore the idea of identity and the component notions, "ethnicity," "nation," and "race," as they represent, and are represented in, Israeli social identity. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (1979, 1980), I explore Israeli identity discourse as a historically constituted regime of discourse that controls—through constraint and proliferation—actual speech in Israel. And drawing on the work of Joel Sherzer (1987), I explore the myriad ways individuals use language to manipulate or contest received notions of identity. The play, within the domain of identity, between structured discourse and structuring (speech) practices forms a spiral of discourse and a nexus of power that is both hegemonic and resistant.

Israel

Israel's unique history makes it an ideal place to study the interaction of language and social identity. Language plays a particularly crucial role in Israel because the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language played such a special role in Zionist political philosophy and practical action (see chapter 5). In addition, however, Israel is a place where the joint processes of social dialect and social identity formation can be studied as they emerge because contact between the competing groups—Arabs and Jews—is so recent a phenomenon. Finally, the study of language and identity in Israel/Palestine carries enormous significance because of the corresponding importance of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

Three main social groups compete for the emergent Israeli identity: Palestinian Arabs; Mizrahim, or Jews of Middle Eastern heritage; and Ashkenazim, or Jews of European heritage. New patterns of interaction and identity are emerging, following major demographic changes during the past century, and especially following Israeli statehood. Sizable Jewish residence in Israel began little more than a hundred years ago, and large-scale, intensive interactions between Arabs and Jews is as recent as the creation of Israel in 1948. This momentous event led to a sudden change for Palestinians, from majority to minority status; and a gradual change for Ashkenazi Jews, from

majority to minority status within the Jewish population, as Mizrahi immigration grew rapidly over the following decade.

The struggle for identity within Israel takes on particular significance through association with the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, yet the issue's complexity has only begun to be explored from an anthropological perspective. Most researchers have looked at Jewish and Arab communities separately, focusing on the complex divisions along religious, class, ethnic, and political lines within each community. Such studies simplify the situation by downplaying the numerous intersecting and overlapping linkages among Jews and Arabs. Thus, Palestinian Arabs and Mizrahi Jews share affinities of socioeconomic class and cultural heritage, while Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews share strong religious and national affinities. Scholarship that focuses only on Arab-Jewish or on Mizrahi-Ashkenazi relations, however, places the pivotal processes linking these three groups in a common contestation over Israeli identity beyond the scope of research.

Language plays a central role in the expression of social identities in Israel. Powerful associations tie Hebrew to the Israeli state and Arabic to Arab cultural heritage. The two languages coexist in Israel due to separate residence patterns and education systems. Within each language, subtle differences of social identity and sociopolitical positioning are reflected in language-use. Studies of Palestinian Arabic, for example, have shown that Palestinian national identity is expressed in changing phonological patterns in Palestinian Arabic (e.g., Shorrab 1981). And studies of Hebrew have shown phonological articulations of the "New (Israeli) Jew" (e.g., Blanc 1968). The complexity and importance of language in Israel is clearest, however, when all three groups are taken into account. Griefat and Katriel (1989), for example, compare norms of use for Hebrew and Arabic, arguing that Hebrew-speaking Israelis are far more direct in their speech than are Arabic-speaking Israelis. The uniformity of the Hebrew-speaking Israeli population is brought into question, however, by research that shows retention of historical differences between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi dialects (e.g., Yaeger-Dror 1988). Finally, a study showing that Israeli Palestinians prefer to borrow English, rather than Hebrew words into their Arabic speech (Amara and Spolsky 1986) demonstrates the centrality of language in sociopolitical positioning in Israel.

On Methods

This study of Israeli identity is based upon nearly two years of ethnographic research conducted in Haifa, a city where day-to-day interaction among Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and Palestinian Israelis is (relatively) common. What counts as "data," however, is often the ethnographer's first problem.

News on the Bus

When I arrived in Israel on December 2, 1990, there was a high level of war anxiety. Iraq had occupied Kuwait the previous August; American President George Bush had declared a January 15 ultimatum for Iraq to

withdraw; and Iraqi president Saddam Hussein had made no secret of his intent to involve Israel in any war that might break out.

This war-anxiety atmosphere is best represented for me by one memory in particular. When I arrived in Haifa, I noticed that city bus drivers kept their radios tuned to talk shows, with the volume high enough that all passengers could, indeed had to, hear. On the half-hour, the drivers turned the volume even higher for the regular news reports.

At first I mistook these radio-listening practices on Israeli buses for precisely the kind of exotic cultural difference from which ethnographers make their living. When the Gulf War ended, however, and Israeli life had returned to a more normal footing, I realized—not without some disappointment—that the radios had been tuned to news-talk in part because of the extraordinary anxiety over an upcoming war. Later on it struck me that there was indeed something interesting about Israeli attention to news (see chapter 6), but the main lesson I drew from "News on the Bus" was that ethnographic learning does not always end up quite as it was planned.

One reason for the indeterminacy of ethnographic learning is that writing about an Other (in this case Israeli) identity inevitably brings the ethnographer's own identity into question.

"The Gulf War Is a Catastrophe"

I had been in Israel only a few weeks when embassies began warning their citizens to leave, international airlines stopped flying into and out of Israel, American students in the dormitory where I was living left to return home, and my friends, relatives, and advisers called in a panic, urging me to come home, too.

I didn't go home until twenty-one months later, after I had wrapped up my fieldwork, but my reasons for staying remain an open question. I had professional reasons to stay, to be sure. I had already delayed my trip several months, in the hope that tensions resulting from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait would die down. Moreover, it was clear that war would be a fascinating social drama to observe as an ethnographer. I was already vaguely aware of the benefits, in terms of ethnographer-informant relations, that would accrue to me if I stuck it out and shared the experience: it would be a "way in."[19]

But I suspect that my being Jewish was also a factor. I had been prepared to examine my identity as it related to my research. In writing grant proposals, for example, I had claimed my Jewishness as an advantage: building on my own positioning with respect to the conflict, I argued that I would be able to see clearly how the ethnographer influences the context he studies, thereby avoiding the trap of objectivism.

So I suspect that I stayed out of a sense of identification with the fate of Israel.[20] But I thereby became situated within a certain discourse on Israel. The Israeli press was harshly critical of those who chose to leave Israel in its "time of need."[21] Conversely, staying became a litmus test of national identity. Most strongly criticized were Israeli citizens living abroad who stayed away;[22] most celebrated were American Jews who came to be in Israel during the war.[23] Somewhere in between were Tel Aviv residents who moved to safer regions within Israel, and American Jews who stayed for the duration.

This distinction extended to Palestinians as well. Many left Haifa to be with their families in rural areas, but those who remained (for whatever reason) said so in interviews with a certain pride, or claim to pride. On a live call-in radio program aired during the Gulf War, for example, a Palestinian Israeli man called up to say that, in this war, Arab and Jewish Israelis were in the same boat.

> *"This is a catastrophe for me as an Arab ... in the middle of the night I have to slap my son in order to get him up and get a gas mask on him ... let's just say our opinions on the conflict in the Gulf differ a bit from the national consensus, but as far as our Israeliness is concerned ... [we] are in the same boat with regard to Saddam's missiles..."*[24]

These discourses forced me to negotiate my own positioning. Staying in Israel was a move to avoid the superposition of American identity—so raw in the power of American students to return home, while my (Jewish) Israeli roommate went off to man antiaircraft artillery guns on the Syrian border. But the beneficial insider status it afforded me unavoidably implied a Zionist stance that made me uncomfortable—not only with respect to Palestinian Israelis, for whom the Gulf War was deeply problematic, but also with respect to Jewish Israelis, who insistently argued that Jewish Americans should immigrate to Israel.

I adopted a discourse-centered approach to ethnography in examining social identity in Israel (Sherzer 1983, 1987; Sherzer and Urban 1986). This paradigm proposes that cultural meanings are intimately linked to the forms of discourse through which they are expressed. Though in part I focus on detailed analysis of linguistic structure (see chapters 7 and 8), I also take a broad perspective on discourse, looking to various symbolic systems of meaning and the complex webs of intertextuality that connect them. I pay careful attention to the emergent nature of symbolic meaning and to the ways in which symbolic meaning is situated—meaning different things in varying contexts and to variously positioned conversational participants.

Wartime Spectators

The war started on January 16, in Iraq, in the very early morning hours. In my Israeli dormitory, crowds of students gathered in the commons room, eyes glued to the television, watching the retransmitted CNN broadcasts from Washington and Baghdad. A party atmosphere prevailed through the night. Hour after hour, the reports and pictures of American, British, and French bombs lighting up the Iraqi sky captivated the Israeli students. The crowd around the television swelled; more and more students, awakened by friends, came in wearing robes and nightclothes; bringing chairs and trays of food and coffee.

Among the latter was a young woman student dressed in the modest clothing of Muslim orthodoxy. I was taken aback by the image of a Muslim Arab in Israel appearing to join the celebration of the American demolition of Iraq.

And celebration it was! Israeli students were all but dancing. "We knew it would happen," many said. Praise for American President Bush flowed liberally. American students were slapped on the back and congratulated until even those, like me, for whom the outbreak of war was not unquestionably good, were swept up in the enthusiasm. It felt good to be an American.

And it felt good, I imagine, to be an Israeli—at least, a Jewish Israeli. Reports claimed that all of the missiles aimed at Israel were knocked out, and that the chances of an attack on Israel were rapidly vanishing. For the first time, Israel was being directly defended by its mighty friends. An implacable and dangerous foe of Israel was being devastated militarily and humbled in the eyes of the world. I remember wondering, however, how it felt to be an Arab Israeli, a Palestinian Arab citizen of Israel, at this moment of crisis in the Arab world.

I employ three main theoretical paradigms to address the relationship of language and identity: sociolinguistics, interpretive anthropology, and symbolic interactionism. My focus on the empirical analysis of language-use in natural contexts stems from the work of sociolinguists, such as John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, and William Labov, who have emphasized the social meaning and function of language variation (see Gumperz 1982a, b; Hymes 1974, Labov 1972a, b). Analysis of the situated meaning of linguistic forms, however, depends upon an interpretive understanding of the multiple layers of meaning present in the social context of speech (see Basso 1979, Geertz 1973) as well as an understanding of the way participants actively manipulate symbolic resources in playful, or contested negotiations of social identity, status, and power (see Goffman 1974).

Linguistic data for this study consist of a representative sample of actual speech, and of speakers' evaluations and interpretations of speech. Interviews were conducted with residents of two neighborhoods where ethnicity was particularly salient, and where I was also a participant observer, either through residence or employment. In analyzing the interview data, I looked at the complex relationships between language form and communicative content, paying close attention to narratives—not only as examples of vernacular speech but also as emotionally charged tools in the expression of Self. Participants in the interview are seen as social actors with particular social and political positionings, and the meaning of an utterance is linked to the complex face-to-face interactions that constitute the interview.

An Interview with Sharon

Nurit stops by my apartment on our way to the interview with Sharon. Usually I meet my research assistants at some convenient bus stop or landmark near the central neighborhood where we do most of our interviewing, but today's interview is with a neighbor and friend of mine.

In the few minutes it takes us to walk to Sharon's apartment, I tell Nurit a little about Sharon and about the topics I think will go over well in today's interview. Nurit is an Israeli university student, one of four I have hired to help me with my research interviews. Being an American, and researching language, I have decided to use native speakers of Hebrew to carry out the bulk of the interviewing.

The interviews are complex, combining both sociolinguistic and ethnographic techniques. The protocol I have developed is long and demanding, and none of my assistants has really mastered it. Nurit, in particular, has found it difficult to carry out the interviews the way I envision them.

In walking from my house to Sharon's, we traverse neighborhoods. I live on the edge of a Jewish working-class neighborhood that borders Haifa's largest Muslim Arab neighborhood. A stark boundary separates the two. Walking downhill, we pass several hundred yards of wreckage—where stone houses once stood, long since demolished, not yet rebuilt. Then come houses that have been sealed, or partially sealed—gray cinderblock walls filling in what had been apartment windows. It is a bleak no-man's land powerfully reminding any who pass of the divisions in Israel between Arab and Jew—and of the ongoing conflict.

As we walk, I tell Nurit about Sharon: that she and I work together at a community center in central Haifa; she is the daughter of Iraqi Jewish immigrants, very involved in Arab-Jewish rapprochement, and an outspoken critic of the treatment of Mizrahim in Israel. I tell Nurit that I am therefore particularly interested in asking Sharon about her reasons for choosing to return to the neighborhood of her childhood, which is now entirely Arab and very poor.

Early in our interview, Sharon tells how her family came to Haifa from Iraq, and about her mixed feelings toward the memory:

Text 1.2. "There Were Almost No Arabs"

Sharon	Look, most of the neighborhood here,	
	is actually— uh,	(1)
	Made up of people who came to Haifa	
	from villages,	(2)
	They were mostly young couples,	
	or something like that,	(3)
	Who didn't have any place to live in the village,	(4)
	Or that they had work in the city, here in Haifa,	(5)
	And they came to live here,	(6)
	When I lived here— uh, that is till 1970— uh,	(7)
	The whole area, all the way up to the mosque,	
	there were almost no Arabs,	(8)
Nurit	Mmhm,	(9)
Sharon	That is, before, before '48, only Arabs lived here,	(10)
	But after '48, they— th— we—	(11)
	We always heard about stories that—	(12)
	People just came to—	(13)
	Entered houses, went into houses,	
	and lived there, eh— in the house,	(14)
	Several families together,	(15)
	There was— a common toilet,	
	a common kitchen,	(16)
	And afterwards there started to be	
	more separation,	(17)
	Things were more ordered,	(18)

I mean people split up, (19)
They didn't like it,
several families living together, (20)
Anyone who could leave left, (21)
And so it started to be one-family residences, (22)
And then anyone who succeeded, somehow,
in bettering himself, left the neighborhood, (23)
Like my family, for example, (24)
For a long time they uh— waited for— (25)
They told them, (26)
They'll resettle you out, (27)
They'll resettle you out, (28)
And when they saw that—
they're not resettling them... ((laughs)) (29)

Nurit Where's your family from? (30)

Sharon Iraq, when they saw that no one would
resettle them, they bought the apartment... (31)
Most of the people who had lived here
did pretty much the same thing, (32)
And in their place came— (33)
I mean we left in order to move up in standing, (34)
People came in who didn't have so much choice, (35)
And they came here... (40A: 10:10) (36)

AFTER SOME DIGRESSION, WE RETURN SHARON TO HER STORY:

Nurit From the stories you heard from your parents,
what was their immigration like? (37)

Sharon Eh, not like for Arabs, (38)
I mean Arabs, they're here, it's not— ((laughs)) (39)
My parents, they really went through
everything that Iraqis went through, (40)
Eh, most Iraqis, they came in '51, (41)
When they told them— (42)
I mean they were rich families in— (43)

Nurit Mmhm (44)

Sharon In Iraq, (45)
And they came to Israel when
they were telling them, eh— (46)
You should emigrate now, (47)
Because if you don't come now, then eh— (48)
We don't know what will happen, (49)
I mean the borders will be closed, (50)
And you'll be stuck here, (51)
Now eh— because their lives were very eh— (52)
Life was good there, very good and all that, (53)
But eh— they didn't feel that they belonged, (54)
I guess, like they entirely belonged, (55)
I mean they were— in Jewish groups,
of communists and that, (56)

So that every time there were uprisings,
they would harass them, (57)

Nurit Mmhm, (58)

Sharon And it's true that there were also Arabs who—
who defended them, (59)
There were— I guess— the kind that took them
to their homes in times of— uh— uh— (), (60)
But no one liked being in a situation like that, (61)
So they uh— were afraid, (62)
When they tell you eh— (63)
When you— when you know that something bad
is liable to happen, (64)
When you know eh— things like that, (65)
And they come and tell you, (66)
Now they're going to close you off, (67)
And if you don't emigrate that's it, you're stuck, (68)
So they preferred taking their things
and coming here, (69)
Now at that time they weren't allowed to take
any of their possessions, (70)
And they came here, (71)
And they weren't Zionist, in the sense of eh— (72)
They were dying to eh—
to come to the Land of Israel, (73)
Because of its being the Holy Land, (74)
And all these stories of people
coming in such a situation, (75)
I can see that it's sort of similar to the
Russian immigration, ... (76)
(40A:18:56–21:05)

In this short segment of interview speech, Sharon weaves a complex subjectivity from the warp of informative answers to our interview questions and the weft of narratives of personal experience. The eloquence with which Sharon constructs this identity is striking. As Livia Polanyi (1985:12) puts it, "upon close examination, a story told in a conversation reveals itself to be as formally constructed as any carefully worked out acknowledged piece of literary verbal art." Polanyi's comparison of everyday conversation to poetic writing reframes the comparison made earlier between choice of language in a visa office to a choreographed ballet.

In the interview with Sharon, as in "The Visa Office Language Ballet," identities are being negotiated through language, but in this case all participants are speaking the same language—Hebrew. The subtle negotiations effected through language depend upon creative manipulation of the rhetorical structure of discourse (Woodbury 1987b). Conversation is a highly structured cultural practice, in which meaning is conveyed at multiple levels of linguistic structure. Indeed, messages conveyed by different dimensions of the linguistic sign may overlap or conflict, generating second-level messages through their interaction. Such enjambment, as Woodbury (1987b) points out, is another way in which conversation is like poetry. In poetry, enjambment occurs

when syntax and meter clash, leaving a line to end before (or after) a natural break in the sentence structure. Often poets use enjambment in order to call attention to particular ideas, making the reader think twice about their meaning. So too for conversational enjambments: the literal meaning of a speaker's words often clashes with the way the words are uttered, calling attention to additional, or alternative meanings.

Western ideologies of language grant priority to the lexical and syntactic levels of meaning (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994), but much of the meaning actually communicated in conversation is of another type altogether. It is this second kind of message that often carries the social import. In analyzing instances of talk in this book, such as Sharon's narrative, presented here, I focus on several additional levels of rhetorical structure that convey social meaning. Speech takes on meaning by virtue of the physical setting in which it is uttered (Hymes 1967). Speech takes on meaning by virtue of the identity of the speaker—or the identity that the speaker provisionally negotiates by means of his/her speech (Gumperz 1982b). Speech takes on meaning by virtue of the participants to the interaction—who utters it, who hears it, and who overhears it (Goffman 1983). And speech takes on meaning by virtue of the language, dialect, style, or genre used (Hymes 1967). Who can speak what to whom has to do with the languages people learn—in school, from their parents, in places of work, or through social interaction (Fishman 1971). Speech takes on meaning by virtue of its intertextual references to images and ideas from the media (see Bakhtin 1981). Speech takes on meaning by virtue of the subtle distinctions of sound that (provisionally) identify a speaker as male or female, relaxed or formal, from "here" or from "there" (Labov 1972a). And speech takes on meaning by virtue of the myriad paralinguistic devices—pauses or hesitations, disfluencies or emphases, rhythms or tunes—by which speakers routinely comment upon their own speech (see Kristeva 1980). Spirals of meaning emanate from the complex interactions between such levels of rhetorical structure.

Speakers use such indirect means to communicate their messages for two main reasons, one aesthetic and one political. Speakers use aesthetically (rhetorically, poetically) structured language because it communicates emotion. Affect is an enormously important part of what we communicate when we converse, but it is not thought to reduce completely to words. Speakers also use indirect means of communication in order to negotiate power. As James Scott (1985) has cogently described, indirection in language often serves as a "weapon of the weak," providing a means for resisting power while putting on a plausible show of accepting it.

More will be said about these theoretical issues in chapter 3; for now, I would like to operationalize the approach through a brief analysis of Sharon's narrative of place and identity, presented as text 1.2. While Sharon's speech appears to be about neighborhoods, at a deeper level it addresses nothing less than being Israeli. Spirals of meaning take us from neighborhood to identity and back. Sharon's emphasis on place provides an illustration. Sharon contrasts the "here" of her neighborhood to several spatial and temporal instances of "there"—villages in Israel from which Palestinian Israelis came to the neighborhood (lines 1–6), previous eras in the neighborhood's history (lines 7–11), upscale Haifa neighborhoods to which her family and their neighbors moved (lines 17–23), and cities in Iraq from which her parents arrived (lines 53–57).

Sharon's discourse on place takes on meaning with respect to Israeli claims to belonging in Israel/Palestine. Sharon has moved back, as a middle-aged adult, to the neighborhood in which she grew up. She has done so, in part, because she believes in coexistence between Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, and breaking down the stark patterns of residential segregation is important to her. The historical parallels in her narrative, though, are striking. Forty years ago her family moved into a neighborhood that had been Arab (part of a phenomenon that displaced the resident Palestinian population). By narrating her parents' arrival in Haifa as a displacement (from Iraq, where they were comfortable, rich, etc.; see lines 40–45), Sharon legitimizes her parents' displacement of Palestinians. Indeed, Sharon notes that many of her current Palestinian neighbors also came to the neighborhood from elsewhere (lines 1–6), implicitly drawing the link between her family's plight and that of her Arab neighbors.

But Sharon draws back from complete identification with Palestinian Israelis. When we ask her about her neighborhood, there is a telling shift in pronoun usage from "we" to "they" (line 3), as she alternately elides and constructs the boundary between herself and her Palestinian neighbors. At this point in her narrative, her speech becomes disfluent, as she starts and restarts utterances (see lines 7–14). Sharon backtracks to correct an earlier statement that there were no Palestinians in the neighborhood when she was growing up (line 10). She hedges again when she begins her narrative of her parents' immigration by saying "it wasn't like being Arab" (line 38).

Of course, Sharon is not speaking to Palestinians, but to an American Jewish researcher, whom she knows, and to a research assistant, whom she assumes is an Ashkenazi Israeli. Sharon constructs distance between herself and Ashkenazi Israel. In sharp contrast to dominant interpretations of Israeli history, she represents her Mizrahi parents as having been unwilling Zionists who had been well off and friendly with Arabs in Iraq (e.g. line 43), and who were intimidated into leaving Iraq through promises of resettlement in Israel (lines 46–49) that turned out to be false (lines 24–31). In this way, she also links her position with that of Palestinian Israelis.

Sharon's use of (forms of) the verb *l'fanot* carries interesting resonances. The verb has a range of meanings, including "to vacate, empty, evacuate, remove, or evict." One resonance is thus the displacement of the Palestinians—both in the general sense of having been displaced by the Jewish return to Palestine, and the specific sense of Sharon's Haifa neighborhood having been cleared of its Palestinian residents in the aftermath of the 1948 warfare. Sharon, however, uses *l'fanot* in two other contexts: first that the Israeli authorities had told her parents and their neighbors that they would be "evacuated" from the slum to better housing (lines 24–31); and second, that the Zionist agents had earlier urged the "evacuation" of the Jewish community of Iraq (lines 66–69). In Sharon's narrative neither of these evacuations benefits her family. Indeed, the word resonates with the harsh treatment meted out to Mizrahi Jews in general (see chapter 2) and constitutes part of Sharon's negotiation of her identity with respect to Nurit, the interviewer Sharon assumes to be Ashkenazi.

The notion of "evacuation" forms an aesthetic nexus for Sharon's narrative speech in part because it is an ideological nexus for Israeli discourses of identity, place, and history. In schools, in books, in films, in all manner of public discourse, Israelis are represented as (Ashkenazi) Jewish victims who needed to be rescued from "there,"

and whose presence "here," in Palestine, benefited the local population. It is not just Palestinian Israelis who must narrate against this image, but Mizrahi Jewish Israelis, as well.

Language style also contributes to the message Sharon's narrative communicates. The dialect of Hebrew that Sharon uses in this interview contains traces of a complex negotiation of identity: Sharon claims mainstream Israeli identity by avoiding the stigmatized Mizrahi dialect of Hebrew associated with Iraqi immigrants. Nonetheless, she peppers her speech with prosodic tunes typical of Mizrahi Israelis, thereby negotiating an identity distinct from that which she attributes to her Israeli interlocutor, Nurit.[25] At a broader level, language choice constrains the set of identities Sharon can negotiate. The flexible boundaries that she verbally constructs and elides between herself and her (current) Palestinian neighbors find their limit. Elsewhere in the interview, for example, Sharon tells us of her efforts to teach her son Arabic, the language of the neighborhood (see "Not Learning Iraqi Jewish Arabic" in chapter 5). While Sharon's parents were speakers of Arabic—and learners of Hebrew—Sharon herself only "understands" Arabic. She must arrange for her son to be tutored so that he can interact with other neighborhood children. The desire to speak Arabic—as a gesture of coexistence and a claim of belonging—is common among politically liberal Israelis, but the ability to speak it fluently is rare. Thus, in conversation with her Palestinian neighbors, whatever relationship she would like to claim, she must do so in Hebrew.

Overview of the Chapters

Two analytic themes recur throughout this study: the dialogic nature of symbolic forms, and the spiral recycling of symbolic meanings. Identities, I argue, are constructed in dynamic opposition to other copresent groups. Symbols linked to Jewish Israeli identity can be transformed into symbols that claim Palestinian identity, and vice versa. Symbols that historically evoked Arab identity can be revived in the present as Jewish symbols.

Negotiations of identity occur within historically specific contexts. Accordingly, chapter 2 introduces the study by tracing strands of the current discourse of modern Israel and Palestine back to their historical antecedents. This narrative approximates a genealogy of everyday interactions in Haifa—interactions that draw meaning from the history of settlement and resettlement. The daily physical, political, and discursive contestations over identity are traced out as they are played out across urban space—buildings being razed; streets being renamed; wealth moving uphill; Arabs replacing Jews replacing Arabs in downtown neighborhoods. These struggles over space generate spatial symbols of identity—from the appearance of homes to the language of newspapers—and mirror, constitute, and constrain the negotiation of identity.

Chapter 3 theorizes several metaphors—negotiation, hybridity, and resistance—that are featured in my discussion of identity. This chapter argues for a theoretical convergence around a notion of *discourse* that links linguistic analysis of language as it is actually used in contexts of face-to-face interaction to anthropological analysis of the deployment of power in the interplay between structure and agency in social process.

Chapter 4 seeks to operationalize the theoretical perspective described in chapter 3, through a discussion of the relationship between theory and methods. This study relies heavily on technical analyses of linguistic detail, and on a set of methodological procedures that are, by their very design, intended to play a role in the work of interpretation. Chapter 4 therefore situates me, the ethnographer, as an active agent in the negotiations of identity under study. Characterizing myself as "an active agent" implies more than an introspective and responsible consciousness of the authority my textualization calls forth. "Active" presence also goes beyond seeing the ethnographer as one who influences the processes he wants to study. This conceptualization sees the ethnographer as a full—if unique—participant in the negotiation of identity. Narrative forms a theme that weaves together the disparate strands of this chapter: the narrative (text) produced by the ethnographer is linked to the narratives (of personal experience) told in the course of ethnographic interviews and interpreted in the course of linguistic analysis, which, in turn, are linked to the narratives constituted by the semiotics of everyday life.

Language-use, whether in face-to-face talk or in the anonymous discourse of public culture, unfolds within a social context, and chapter 5 conveys an ethnographic understanding of the contexts for speech and communication in Israeli society by discussing the learning (and unlearning) of languages in Israel. I focus on the three languages primarily implicated in the negotiation of Arab and Jewish identities in Israel, Hebrew, Arabic, and English, and I argue that the social contexts of language learning produce and constrain the configuration of contexts for language use observable in everyday social practice.

The dynamic tension between the control of historically constituted regimes of discourse and the resistance of voices of individual actors is the subject of chapter 6. An examination of public representations of identity in media discourse probes the role of public culture in constructing identity in Israel. Identities may be negotiated in face-to-face talk interactions, but these negotiations occur within an overarching discursive framework. This regime of discourse controls the negotiation through conjoint processes of proliferation and constraint. Chapter 6 thus explores Israeli public discourse to reveal the rules by which individuals negotiate their own identities.

In contrast, chapters 7 and 8 look at the negotiation of identity from the perspective of the resistant voices of individual actors. Chapter 7 argues that the three-way nature of the struggle over Israeli identity is especially clear in the ambivalent and contradictory meanings associated with two phonological variables in Hebrew, which combine both high and low status. Analysis of the social distribution of variable forms in the speech of Haifa residents, combined with an interpretive analysis of the meaning of these forms, shows how old and stigmatized usages, stereotypically associated with Mizrahi Jews, are being adopted (and thereby recycled) by Palestinian Israelis in constituting a Palestinian Israeli social dialect of Hebrew.

Chapter 8 focuses on a different level of linguistic structure (intonation) and on different dimension of the three-way identity struggle, emphasizing the role of Jewish ethnicity in Israeli national identity. While Mizrahim have abandoned some of the stereotyped (linguistic) markers of their ethnicity, they continue to represent identity

difference through language. Examination of the distribution, social meaning, and relation to affect of one particular pitch contour, a phrase-final rise-fall, suggests that the linguistic marking of Jewish ethnicity in Israel has shifted from phonology to intonation.

2

Negotiations of Memory and Space

My first—and last—encounter with "the field" came at Israel's airport. In 1990, when I traveled to Haifa to begin fieldwork, Israel had only one major airport, the Ben-Gurion International Airport,[1] and so most visitors encountered Israel first through the adjacent city of Lod. Or Lydda.

> The British built the airport in the 1920s while they were the mandated colonial government in Palestine. The airport was located near the Arab town of Lydda, which was conveniently central in Palestine—roughly halfway between Tel Aviv (or Jaffa)[2] in the east, Jerusalem in the west, the Galilee in the north, and the Negev in the south (see fig. 2.2).
>
> Lod is the Hebrew name given to the (formerly) Arab town of Lydda. Hundreds of places in Israel/Palestine have been renamed by the Jewish immigrants and Israeli authorities.[3] In some cases the Hebrew names revive Biblical names, but in most cases the older Arabic names were merely hebraicized—changed slightly to conform to the sound patterns of Hebrew. I don't know which case Lod/Lydda falls under, but the dual place names recall this process.
>
> What was long known as The Lydda International Airport was renamed the Ben-Gurion International Airport, after Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. The (formerly) Arab town of Lydda has receded even further.
>
> Lod/Lydda was a vital strategic nexus in the conflict between Jews and Arabs from 1947 to 1949—a conflict that Israelis now call *milxemet ha-shixrur*, "The War of Independence," and which Palestinians call *an-nakba*,[4] "The Defeat." In July 1948, the Israeli military commander Moshe Dayan

Salman: Arabic? eh—
Dan: Do some speak Arabic?
Salman: Almost all of them, speak Arabic,
But Arabic that I don't understand... (66A:14:42–16:37)

In Daliat Ha-Carmel I was able to buy a Hebrew newspaper—but not an Arabic paper.

3

Theoretical Frameworks for Linguistic Negotiations of Identity

In chapter 2 I showed how Israel inscribes, and reinscribes, identity on geographical terrain. A bus trip through Haifa, ascending Mt. Carmel from the narrow streets of old, downtown neighborhoods to the wide avenues of lofty suburban quarters, re-presents past and present struggles over the construction and interpretation of place. Fragmented and contradictory narratives of history and locale show an ongoing process of negotiation that is simultaneously structured and structuring. Israeli renaming of streets after Zionist ideas and heroes constructs Jewish space by inscribing Israeli history as a narrative of place. An Arab restaurant, named simply for the street on which it is located, participates in this negotiation of place, as it profits from an Israeli act of reinscription. When Israel renames the street, the restaurant's retention of its earlier name becomes a claim to Palestinian space, a narrative of Palestinian place, and therefore a resource for Palestinian resistance.

This negotiation of identity takes form as a play of signifiers. At the level of semiotics and discourse, the alternation of names and partially forgotten meanings can be seen as humorous. Linked to social structure, however, this symbolic struggle generates material consequences for relations of power. Negotiation of symbolic identities is therefore both playful and serious. Israeli (re)naming of streets is an attempt to impose hegemony, in the face of which a restaurant's name assumes resistant meaning. The play signals an underlying negotiation of structure and agency.

Such negotiations take place continuously, dispersed across space and time. Discourse offers individuals ready-made identities that individuals adopt, adapt, reject, and deny in their symbolic expressions. Learned in school, accepted by parents, represented on television, textualized in newspapers, inscribed in the stone and plaster of urban environments, discourse interpellates subjects into ratified identities. Discourse becomes the site of struggle, but the struggle also emerges in and through discourse. Such a negotiation spirals back upon itself, for in adapting a ready-made subjectivity to the pragmatic demands of situated discourse, individuals call into existence signifiers—symbols—that challenge and bend the ratified identities. Like the restaurant that steadfastly retains its name when caught up in dislocations beyond its control, individuals engage with master narratives of identity by negotiating the meanings of everyday symbols: the clothes they wear, the homes they live in, the politics they support, and the languages they speak.

Play

The notion of "play" encapsulates many of the meanings behind terms such as "negotiation," "struggle," and "dialogism."[1] Play captures ideas of indeterminacy, creativity, and strategy in human behavior, while juxtaposing these notions to a framework of rule-based behavior. At first glance, "play" seems a simple word, but a review of its common-sense meanings indicates its complexity. "Play" can mean:

- A space in which something can move, as the play in a joint
- Acts in fun, recreation, nonserious activity, as in children's play
- A dramatic composition or performance, as a Shakespeare play

Play is a space, a gap. The play in a steering wheel, for example, is a space of free movement. Within the range of play in the steering column, small changes in the steering wheel do not turn the car. The play in discourse is a similar space of free movement. All languages provide different ways of "saying the same thing." The words "chew" and "masticate," for example, refer to the same activity, and they are said to have the same *referential meaning*. In discourse, however, in situated use, "chew" and "masticate" are separated by a gap of formality, authority, erudition, and history. In an actual context of speech, a speaker's choice of one or the other conveys—alongside the referential meaning—a social or affective meaning. Variation in language provides the symbolic resources with which speakers play on, and play with their messages, thereby negotiating social relationships.[2]

Play is also a game, a recreation. Children's play, for example, is fun, imaginative, and nonserious behavior. A "play on words" is recreational language-use. We think of language as a rational, scientific code for directly communicating information, but much of what is actually communicated through language is communicated indirectly.

The apparent contradiction stems from a powerful ideology of language that privileges the rational over the creative or the aesthetic in language.

Even in poetry we focus on the information content, despite recognizing the importance of rhyme and meter. Edgar Allen Poe's poem "The Raven," for example, tells a powerful story of love and loss, but, as Roman Jakobson (1960) has pointed out, the poem's fame stems from an exquisite pattern of sound. The memorable line

> Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore,"

draws its power from the play of sounds, including the rhyming of the final syllable with previous lines, the rhythmic pattern of dactylic feet followed by trochaic feet, and most subtly but most significantly, the symmetrical opposition of the recurring sounds r, v, and n, in RaVeN NeVeRmore. Jakobson (1960) argues that Poe's playfulness with sound in "The Raven" calls attention to alternative, or additional meanings. The parallelism of repeating the line "Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore,'" at the end of many stanzas, and of repeating the sounds r-v-n within this line, establishes the raven as a symbol, as an index of something beyond itself, as more than just a word that refers to a bird.

Poetic symbols, like Poe's raven, are specialized forms of indirect communication, but indirection—and the play involved—is fundamental to the way everyday conversations work as well. For example: A boss stares at an empty coffee pot and says to her assistant,

> "The coffee pot is empty."

Here the boss has communicated much more than she has said. The boss is doing much more than stating her observation about the world (coffee pot → empty). She is requesting that the employee make more coffee—but she is doing this indirectly. This too is play with language, since there are many other ways the boss might have phrased her request. She might have said "Make some more coffee," for example. We recognize in the boss's indirect formulation that she was trying to be polite, considerate, or modest. In other words, her choice of language form was embedded in a negotiation of situationally relevant identities.

Such dramaturgical use of language suggests the third meaning of play: a dramatic composition or performance. A Shakespearean play is both the script that underlies the performance and the performance itself. In the first sense, it is the set of rules that guides the actors' behavior. In the second sense, it is the way reality emerges from the scripted interactions of the individual actors.

Erving Goffman (1959) has suggested viewing social life in general as a play in which members of society are actors performing (more-or-less) scripted roles. Building on the work of George Herbert Mead (1962 [1934]) and Gregory Bateson (1972), Goffman's dramaturgical model of symbolic interaction looks to the nuances of face-to-face encounters to reveal the rules underlying social interaction. Though Goffman begins with the notion of the script, his interest is actually closer to ad-libbing. Actors follow their scripts, but they are also aware that they are acting, representing, and constructing identities, and that they are interacting with individuals who are similarly aware of the multiple levels of interactional structure.

The play within the play provides room to maneuver. Actors come out of role; they take on new roles; they dispute the roles of others. Social reality, in Goffman's world, is both up for grabs and created on the fly as it emerges from the details of face-to-face social interaction. In the coffee pot example, boss and assistant perform a loosely scripted scene, using the play in language to negotiate their roles.[3]

The metaphor of play helps to explicate the idea of the linguistic negotiation of identity, but the full range of meanings of play must be taken into account. Identity is a freedom of maneuver within a field of power. Individuals receive their identities prescripted, but they may perform their roles in various ways.

Identity

Identity is a complex field of ideas. As Richard Handler (1994) has pointed out, a paradox attends the common use of "identity" in referring to social group membership. "Identity" implies complete equivalence, as in the related word "identical," but social scientists conceptualize a person's "social identity" as meaning the opposite, namely the ways in which a person differs from other individuals. Moreover, "identity" in its mathematical meaning of "equation" implies an eternal equivalence, whereas recent studies of identity focus on the ways that individuals may be constituted differently depending upon the context.

Identity is conceptualized in this book as a discourse phenomenon, as a rhetorical device, as a field of play. I refer to "identities," plural, to emphasize their multiplicity and situated provisionality. I metaphorize identities as something that can be haggled over, or negotiated, in order to emphasize that they are subject to contestation and the source of conflict. This formulation never loses sight of the real power that is won and lost as identities are fixed—and refixed—by culture, by ideologies, and by individuals in their everyday speaking practices.

"The Israeli Kid"

The summer of 1992 was an exciting time for Israelis, as two athletes brought home medals from the Olympic Games in Barcelona—a first for Israel. In the midst of this celebration of Israeli nationhood; however, a young man from Nazareth stole the show.

The Olympic medals came in the obscure sport of judo. Ya'el Arad, a world champion in her weight class and the odds-on favorite to garner the first Israeli medal, won a silver medal. Then, a complete unknown turned in a once-in-a-lifetime performance, and he too won a silver medal. Both athletes were native-born, classically attractive emblems of Israeli society, and they instantly became media darlings.

As Israelis were celebrating their heroes' second-place medals, a young boxer from Nazareth took a first-place medal. This latter event (a professional boxing world championship) received much less attention, but it was featured on the popular Friday night television news magazine, and it was written up in the weekend newspapers. In a complex web of significations, the news report showed a tearful Palestinian man calling himself "The Israeli Kid," draping himself in the blue-and-white Israeli flag, and crying with emotion at the playing of "Ha-Tikva," the Israeli national anthem.

The reporter, the regular United States correspondent for Israeli television, whose flawless, if accented, English was heard each night interviewing American politicians, now interviewed the boxer in Hebrew. The young man's Hebrew was halting and stilted—rusty, it seemed. He had been living in the United States for several years, trying to make it as a boxer. His Hebrew was from high school, and I sensed that he was embarrassed. Toward the end of the interview the reporter allowed him to say hello to his mother, and the contrasting fluency of his Arabic highlighted the disfluency of his Hebrew.

This play of symbols plays with identities. The boxer was claiming an Israeli national identity that was consistent with the norms of international sport, but striking for a Palestinian man in Israel. Organized spectator sports have long been associated with constructions of national identity (see Appadurai 1996:97–105; Oriard 1993; Pope 1993), and global events, such as the quadrennial Olympics or World Cup soccer championship, call special attention to a phenomenon that is extraordinarily widespread. By emblazoning his white boxing robe with the blue label "The Israeli Kid," this boxer was participating in the hyped-up style of international boxing, in which nicknames and stage personas contribute to a uniqueness of media identity critical to success (see Barthes 1972). But the reference to national identity stems from the nation-state foundation of international sport, in which individuals must compete as part of nationally organized and supported teams. The link between competition and nation, and the patriotism involved in spectatorship, are reinforced by the public playing of the victor's national anthem.

This public display of national identity was a striking play on identity in the Israeli context because it claimed Israeliness for a Palestinian Arab Self. At one level the play stems from "Israeli" including "Palestinian" within its scope of reference. At another level the play is reversed, stemming not from the suggestion that "Israeli" could stand for "Arab," but that a Palestinian would stand for being labeled "Israeli." Israel is so closely associated with its majority population, Jews, and so vividly opposed to its neighbors, Arabs, that the embrace of Palestinian and Israeli symbols calls poetic attention to itself. In so doing the play calls attention to deep ambiguities and contradictions in Israeli society: What does it mean to be "Israeli"? Does Israeli citizenship imply Israeli nationality? However, by embracing these ambiguities, the young boxer appears to efface his Palestinian identity. His play was thus either audacious, in claiming mainstream status, or politically suspect, in wanting to.

Discourse

There is nothing simple about the play of symbols in "The Israeli Kid" as described here. They are enmeshed in webs of signification that lead outward in many directions.

To understand what such signification means and does, I approach it from a discourse perspective, according to which cultural meanings are generated in the communicative forms through which they are expressed (Sherzer 1987; Urban 1991). Symbols are meaningful by virtue of their deployment in situated contexts of communication, and their meaning emerges from such use, rather than inhering in the symbols themselves. This discourse approach depends upon a crucial reflexivity, which I conceptualize as a spiral (see chapter 1). Symbols are deployed in discourse as meaningful elements; they bring particular meanings to the discourse. But the meaning of any particular deployment of a symbol depends upon emergent characteristics of the discourse context. Moreover, discourse has history, in the sense that subsequent uses of symbols bear the traces of earlier deployments. The gap between a symbol's (historical) meaning potential and its emergent meaning in discourse is a source of play. Discourse is thus simultaneously structured, by the historical meanings of symbols, and structuring, as it re-sets trajectories for subsequent meanings (see Bourdieu 1977).

The idea of discourse, as it is used here, draws on three threads of meaning. Formal linguists tend to use discourse to refer to levels of linguistic structure larger than the sentence. Linguistic anthropologists use discourse to refer to "instances and types of language use" (Urban and Sherzer 1988:284). And cultural anthropologists use discourse in the Foucaultian sense of forms of power that work by limiting and constraining what can be said (see Foucault 1972, 1980). These strands are usefully different in their focus, and complementary in their implementation. The methodological focus on studying signs in actual use (in conversation, in media representations, etc.) necessitates attention both to the syntagmatic structuring of discourse in relations of cohesion between a given utterance and previous utterances, and to the social structuring of discourse in relations of power between speakers and recipients.

The discourse approach to language and culture is based upon an ethnography of speaking (see Gumperz 1968; Hymes 1967) that attends to the social structuring of contexts within which communication occurs, as well as to the consequences such structuring entails for discourse, as it unfolds. For example, an ethnography of speaking approach helps to unpack the complexity of the "Israeli Kid" discourse by focusing on the multiple layers of mediation. At its core is a boxing match that took place in a sports arena in an American city. Israeli television reported on the match, assigning its international news correspondent to cover the sporting event, and editing the report to include footage of the boxing match as well as direct transmission of the interview conversation. Israeli audiences of various kinds watched the televised report. Thus what appeared as a simple conversation between news reporter and boxer unfolds as a complex communicative phenomenon. The signifier "The Israeli Kid" takes on disparate meanings for different recipients of the signification, such as: the spectators in the boxing arena, the broader American public, Israeli Jews, and Israeli Palestinians. Moreover, the meaning to Israeli Palestinians of the boxer's signification is not independent of its potential meaning to, for example, Israeli Jews and the American public. The discourse approach views situated utterances as spiral relations among meanings that are always both emergent and provisional.

Dialogue

Meanings that emerge from discourse are provisional, but they are not necessarily vague. The specificity of discourse meaning stems from their dialogism, their reference to other, well-established meanings. The playing of the Israeli national anthem after the boxer's victory—and its replaying in the Israeli television's reporting on the boxer—provides a good example of dialogic meaning.

The idea that utterances are (inherently) dialogic stems from Bakhtin's work on reported speech and novelistic discourse (Bakhtin 1981; Vološinov 1973).[4] The development of the novel as a form of artistic expression signals, for Bakhtin, the crystallization in written discourse of the dialogic nature of everyday speech. By "dialogic" Bakhtin means that the words represented on the page resonate with multiple voices, and that the meaning or interpretation of the words must take the several voices into account. By looking at the use of indirect, or quoted, speech in novels, Bakhtin elegantly demonstrates a simple example of what he argues is a pervasive, indeed quintessential, aspect of discourse. Indirect speech is speech of one individual as retold by another and, therefore, retold from the perspective of that other. Since novelists frequently embed the speech of their actors at many nested levels, dialogism is seen to be recursive. Speech is embedded not just in the voice of another character (or the narrator, etc.), but in a series of embeddings that introduce multiple perspectives, or "multivocality."

Bakhtin's study of indirect speech sets up a foil: what is clearly true in the simple case is then convincingly argued to be true for progressively more subtle cases. If a narrating voice can report the words of a character, thereby imparting his/her own perspective or interpretation to the other's words, then the narrator too can speak in the manner of that other character, tingeing his own words with the character's accent, style, or perspective. In this way Bakhtin shows all discourse to be inherently dialogic and multivocal. Dialogic because the speech of the Self refers to and takes on meanings from an Other, and multivocal because both the Self and the Other are, in fact, complex objects that signify at multiple levels. As Bakhtin puts it in "Discourse in the Novel,"

> the authentic environment of an utterance ... is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance ... imagine the work as a rejoinder in a given dialogue, whose style is determined by its interrelationship with other rejoinders in the same dialogue (in the totality of the conversation). ... The dialogic orientation of a word among other words (of all kinds and degrees of otherness) creates new and significant potential in discourse ... which has found its fullest and deepest expression in the novel. (Bakhtin 1981:272–275)

Building upon Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and multivocality, Julia Kristeva (1980) pointed out that speech is intertextual, inescapably interwoven with the dialogic meanings other voices contribute. Kristeva's observation deconstructs received notions of stable meaning and subjectivity, for if reference is always and constantly intertextual, partaking of meaning from the complex of (con)texts implicated by the discourse,

then no object can have a stable, immanent meaning, and no voice a stable and immanent subjectivity.

National anthems are played as a routine formality preceding and following some athletic events. In the Olympics and international boxing the anthem of the victorious competitor is played as the trophy is awarded. In such contexts the anthems are usually played as music—without the lyrics. In the case of "The Israeli Kid," the music to the Israeli national anthem, "Ha-Tikvah," was played to the American spectating audience. To the American audience the playing of the anthem was a simple symbol of nationhood, but when replayed on Israeli television as part of the report on the Israeli boxer, the anthem took on additional meanings.

Anthems are so commonly played that we take the lyrics for granted. I am vaguely aware, for example, that the American national anthem refers to a military victory, but when I sing (or hear) "The Star-Spangled Banner," I do so by rote and do not think about the meaning of the words.

So too, I am sure, for Israelis. The Israeli national anthem, called "Ha-Tikvah," "The Hope," puts a Zionist poem to music:

"Ha-Tikvah," "The Hope"

So long as still within our breasts
The Jewish heart beats true,
So long as still towards the East,
To Zion, looks the Jew,
So long our hopes are not yet lost—
Two thousand years we cherished them—
To live in freedom in the Land
Of Zion and Jerusalem.[5]

The lyrics of the anthem highlight the Jewish nature of the state of Israel and erase the Palestinian presence by equating the "we" with Jews and by recapitulating the Israeli master narrative of legitimacy, including the two-thousand-year displacement from "home." Though taken for granted, the meaning of the lyrics is evoked by the play in the signification. "The Israeli Kid" refers dialogically to whole sets of practices and discourses that privilege Jews in Israel and subordinate Arabs. The dialogic nature of discourse establishes a relation of intertextuality, in which the meanings of one text (e.g., the boxing match) are linked to the meanings of another text (e.g., Zionism).

Other texts are referenced by "The Israeli Kid" as well. The sport of boxing generates a certain irony that was highlighted in an Israeli newspaper feature story. Growing up in Nazareth, the boxer had trained with, and often fought against, Jewish boys. Such matches, in the political and social tension that permeates Israeli society, are unavoidably fraught with overtones. Boxing, it seems, often provides an outlet for a society's repressed classes, and the symbolic retribution is not lost on the practitioners.

Viewed with respect to the various sources of intertextuality, the boxer's play on identity takes on parodic meaning. The social identities in play in this media representation refuse neat categorization and thereby provoke a rethinking of categories. A Palestinian calling himself *the* Israeli Kid crosses the boundaries between established identities, thereby blurring the distinction between them. Such play manipulated

symbolic forms, such as the Israeli flag, colors, and anthem, and recontextualized them. Such a new use of old symbolic forms becomes a parodic counteruse, for no Israeli could miss the situation's irony. New, ironic, parodic, resistant meanings emerged from the play, and such emergent use of symbols constitutes a renegotiation of their meaning.

The boxer's play involves, further, the relation between subjectively felt identities, public media images, and situated enactments of identity. The media's juxtaposition of the celebration of mainstream Israeli identity (the Olympian heroes) to the boxer's challenge from the margins of Israeli identity highlights the way that the media constructs, disciplines, and maintains identity boundaries. At the same time, however, it points to the media's potential as a venue for transgression. Symbolic play is political, but its valence is up for grabs. This particular media play was deeply ambivalent. Did the boxer's use of Israeli symbols resist dominant Israeli articulations of identity? Or was his own subjectivity coopted? The Nazareth boxer's play with identity flouts taken-for-granted aspects of the Israeli discourse of identity by violating (and thereby challenging) the idea that "Arabs" are not "Israelis."

By challenging this idea the boxer exposes contradictions in the Israeli discourse of identity, which posits two mutually inconsistent metaphors for identity: nationality and ethnicity. The metaphor of nationality applies to the opposition between Arabs and Jews in Israel. The metaphor of ethnicity applies to the opposition between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi.[6]

Power

The two metaphors—nationality and ethnicity—are mutually incompatible. They are also insufficient, since neither concept adequately represents the full range of identity processes in Israel. Race and class are concepts familiar in the social sciences but largely silenced within Israeli discourses of identity.

"Nation, Not Race!" 2

Not long after I arrived in Israel to begin my research—and while I was still getting my bearings—I described my project to two University of Haifa linguistics professors over lunch. They understood my interest in studying dialects of Hebrew, including the use of Hebrew by Palestinian Israelis in Haifa, but they were mystified—and a little shocked—by my description of the project as distinguishing between ethnic and racial processes in Israeli discourses of identity. One assured me in a polite but firm tone of voice that "The Arab-Jewish difference in Israel is one of nationality, not race!" And with that the topic was changed.

If Israeli identity discourses are conceptually confused, so too are social scientific discourses on identity. Scholars have long debated the scope, reference, and utility of terms like *nation*, *ethnicity*, *race*, and *class*, which are used in overlapping and mutually inconsistent ways. Accordingly, in order to clarify the phenomenon under investigation, I will begin by reviewing Israeli (emic) and social scientific (etic) discourses of identity.

Israeli Ideologies of Identity

Theorizing identity is crucial to an understanding of Israel because Israeli identity discourses hold enormous power. Israeli identity discourses are ideological in that they tend to mystify social practice so as to justify the dominant social order. One way that the Israeli discourse of identity supports the dominant social order is by obscuring dimensions of social injustice. Constructing identity in Israel as either "national" or "ethnic," for example, erases potential allegiances between Mizrahim and Palestinians based on shared socioeconomic class position. Constructing identity in Israel as simultaneously "national" and "ethnic" establishes a categorical difference between Jews and Arabs that naturalizes the boundary between groups, while obscuring its racialized rigidity. The erasure of "class" serves ideological purposes in Israel, which was founded in the socialist spirit of classlessness. The erasure of "race" masks the hardness of identity boundaries. Casting the racialized division between Arab and Jew in Israel in terms of "nation" supports Israeli discourses of legitimacy by rendering the imposition of Jewish presence on Arab soil less visible.

The opposition of Jew to Arab is constructed as an opposition of *l'om*, "nation." The term *l'om* is an official designation in Israel, represented, for example, on the identification card every Israeli citizen carries (see text 5.4). Each Israeli citizen is thus officially designated "Jew" or "Arab."[7] Neither of these terms, however, identifies a national group unproblematically. "Jew," for example, more conventionally applies to a religious group. The attribution of nationhood to Jews was one of the major innovations of the Zionist movement. "Arab" applies to people living in a number of different nation-states—Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, and others, in addition to Palestinian. Parallel to Jewish nationhood, Arab nationhood is also the result of a political project. Various pan-Arab nationalist discourses have gained prominence in Middle East politics since the 1960s, harking back to a long and storied heritage of Arabness constructed through the notion of *umma*, "nation," though these discourses—again intriguingly parallel to the case of Jews—are more intimately tied to Islamic religious identity than to normative notions of nationhood.

Zionism argued that the revival of a common language (Hebrew) and the repopulating of an ancestral territory (Palestine) could create nationhood for a people scattered among the nations of the world. Nation building remains a prominent process in Israel, partly due to its creation (or recreation) and immigrant character, and partly due to its isolation in a historically hostile environment. Tremendous ideological energy has gone into constructing what it is to be Israeli and in producing actual Israelis, as seen for example, in the revival of Hebrew (see Blau 1981b; Fellman 1973a; see also chapters 5 and 7) or the construction and planning of Israeli national observances (Dominguez 1989; Zerubavel 1995). Calling Jews a nation thus serves political ends for Zionism. The same Zionist political ends are served by calling Arabs (as opposed to Palestinians) a nation.[8]

But if Jews and Arabs comprise separate nations, then the reference of "Israeli" is unclear. Indeed, the boundaries of "Israeli" are inherently unstable, as the dominant construction of the Israeli nation extends potential Israeliness to all Jews throughout the world. The Israeli "Law of the Return" grants immediate citizenship to any Jew who chooses to immigrate to Israel, whereas obtaining Israeli citizenship is quite difficult for nonJews. The idea of the Jewish nation is thus unbounded in two important senses. Membership in the Jewish nation is, as a practical matter, limitless, since the number of Jews around the world (and thus the number of potential Israelis) is far greater than the number of actual Israelis. The idea of the Jewish nation is also unbounded in the sense that it is nonreciprocal: diaspora Jews do not consider themselves to be "Israeli" in quite the way that Israelis consider them to be. The Israeli discourse of Arab nationhood is similarly problematic. Neither Jews nor Arabs imagine "Israeli" to encompass "Arab." Both Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, for example, sometimes use the words "Arab" and "Israeli" to distinguish between Palestinian and Jewish Israelis.

"Ethnicity" is a complementary identity term in Israel, and it is similarly complex. In scholarly discourse, the loan word, *etniyut*, is used for "ethnicity," but in everyday speech the Hebrew word *eda*, "ethnic group," is used. The derived term, *adatiyut*, "ethnicity," is attributed primarily to Jews in Israel, and in particular, to Mizrahi Jews. The phrase *edot ha-mizrax*, "ethnic groups of the East," for example, refers to "Oriental Jews," or Mizrahim, but no parallel term is commonly used to mean "Ashkenazi Jews." Mizrahi Jews, whose families came to Israel one generation ago from places like Morocco or Iraq or Yemen, are "ethnic"; but Ashkenazi Jews, whose families arrived at the same time from Germany, Poland, or Russia, are not. Having "ethnicity" in Israel means being Mizrahi, and the term *eda* has taken on a strongly negative stigma.

Thus the Israeli ideology of identity constitutes Palestinians as inherently national, Mizrahim as inherently ethnic, and only Ashkenazim as "Israelis." This ideology overvalues "nation" and "ethnicity," making them signify more than they mean, and undervalues "class" and "race," making these terms signify less than they mean. The ideas of "social class" and "race" do not commonly occur in everyday discussions of identity in Israeli Hebrew, which is why my phrasing of my research questions often raised eyebrows (if not hackles). This raises the question of why I felt it important to think about identity in Israel with terms that (Jewish) Israelis rejected, and I turn now from a discussion of Israeli ways of thinking identity to a discussion of social scientific discourses on identity.

Social Scientific Discourses on Identity

Identity is an overused and undertheorized term in anthropology, as Richard Handler (1994) has pointed out. Identity is either (or both) too hard or too soft a concept. When viewed as an essentialized primordial category ("the Zulu are X," or "Italians do Y"), the concept lacks intellectual rigor. When viewed as the way people make sense of their lives, it lacks specificity. Bouncing between these poles, identity has remained fuzzy in its conceptualization.

The too-hard conceptualization stems from an earlier era when anthropologists studied isolated and small-scale societies whose members were very different from the researcher, and whose economies did not overlap with the modern, technological

world. In such studies, the Self/Other characterization was uncomplicated, from the standpoint of both the researcher and the native. Anthropologists treated native identity as primordial—a straightforward matter of birth and socialization to a particular culture. This view of the native was buttressed by constructions of the native's own view. Emic worldviews were constructed as uniform and unified, epitomized by cases in which a people's name for themselves appeared to be glossable only as "people" or "humanity." In this way anthropologists attributed to the objects of ethnographic description an emic discourse of total ethnocentrism.

This anthropological discourse of aboriginal identity, centered on its prototypical concept, the "tribe," was deeply embedded in the political projects of colonialism. Nineteenth-century colonialism spawned both the anthropological project and the political doctrine of race. As Brackette Williams (1989:431) notes, "the current prototypical features of the races of mankind were invented, transferred, and institutionalized during colonial maneuvers to justify conquest, slavery, genocide, and other forms of social oppression."

As a corrective to essentialized notions of identity bound up in the service of oppressive political projects, Franz Boas and his students pioneered the concept of culture at the turn of the century. Boas focused on language and history, showing that biological and genetic notions of race did not correlate with cultural development. Linguistic history, for example, showed the effects of contact, adaptation, and borrowing. Similarly for cultural inventories, whether they be folklore repertoires or pottery styles. This historicization of culture discredited essentialized and deterministic models of the relationship between bodies and social organization. Identity became much more complex—and more interesting—when it was historicized.

The idea of identity as "ethnicity" took hold in the postcolonial world of the 1960s. The world that anthropologists were describing had changed markedly, and many of the groups formerly considered "tribal" were now competing for economic position among nation-states. As recently liberated "tribal" groups of the Third World came to resemble "ethnic" groups of the First World, social sciences advanced to treat them as such. By the early 1970s, Abner Cohen, a prominent ethnicity theorist, wrote, "the traditional subject matter of anthropology—tribes, villages, bands, and isolated communities—was being transformed into ethnic groupings, making ethnicity a 'ubiquitous phenomenon' that anthropology could not afford, heuristically or theoretically, to ignore" (Cohen 1974, cited in Williams 1989:402).

But the turn from "tribe" to "ethnic group" also reflected a theoretical relocation driven by changed attitudes in the social scientific community. The airtight formulation of island tribal groups isolated from contact with other groups left little room either for historical change or for politics. The shift to ethnicity reflected a growing interest in studying societies by studying how they change and interact, rather than how they stay the same. Fredrik Barth's (1972 [1964]) landmark study of shifting patterns of ethnic identification among the Pathans along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan moved anthropology away from static views of identity and toward a processual model. Barth argued that individuals selected an identity strategically, based upon competition over material resources.

Barth also prefigured the important distinction between ideology of identity and identity practices discussed earlier. He noted, for example, that while Pathan identity practices were in fact fluid and situational; Pathans spoke about identity in absolute and durable terms.

The play between "ethnicity" and "nation" is a crucial gap, as international boundaries take on increasingly prominent roles in social identity processes—and are increasingly attended to in scholarship on identity. Barth's study of Pathan "ethnicity," however, curiously ignored the international boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which bisected the Pathan region his research addressed. Similarly, Abner Cohen's work on ethnic groups defined the ethnic group in terms of its relations with other groups within the overarching context of a nation-state, but left "nation" relatively untheorized.

In the 1980s, however, anthropological interest focused on nationalisms—their essence and historical development (Gellner 1983; Handler 1988). In doing so, anthropologists drew heavily on work in other fields by such scholars as: Tom Nairn (1977), Benedict Anderson (1991), Eric Hobsbawm (1992), and Hugh Seton-Watson (1977). The interest generated by this form of identity stems from the paradoxical combination of the intellectual poverty of the idea of "nation" and its enormous practical influence. Benedict Anderson's work has been seminal in this regard. Nationalisms, Benedict Anderson (1983:5) has noted, paradoxically posit the most ancient of pedigrees in order to justify what are patently modern phenomena. In so doing, Anderson focused attention on the discourse of nationalism, and in particular on the role written discourse—novels and newspapers, for example—played in the emergence of this new form of identity (Anderson 1991). Anderson describes the nation as "imagined," placing national identity within the domain of negotiated identities.

Two persistent problems in social analysis frustrate the popularity of concepts such as tribe, culture, ethnicity, and nation: discrimination and hierarchy. Theories of social class and race maintain their centrality in anthropological work, as Brackette Williams (1989) has noted, because of the persistent failure of other concepts to explain systems of domination. Indeed, in many cases it is precisely the discourse of ethnic or cultural difference that obscures systematic patterns of economic subordination and exploitation.

The legitimacy of ethnic differences coinciding with socioeconomic differences is reduced. When linked to race, however, this legitimacy is often buttressed. Racial difference crucially links social groups to behavioral patterns by way of biological characteristics. Such links have powerful discursive and social effects because they naturalize difference, making it both legitimate and eternal. The concept of race helps to explain the distinction between "melting" and "nonmelting" identity groups (see Ogbu 1978). It has long been observed, for example, that many immigrant groups to the United States participated in the assimilatory processes that led to economic and social success along with the disappearance of cultural distinctiveness, while other groups failed to rise socioeconomically. It is striking that the groups in the former category, Irish and Italians, for example, tend to come from Europe, while the groups in the latter category, notably African Americans and Native Americans, are constructed as racially different. Social science thus distinguishes between the racialized divide

between blacks and whites in the United States, and the ethnic divisions among white groups.

The core concepts—race, class, ethnicity, and nationality—merge one into another, however. Intermediate groups, like Jews in nineteenth-century Europe, Hispanics in the twentieth-century United States, or Mizrahi Jews in modern Israel, blur these lines and decenter the underlying distinctions. Groups can be intermediate because they are "hybrid," like American Hispanics, who are characterized both as an ethnic group and as a racial group, or because their classification changes over time, like Jews (Brodkin 1998).

Scholars, like activists, have misrecognized the symbols and rhetoric of identity as things, rather than projects. "Instead of focusing on nations as real groups," Rogers Brubaker (1996:7) has written, "we should focus on nationhood and nationness, on 'nation' as practical category, institutionalized form, and contingent event. 'Nation' is a category of practice, not (in the first instance) a category of analysis." Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994:54–55) echo Brubaker's claim, while phrasing it in terms of race:

> There is a continuous temptation to think of race as an *essence*, as something fixed, concrete, objective. And there is also an opposite temptation: to imagine race as a mere *illusion*, a purely ideological construct that some ideal non-racist social order would eliminate. It is necessary to challenge both these positions ... we should think of race as an element of social structure rather than as an irregularity within it; we should see race as a dimension of human representation rather than an illusion.

Indeed, identity itself needs to be theorized as a set of organizing principles for social projects, rather than as entities. Scientific racism may have been discredited in Boasian times, but race as a political concept maintains its influence to this day. The theorization of identity thus must keep pace with its political applications.

The Rhetoric of Israeli Identity: From *Kibbutznik* to *Palestinian*

In Israel, too, the notions of "class" and "race" are important—despite their lack of popularity. Israel is a class-stratified society, in which speaking of class goes against the grain, and a racialized society, in which speaking of race is taboo. The absence of "class" in Israeli discourse has historical roots. Early Zionist settlements in Palestine were based on socialist ideals imported from revolutionary Russia in the early part of the twentieth century. Many early state institutions (like the national labor union, called *histadrut*) have a socialist heritage and maintain a powerful discursive tradition of a classless society, even though Israel is by no means a socialist state now. The ideology of classlessness retains its rhetorical power despite a growing material reality of privatization of state industries, increasing wealth differentials, and growing disparities between posh suburbs and poor slums.

Maintaining the notion of a classless society is predicated in part on the image of the kibbutz, a prominent symbol of communal, socialist life. Two important mythologies of Israeli society derive their power from the kibbutz image: *kibush ha-avoda*, "the conquest of labor," and *kibutz galuyot*, "ingathering of exiles." The latter phrase refers to the return of Jews from all corners of the globe to Israel, a place where few of them had ever been, and where all of them would be remade both as Jews and as Israelis. The Ulpan experience, in which doctor, merchant, and peasant alike learned the new language, Hebrew, was a central acculturating influence. Kibbutzim are known to this day as centers of Ulpan-style language teaching (see chapter 5). The idea of the conquest of labor held that Jewish/Israeli redemption lay in a return to the land, to manual labor, and especially to a farming way of life. This ideology purported to treat all immigrants equally, despite enormous disparities in their wealth, skills, and education. Doctors as well as beggars remade their lives as farmers and manual laborers, abandoning class differentiation. The kibbutz was the center of manual labor and agricultural production in the early years of the Israeli state.

In Israel consciousness of class remains low—despite significant class differences—in part because differences of socioeconomic class are obscured by being rhetorically inscribed onto differences of *eda*, "ethnicity." In the 1950s waves of immigrants came to Israel from Middle Eastern countries, such as Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, and others. Included in this immigration were many indigent, illiterate, or unskilled Jews, and the Mizrahim were incorporated into the Israeli economy as manual labor in factories and on farms (Swirski 1989).

The Mizrahi immigration also included many wealthy, educated, and highly trained Jews (Beinin 1998), but Mizrahim were discursively represented as illiterate and poverty-stricken nonetheless, a representation that has since become a stereotype. Indeed, the poverty of some of the Mizrahi immigrants was compounded by specific Israeli policies, such as settling Mizrahi immigrants in remote *ayarot pituax*, "development towns," along the frontiers with Arab countries, or housing them in the temporary *ma'abarot*, "transition camps," where they were doomed to failure.

The gap between the discourse of the Mizrahi immigration and the material reality of the Mizrahi immigration can be seen in a comparison to Ashkenazi immigration at the same time. During the 1950s, in the first decade of Israel's existence as a state, massive waves of immigration nearly doubled its population. In 1949 there were just over one million Jews in what became Israel. By 1961 this number had grown to just under two million (Government of Israel 2000:2–7).[9] Huge numbers of Jews came to Israel from Middle Eastern countries, but a nearly equal number of Jews came to Israel from post-Holocaust Europe. According to official Israeli statistics, in 1948 Ashkenazim comprised 88 percent of Jews in Israel, but by 1961 they comprised only 56 percent (Goldscheider 2002:31). This means that the Mizrahi population skyrocketed from 12 percent of the Jewish population in 1948 to 44 percent in 1961. At the same time that some 700,000 Mizrahi immigrants arrived in Israel, over 450,000 Ashkenazi immigrants came as well. Despite the comparable representation of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews in this massive influx, the immigration is conceptualized as a Mizrahi immigration.[10] Ashkenazi immigrants—refugees from the Holocaust—were as destitute

and needy as the Mizrahi immigrants, but immigrant absorption and trauma are nonetheless disproportionately constructed as Mizrahi problems.[11] In modern, colloquial Hebrew many words or phrases index, or indirectly refer to, social class—such as *shxunot oni*, "slums"; *shxunot*, "neighborhoods"; *ayarot pituax*, "development towns"; *mishpaxot m'rubot y'ladim*, "multichild families" (see text 2.4)—but the phrase that directly, literally, means "social class," *ma'amad xevrati*, is rarely heard in everyday conversations. This term lies outside the quotidian vocabulary of Israeli identity.

If Israel is a class-structured society, in which speaking of "class" goes against the grain, it is also a racialized society, in which speaking of "race" is taboo. The Arab/Jewish divide is heavily racialized. In Israel the social categories "Arab" and "Jew" are absolute, categorical, inalienable, and official. Each Israeli citizen carries an identification card on which his/her *l'om*, "nationality," is inscribed. These cards can be demanded by gatekeepers of various kinds (see text 5.4), making identity a very public matter in Israel. Israelis are born into their l'om, a fact that racializes Israeli identity by linking it to the genetic body.[12] The social/political distinction is constructed in part by reference to body types, as both Arab and Jew carry ideological and stereotypical associations of physical and mental differences. Such biological differences constitute organizing principles for social subordination. Barriers to intermarriage between the groups are nearly absolute, while intragroup marriages are ideologically and legally encouraged. Institutional forms of segregation are far-reaching, as Jews and Arabs have separate schools (with different curricula), separate social service institutions, separate governmental oversight ministries, separate television and radio broadcasting systems, and so on. Systematic forms of discrimination are officially sanctioned and permanently installed, including most dramatically, restrictions on serving in the military service—and therefore, on receiving benefits from such service.

The term "race" itself, however, is rarely heard in everyday conversations. Hebrew words for "racism" (*giz'anut*) and "racist" (*giz'ani*) do occur in colloquial speech, but these refer to individual behaviors, or to political stances. The word for "race" (*geza*) is almost never applied to Israeli social groupings. Israelis substitute "nation."

It is therefore important to distinguish between identity on the one hand and discourses of identity on the other. Identity itself is abstract, provisional, internal, and individual. Discourses of identity, on the other hand, are concrete, durable, overt, and public. What being Palestinian in Israel means to an individual is a very different matter than what "Palestinian" stands for in Israeli discourse. Identity is a process; discourses of identity are projects. As projects, these discourses are material in several senses: they provide material sentential frames for talking about identity; they generate material patterns of representation for identities in newspapers, television advertisements, films, and novels; they generate deeply felt stereotypes that lead to material disadvantage.

A discourse approach looks at identity from two perspectives simultaneously: structural and agentive. Identities constitute a structured set of signifiers that (partially) determine subjectively felt meanings. But identity signifiers are simultaneously semiotic resources with which individual agents can play. Figure 3.1 is a partial representation of the structured set of identity signifiers in Israel.[13] The words on the diagram are

placed in quotation marks to indicate that they stand for signifiers, rather than people. In figure 3.1 Israeli identity is represented as a continuum that varies simultaneously along two dimensions of meaning: Israeliness and Easternness, which are intended as ideal-typical poles of identification. The identity words in figure 3.1 are also arrayed hierarchically, top to bottom, reflecting the different status and power indexed by the various signifiers.

Maximal Israeliness corresponds to the mythological attributes of the New Jew, as imagined by Zionist literature and as nostalgically recalled by modern Israeli discourse. Easternness, on the other hand, is the Israeli instantiation of alterity, of otherness; it is the opposite of Israeliness. Israeli alterity mimics Western Orientalist discourses (see Said 1979), projecting such qualities as irrationality, backwardness, primitivity, laziness,

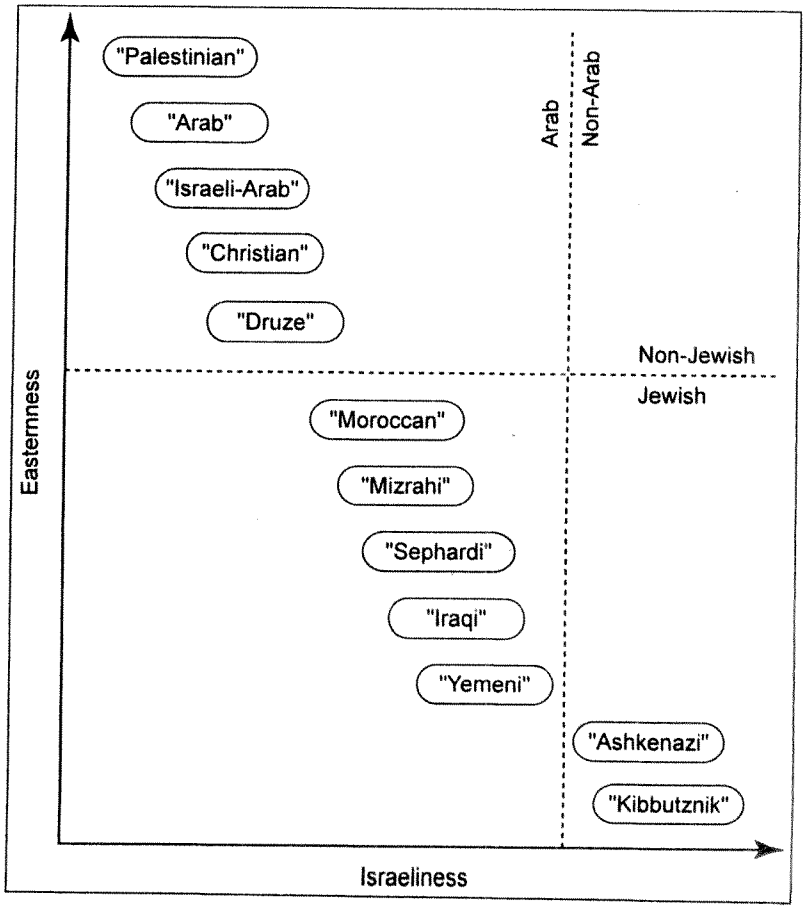

Figure 3.1. The Space of Israeli Identity.

and emotionality onto cultural Others—the Palestinian Other, as well as the Mizrahi Jewish Other (Shohat 1989). Figure 3.1 thus represents graphically Israel's self-concept as a Western European island in the midst of Oriental geography and demography (Shohat 1989).

Israeliness, however, does not completely coincide with Jewish identities in figure 3.1, nor does Easternness completely coincide with Arab identities. Gaps permeate the continuum, leaving space for semiotic play. A dotted horizontal line separates Jewish identities, above, from non-Jewish identities, below. All Arab groups are located above this dividing line, of course, but as Dominguez (1989) and others have argued, discourse at times attributes to several of the non-Jewish categories strikingly Israeli qualities. A dotted vertical line separates Arab identities, on the right, from non-Arab identities, on the left. All Palestinian identities are located to the right of this division, but many of the Jewish (Mizrahi) identities are inscribed with Eastern attributes.

Figure 3.1 also shows a proliferation of subidentities. As kinds of "Palestinian" we find "Palestinian" itself, in addition to "Arab," "Israeli-Arab," "Christian," and "Druze," among others. As kinds of "Mizrahi" we find "Moroccan," "Mizrahi," "Sephardi," "Iraqi," and "Yemeni," among others. These proliferations show the tendency of hegemonic discourses toward structured subdivision (Gal 1994). But the proliferation recapitulates the hierarchy: subaltern identities proliferate in their specificity, but the dominant group is seen as an undifferentiated whole. While "Palestinian" and "Mizrahi" identities splinter almost endlessly, the dominant, Ashkenazi, identity remains relatively unified. As pointed out earlier, there is no common Hebrew usage *edot ha-ashkenaz*, "Ashkenazi ethnicities," parallel to *edot ha-mizrax*, "Oriental ethnicities." "Ashkenazi" just does not subdivide into "Polish-Ashkenazim," "German-Ashkenazim," and so on, the way that "Mizrahi" splinters into "Moroccan," "Yemenite," and "Iraqi."

Within each domain the subcategories are organized hierarchically. For example, the signifier "Palestinian" itself is maximally opposed to the signifier "Israeli." Thus in colloquial Israeli Hebrew, the word *falastinai*, "Palestinian," refers unambiguously to noncitizen residents of the Occupied Territories—that is, non-Israelis even in the legalistic sense of citizenship (see "Arabic and Soldiers" in chapter 5). Within the domain of "Palestinian," the terms "Arab" and "Christian" occupy ranked positions in a hierarchy. In a door-to-door neighborhood survey in Hadar Elyon, for example, a Jewish Israeli woman was asked whether she had any "Arab" neighbors (i.e., whether any Palestinian families occupied apartments in her building). The woman responded, "No, two Christian families live on the first floor, but there are no Arabs living in the building." Her response (which was clearly intended to be cooperative) meant that two Palestinian families lived in her building, and that they were Christian by religion, not Muslim. Following common—if not quite standard—Israeli usage, the woman had used the Hebrew word *aravi*, "Arab," to mean "Muslim (Palestinian) Israeli," expressing what to her was a salient (and ranked) distinction between Christian and Muslim Palestinian Israelis.

Relative to "Palestinian," other terms for Arab groups take on increasingly Israeli character. Dominguez (1989) describes the striking parallels that the Israeli media drew between Lebanese (non-Palestinian) populations and Israelis during the early stages of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The Israeli press, for example, referred to Lebanese social groups as *edot*, parallel to the Israeli usage for relatively internal out-groups, such as Mizrahi Jews and, sometimes, Druze (Dominguez 1989:178–183). Dominguez argues that Israelis accord peoplehood—on a par with themselves—to citizens of other Arab states, such as Egyptians, Syrians, and Lebanese, but not to Palestinians. The term *Arab*, inasmuch as it sometimes refers to (Arab) citizens of other states, thus gains in Israeliness.

The domain of "Mizrahi" identity shows similarly structured subdivision, as in the contrast between "Moroccan" and "Yemenite" (see text 2.4). Israelis of Moroccan heritage are singled out for unfavorable rhetorical treatment. Moroccans are associated with nonconformity to mainstream Israeli culture. Slums and urban protest movements, for example, are conventionally associated with Moroccan Israelis. In dramatic contrast, Yemenite immigrants are singled out for favorable rhetorical treatment. Several ethnographies portray immigrants from Yemen in a particularly positive light (e.g., Gilad 1989; Lewis 1989). They are characterized as dedicated Zionists, willing assimilators, and model Israelis. Yemenite crafts, especially needlework and silver metalwork, have long been very popular. Yemenite food became popular more recently. In the early 1990s a chain of fast-food restaurants called Nargila enjoyed tremendous success. This chain built upon positive stereotypes of Yemenite identity, including the slogan *kef temani*, "Yemenite fun," a décor that featured enormous posters of the owner's mother in "traditional costume," and, of course, the traditional food.[14] Moroccan cultural practices are treated quite differently. Mimuna, for example, is the traditional Moroccan celebration of the final day of the Jewish Passover festival. Many cities, like Haifa, put on large Mimuna celebrations that are advertised citywide and often attended by city officials. These events are located in Moroccan neighborhoods (one was held in Neve Yosef), though, and they are attended mostly by Moroccans and other Mizrahim—but not by large numbers of Ashkenazim.

The two terms "Mizrahi" and "Sephardi" are also ordered hierarchically, despite being essentially synonymous. The terms differ in affective polarity and semiotic associations. *Mizrax* is the Hebrew word for "East," and the derived adjectival noun, *mizraxi*, literally means "Easterner."[15] As a term of identity, Mizrahi evokes the range of stigmatized meanings associated—in English—with the word "Oriental." Stigmatized words and phrases derived from this root include *edot ha-mizrax*, "Orientals"; *mizraxiyut*, "oriental nature"; *mizraxan*, "Orientalist"; *muzika mizraxit*, "Oriental music"; and so on. *Sfarad*, on the other hand, is the standard Hebrew word for the country "Spain," and the derived form, *sfaradi* (plural: *sfaradim*), literally means "Spaniard." *Sfaradim* came to be a term of Israeli identity because it refers to descendants of Jews who were expelled from Spain as part of the 1492 Spanish Inquisition. As such, the term evokes a range of high-status associations: the modern, European country of Spain; the proud heritage of the Golden Age of Jewish culture and letters in medieval Spain (see Sachar 1994); and the fact that some Sephardi refugees made their way to Palestine centuries before the emergence of Zionism. In the context of Zionism's struggle with Palestinian nationhood, those individuals who can point to generations of Israeli heritage do so with pride. They can claim to be the first Zionists—and such people are often referred to as *sfaradim*.

The gaps between "Moroccan" and "Yemenite," "Mizrahi" and "Sephardi," provide

room for play. On the one hand there is the play of stereotype and discrimination. On the other hand there is the play of resistance. Smadar Lavie, a Mizrahi scholar, writes:

> the Mizrahim (literally meaning "Orientals"—in Hebrew) ... constitute 68 per cent of the Jewish population and 54 per cent of the total population of Israel. ... The official government term for them is "descendants from Asia-Africa" (yotzei Asia-Africa [*sic*]), or in short, "Edot Hamizrah," the "bands of the Orient" ... [their] apolitical term for themselves is Sephardim ... but "Mizrahim," or "Arab-Jews" are the terms they use when advocating their rights before the ruling minority, the 28 per cent of Israeli Jewry called Ashkenazim. (Lavie 1992:85–86)

Lavie's claim to the term "Arab-Jew" coopts the negative stereotype into a positive symbol. Reclaiming the signifier of the Arab-Jew for political purposes reflects the flexibility of boundaries of the Israeli Self/Other distinction represented in figure 3.1. The same flexibility, however, is also reflected in the pejorative ways the Self/Other boundary can be negotiated. For many Ashkenazi Israelis the external (Palestinian) Other is closer to the Self than is the internal (Mizrahi) Other (see, for example, text 5.6).

Resistance

The concept of resistance is crucial to any discussion of identity and power. Theorizing resistant, or oppositional, power depends upon the identification of oppositional behaviors that are powerful. While the language of subaltern Israelis may contest hegemonic discourses, ultimately the power of these symbolic deployments depends upon the change they bring about. Eternal opposition is too close to cooptation to be called resistant.

Stereotype and resistance exist in an uncomfortable and unstable equilibrium, merging one into the other. Stereotypical images are often deployed parodically as resistances, for example.

> **Of Painting and Pictures**
>
> In colloquial Israeli Hebrew, Jews sometimes modify nouns with the adjective "Arab" in order to express a complex of strongly negative attitudes. *Ta'am aravi*, "Arab taste," for example, refers to bad, gauche, or inappropriate taste, as in clothing styles. *Avoda aravit*, "Arab work" refers either to dirty work, as in street sweeping, or work done lazily or sloppily.
>
> The painting of interiors of buildings and homes fascinated me in Israel. Most walls seemed to me to have been painted cheaply, sloppily, or amateurishly. Baseboards, for example, were often smeared with paint that had dripped from the wall. Having spent summers supporting myself in college by painting houses, I was appalled to see so many blemishes that could have been avoided or corrected.
>
> One day, waiting outside my advisor's office high up in the forty-story skyscraper that is Haifa University's signature building, I was struck by a particularly sloppy paint job that had left a different color paint behind a picture hung on a nail in the wall. This wall had been painted so quickly that the painters hadn't even bothered to move the picture.
>
> In a sudden epiphany, I was reminded of James Scott's (1985, 1990) work on modes of everyday resistance. Since painting in Israel is done, by and large, by Palestinians, I suddenly saw in this unpainted shadow of a picture frame an emergence of the subaltern voice into the consciousness of dominant Israel—into the consciousness, that is, of anyone who bothers to look behind the pictures.

Throughout my stay in Israel I saw the blotches and drips of white paint on the tile baseboards of Israeli homes and offices as an "everyday form of resistance" (Scott 1985). James Scott highlights the role of language when the powerless contest the power of the powerful, especially in what he refers to as the "hidden transcript" (Scott 1990). In distinguishing hidden from public transcripts, or, roughly, private from public speech styles, Scott notes that the stark differences between what is said behind the back of power, as it were, and the deference paid to power in public performance, constitute resistant practice. These discourses of the hidden transcript often explode upon the public scene, much as pressurized gas bursts from an overloaded bottle (Scott 1990). Drawing on Bakhtin's (1984) description of carnivalesque celebrations of reversals in the social order, Scott likens the discourse of the hidden transcript to Saturnalias.

James Scott's work leaves unaddressed, however, the important issue of how powerful hidden transcripts really are. Nor does he address how this power is exercised, or witnessed. Foucault (1979) has convincingly argued that in the modern world power is increasingly produced and enforced discursively, rather than coercively, and that these procedures are increasingly dispersed, rather than centralized. Scholars have taken from Foucault's work the notion that resistance too must take discursive and dispersed forms. Everyday infiltrations of the hidden transcript into the public transcript have thus become a site for investigation, leading to a growing interest in the mechanisms of speech and the meanings of language. I found that in Israel irruptions of the hidden transcript into public discourse were both commonplace and powerful, and that they contest the nature of public space itself. Indeed, in conversational interactions it may not be clear which transcript is rolling.

Negotiation

Negotiation is my metaphor for the ways in which social practices—and specifically practices of language-use—mediate between structure and agency. Identity, then, can be seen as a metaphor for the language used in such negotiation.

> **An Untaped Interview**
>
> Shoshana was in her late thirties when we interviewed her. She had shoulder-length hair that was streaked gray-and-white in a style that was popular then among some Moroccan Israeli women. We conducted this interview

in a cramped and noisy office of the Shutafut Community Center, where I worked as organizer of the center's youth soccer team. We conducted most of these interviews in the interviewee's home—but only because interviewees tended to extend the invitation.

The interview began as usual. I introduced Nurit, my Israeli research assistant. We engaged in some small talk. Then I briefly explained the goals of my project and the format of the interview—while assembling the tape recorder and unpacking the microphone. My remarks were synchronized with the setup, enabling me to segue seamlessly into a request to record the interview. The interview with Shoshana occurred well into my research. I had interviewed dozens of people before her, and by this time my routine was well established. No one had yet refused to be recorded, and my request had become perfunctory, presupposing acceptance. This time, however, as I reached across the coffee table to hand Shoshana the clip-on lavaliere microphone, I was brought up short by a firm refusal.[16]

Nurit and I urged Shoshana to allow us to tape-record the interview, but she remained adamant. The interview continued. Nurit posed the questions, and I struggled to record her responses in a tiny spiral notebook. After twenty minutes we again asked to record, pointing to the importance of her words, and repeating our promise to keep her identity confidential. Shoshana explained: "It's not that I'd need my husband's permission, but ..." We continued the interview without taping.

As the interview progressed, the interaction between Nurit and Shoshana became more intimate and more intense. Our questions about Mizrahi identity in Israel, and about the relation between Mizrahi and Arab identity, struck a chord. Shoshana had strong feelings about her Mizrahi identity and about the treatment Ashkenazi Israel metes out to its Jewish Other. Nurit, whose mother was born in Tunisia, began to pose our interview questions from the perspective of one who shared Shoshana's Mizrahi identity. She identified with the experiences Shoshana narrated.

At one point we asked Shoshana how her current experience living in a mixed (Arab and Jewish) neighborhood compared to her previous experience living in a neighborhood that was mostly Mizrahi Jewish. Shoshana replied that the "mixed" neighborhood felt less "Jewish," because it included many Russian Jews, who were not observant—not because of her non-Jewish Arab neighbors ...

Nurit Can you identify a Russian immigrant?
Shoshana Immediately.
Nurit How about Arabs?
Shoshana Used to be able to, but not anymore.
Nurit Mizrahim?
Shoshana Not by the way they look, but as soon as they speak I can. Also, they have different jobs. Unfortunately, Ashkenazim have the important jobs. My daughter, for example, has really blue eyes, but people know she's Mizrahi.
Nurit I look Ashkenazi, but I'm Sephardi ...

As the interview came to a close, we returned—as often happened at the end of a successful interview—to introductions and small talk. Shoshana asked me more about my research, and she asked Nurit more about herself. We exchanged full names. Upon hearing Nurit's family name—which sounds Ashkenazi—Shoshana became enraged. Struggling to repair the damage, Nurit explained that her Tunisian mother had married an Ashkenazi man, but Shoshana did not appear reconciled. The discussion broke up soon thereafter, and I was left thinking that any satisfaction Shoshana might have derived from the interview had been dissipated by her perception of insincerity on our part.

A negotiation of identity emerged quite suddenly during this interview and turned into a real conflict. Shoshana's angry reaction to Nurit's play with identity was extreme—but understandable. Our research interviews constituted an exchange, in which the researcher obtained information, the research assistants received a salary, and the interviewees (who were not paid for their time) benefited if they derived pleasure from having their story heard. In this case, the good hearing was compromised when the interviewee thought the interviewer was being insincere. The terms of the exchange had therefore been violated. The strength of Shoshana's reaction stems from the great importance identity plays in her life, and from the interview we know that this identity as a Moroccan, a Mizrahi, a Jew, an Israeli is both important and problematic. Images of identity—in this case Jewish Israeli "ethnic" identity—appear uniform, definite, specific, and stable, even though the underlying identities are negotiable and suspect. Negotiable because they can be claimed or denied (as Nurit did in the interview) and suspect because of the power at stake.

Hybridity

In the example just given, Shoshana appeared to be guarding an absolutist notion of what it means to be Mizrahi. Her negotiation with Nurit over possession of "Mizrahi" identity became a zero-sum game, in which Shoshana and Nurit either counted or did not count as "Mizrahi." While politics often pushes identity negotiations into these categorical alternations, a subtler form of negotiation may have more influence on the historical trajectories of identity discourses.

The paradigm case comes from the postcolonial world, where strict dichotomies of colonial/other break down. Frantz Fanon (1967), for example, describes a postcolonial Caribbean world, in which Caribbean (colonized) and European (colonizer) cultures hybridize in mutual influence. The postcolonial subject embodies an amalgam of cultural influences, including the nativistic, the European, and a conjoint of the two. Fanon's own biography—educated Caribbean black native who lived and worked as a physician in French colonial North Africa—dramatically demonstrates this view of culture, of cultural production, and of social identity.

In many places—like Israel—the hybridization of culture and identity is even more complex. Kobena Mercer, for example, argues that the modern black Caribbean experience is better described with reference to three poles of identity, not just two. Referring to these as the "African Presence," the "European Presence," and the "American Presence," Mercer notes that there is a

> critical difference between a *monologic* tendency in black film which tends to homogenise and totalise the black experience in Britain and a *dialogic* tendency which is responsive to the diverse and complex qualities of our black Britishness and British blackness—our differentiated specificity as a diaspora people. ... There is no escape from the fact that, as a diaspora people ... our blackness is thoroughly imbricated in Western modes and codes. ... What is in question is not the expression of some lost origin or some uncontaminated essence in black film language, but the adoption of a critical voice that promotes consciousness of the collision of cultures and histories that constitute our very conditions of existence. (Mercer 1994:62–63)

One such place of cultural contact, of hegemonic domination, and of discursive resistance is the complex (colonial) encounter between Hispanic, Native American (Indio) and Anglo-American cultures and peoples along the Mexico/United States border zone. Gloria Anzaldua (1987) describes the identity processes of the Tejanas: the intimate incorporation/appropriation of Indian identity in the Mestiza identity of Hispanic Americans in their conflict and struggle with mainstream culture in the United States. Anzaldua presents this mixture of identities as seamless, invisible, almost etymological. Her image for the point of contact between cultures—Mexico and the United States—is the shifting, chaotic boundary between a body of water and its banks (Anzaldua 1987:1–3).

Hybridization metaphorizes identity processes by linking disparate components of particular identities and emphasizing flexibility. Attention is therefore focused on symbolic processes of discursive elaboration. Kobena Mercer specifically points to language-use as the best site of hybrid identity construction, which he describes as

> a powerfully *syncretic* dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and *creolizes* them, disarticulating given signs and rearticulating their symbolic meanings otherwise. The subversive force of this hybridising tendency is most apparent at the level of language itself where creoles, patois and Black English decenter, destabilise and carnivalise the linguistic domination of "English"—the nation-language of master-discourse—through strategic inflections, reaccentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic and lexical codes. ... Creolising practices of counterappropriation exemplify the critical process of *dialogism*. (Mercer 1994:63–64)

While Mercer's notion of "language" oversimplifies an intricate, complex system that is better conceived as "discourse," his focus on language/discourse does much to correct the relatively passive focus of hybrid identity theory. Theories of hybrid identity capture the complexity, indeterminacy, and mutuality of social identities, but the process is conceptualized as a passive one. Terms like "hybrid," "creole," and "border" imply displacement of agency in worlds where blurred identities happen upon individual actors. In contrast, focusing on the discursive construction of identities conceptualized as a negotiation highlights agentive processes, in which individuals actively construct their own identities through a range of encounters—face-to-face interactions, as well as encounters with institutional discourses.

A discursive approach to hybrid identities also avoids a danger of the hybrid metaphor: losing sight of the role of power. Gloria Anzaldua, for example, appropriates Indio identity into her Mexicana/Chicana/Tejana identity only by eliding important facts—like the marks of a historical people's passing—thereby erasing the sutures, the marks of her appropriation. Indeed, interest in hybridization took hold in academic circles during an era of exploding (ethnic) nationalisms. Ethnicity's emergence as a dominant force in social change decreased its utility as an analytic tool. The West's inability to develop a coherent political position with respect to local conflagrations that are organized around political notions of identity (e.g., the conflict between Bosnians and Serbs in the former Yugoslavia, or between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda) has been a powerful stimulus to the development of more complex notions of identity.

This project deconstructs the binary image of dichotomous struggles into a three-way negotiation. By focusing on the intersecting and overlapping linkages between the two oppositions, the dichotomous struggles can be resolved into a common negotiation over a hybrid identity, Israeliness. Evidence for the crystallization of a hybrid Israeli culture derives both from increased participation by Palestinians in the mainstream economic, political, and cultural life of Israel, and from ongoing destabilization of the Western, Ashkenazi cultural hegemony. The affiliations of social class position and cultural heritage that Mizrahim share with Palestinians, for example, crosscut and decenter dominant constructions of identity in Israel.[17]

Expressions of identities that blur or challenge the lines of demarcation between named social identities are commonplace in Israeli media, in everyday conversation, and in the taped interviews conducted during my field research. Blurred identities challenge categorization. A particularly interesting case involves the Druze minority in Israel. Druze identity forms a signifier intermediate between "Arab" and "Jew" in Israel, since it represents an Arab cultural identity that supports the Israeli state politically. For this reason, an intense struggle rages in the press and in everyday discourse over the meaning of "Druze" identity. Druze serve in the Israeli military—the same as Jews, but in contrast to other Arabs.[18] In a media culture in which a picture of each soldier who dies in service is printed on the front page of every national newspaper, the occasion of a Druze soldier falling in action takes on particular meaning. The sacrifice of a Druze life for the (Jewish) state highlights the paradox of Druze identity, yet Israeli (Hebrew) media usually focus on Druze "loyalty." Such representations claim legitimacy from this "Arab" support for Israel, as well as from the Palestinian/Druze antagonisms the representations themselves fuel. Such paradoxes are particularly strong when, as happened several times in the early 1990s, a Druze Israeli falls victim to Palestinian violence connected with the Intifada. The Israeli government milked such events for their symbolic capital, sending high-ranking government and military officials to attend the funerals. On the other hand, Israeli Jews do not always include Druze in the collective as eagerly as these media representations imply. In 1992, for example, a Druze student was elected president of the nationwide University Student Council, but conservative students and government officials objected vociferously.[19]

Identities that are blurred because they are intermediate between received categories are not unique to the Arab/Jewish dimension, but are characteristic also of Jewish

ethnic identity in Israel. The central signifier of this blurred identity is the mixed marriage. Most Jewish Israeli interviewees thought that Ashkenazi/Mizrahi cultural differences would soon disappear because there was so much intermarriage. This response biologizes the notion of cultural difference, implying that the absence of biological purity portends the disappearance of ethnic practices.

Dominant Israeli discourse simultaneously dichotomizes (exaggerates) Arab/Jewish difference while it erases (minimizes) Jewish/Jewish difference. Indeed, expression of dichotomized Jewish identities, either strongly Ashkenazi or strongly Mizrahi, is taboo in Israel. The twin processes—discursive proliferation (of Arab/Jewish difference) and discursive silencing (of Jewish/Jewish difference)—interact through the image of the Mizrahi "Arab Jew/Jewish Arab," symbolically linking the Arab and Jew in a complex signification.

Performance

The metaphor of performance is a way of thinking about the relationship between structure and agency. Like the performance of a play, this metaphor suggests an evanescent articulation between an underlying script and an emergent practice. A performance can never unfold "just as it was scripted," because it would lose its emergent character. Nor can a performance ever be completely "unscripted," because it would lose its meaning. Rather, a performance is an articulation of the scripted and the unscripted. Its meanings are negotiations of the script and the nonscript. In this sense they are "hybrid" meanings. Its meanings inhere in the moments of actual performance, and in that sense they are transitory. The script perdures; the performance vanishes. But, as Chris Weedon (1987) has argued, the semipermanent articulations that emerge from performance have material consequences.

The effects of transitory articulations of script and nonscript relate to the spiral of discourse meaning. Momentary articulations of meaning provide the ground from which subsequent signification draws its meaning. The work of Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs does much to illuminate such abstract social processes (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Briggs and Bauman 1992). Working from the disciplinary perspective of folklore, Bauman and Briggs retheorize the "text" as a dynamic set of processes. Canonically thought of as the inscribed script of a centuries-old document (such as the Bible), the text becomes, for Bauman and Briggs, a much more expansive notion, incorporating, for example, Geertz's (1973) idea of social ritual as a "text." Crucially, texts emerge in discourse, at the intersection of two opposed processes that Bauman and Briggs call "recontextualization" and "entextualization." Speakers recontextualize a text when they perform a canonical text (script) in social interaction. Such a performance draws meaning dialogically from the text and applies the meaning to the here-and-now of the speech event—a novel (and emergent) context of interaction. "The Israeli Kid," the Palestinian Israeli boxer discussed at the outset of this chapter, is deeply engaged in recontextualization. Drawing on Israeli cultural symbols that are deeply imbued with meaning (Israel's national anthem, called "The Hope," for example), the boxer

recontextualized the symbols in performance, articulating an emergent, hybrid, and potentially resistant meaning.

On the other hand, the complex signification behind "The Israeli Kid" was powerful because of the "entextualization" involved. Bauman and Briggs describe this latter process as the tendency to textualize unscripted performance through semiotic techniques. Entextualization addresses the linguistic (and other semiotic) structuring of symbols. As Roman Jakobson (1960) has pointed out, the efficacy of discourse depends upon form as well as content. Entextualization is, in effect, the reverse of recontextualization, but in actual discourse the two processes are intertwined, and they feed off one another. The Israeli national anthem is in and of itself a powerful symbol, but its deployment during a Palestinian Israeli's boxing triumph entextualizes it. The entextualization stems from the embedding of the symbol in another ongoing script (a championship boxing match). Playing the anthem belongs to the boxing script; commenting on Palestinian Israeli identity (by the boxer's playing up of the Israeli anthem theme) entextualizes the anthem. By doing so the boxer evoked dialogic resonances, transformed a paradigm onto a syntagm, and played with both symbols and identity. Entextualization inscribes textuality onto emergent interaction, allowing a speaker to claim for his unscripted action the pedigree of script. This is the everyday practice of narrativization.

Language

Socially variable aspects of language entextualize speech. Narrative, for example, the culturally valued ways of relating objective events, embeds speech in cultural discourses, pragmatic interaction, and affective relations (see chapter 4). In so doing, the structures of language—in this case of narrative—structure speaking practice. Other structural aspects of language-use structure speaking practices. Media discourse, for example, entextualizes particular ways of thinking about identity through the structuring practices of headlining, illustrating, and narrating news (see chapter 6). And dialect entextualizes speech by making automatic and unreflecting the variations born of specific interactions, or specific encounters (see chapters 7 and 8).

Close attention to the details of spoken language, as it is used in face-to-face talk interactions, can illuminate important processes of cultural determination and contestation. Ethnography represents not only the Other, but also the Self. In conducting interviews for this research my own identity—as researcher and, more generally, as an American (Jew) in Israel—was very much at stake. In carrying out my research I played upon flexible and overlapping aspects of my own identity, at times emphasizing my American, at times my Jewish identity. While my accent pointed to an American background, it did not completely specify my identity with respect to the Israeli discourse of identity. On the one hand, American immigrants to Israel comprise a prominent component of Israeli society (see Bloch 1990), and on the other hand, both Jewish and non-Jewish Americans have powerful stakes and interests in Israel (see Dominguez 1989; Swedenburg 1995). Although I did not specifically identify myself

as Jewish, Israeli Jews assumed that I was. Palestinians, on the other hand, did not always make this assumption, and the ideas they formed of my identity affected the interviews in complex ways.

Text 3.1. On foreign and other accents 1

During our interview with Najib, a young Palestinian man living in the Hadar neighborhood, we asked about Palestinians' feelings about using Hebrew, their accent, their acceptance in Israeli society, and their being able to pass as Jewish:

Najib Usually I laugh, I don't care what they say,
Because I really don't sound Arab,
I know how an Arab sounds when he's speaking [Hebrew],
And I also know how an American sounds when he's speaking () American— er— Hebrew,
And if you spoke Hebrew a bit better I'd be able to tell you you don't sound American at all,
And that wouldn't insult you at all,
But to say that you don't look Arab—
'Cuz how— what's looking Arab?
Or that you look Jewish, so what?
Do you stereotype Jews? Or to Arabs ...
Dan Yea,
Najib All of a sudden you're someone that—
Dan In the States it's— as if you would— I would hear, for example, in the US, that I don't look Jewish,
That would be—
Najib Uh, you really don't look Jewish, really,
((All laugh))
Najib Are you really Jewish?
Dan Yes,
Najib You don't look it,
And you also sound American,
Dan American, yes,
Najib Eh, so you grew up in America?
Dan American Jew, ... (117A:39:40–40:50)

Text 3.2. On foreign and other accents 2

Our interview with Hani and his wife, Farha, a young Palestinian Israeli couple, lasted several hours. When I had come to the end of my questions, the talk became much less formal. Farha asked me about my work in Haifa:

Farha How do you know Hebrew so well?
Dan Thanks, really I feel more limited than—
Farha ((laughs))
Dan No, it's from here,

I had a little preparation,
I'm Jewish,
Don't know if that was clear,
Hani There's no—
Dan —Almost every Jew gets Jewish education after—
Farha Yes, but do you study the language?
Hani Better that I ()—
Dan ((laughs))
Hani When I made the joke about Jews, about misers,
Farha ((laughs))
Hani I did so under the assumption that you were Jewish,
Farha ((laughs))
Hani Don't think that now I'm feeling some kind of "What-have-I-done-now" feeling,
Farha ((laughs))
Dan I'll write that in my dissertation, "Israeli Arabs are racist, anti-Semitic"
((All laugh))
Farha But you learned Hebrew when you were young? ... (206A:06:14–07:01)

In these interviews the dimensions of my own identity—American as opposed to Israeli, and Jewish as opposed to non-Jewish—was a critical, and suspect, aspect of the ongoing negotiation. In these two cases, it was the cause of some mutual embarrassment, but more generally it played a much subtler role, influencing the politics of Self- and Other-representation that comprised the flow of question and answer in the interviews. The important point here, though, is not to provide a detailed exegesis of any particular case of misunderstanding, but to recognize the pervasive role that the identity of the interviewer/ethnographer plays in the process he or she is studying. In chapter 4 I turn to an analysis of the structuring of narrative as a way of understanding the dynamics of sociolinguistic research on identity.