



Narrating hyphenated selves: Intergroup contact and configurations of identity among young Palestinian citizens of Israel

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Palestinian citizens of Israel must negotiate disparate identities as they construct a “hyphenated” self. Their status as a national indigenous minority places them in a particular location of subordination and existential insecurity within Israeli society, which has been accentuated during the intensification of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories since 2000. This study examines processes of identity negotiation and reconciliation in the personal narratives of young Palestinian citizens of Israel who participate in intergroup contact with Jewish Israelis and Palestinians from the occupied territories. An interpretive thematic analysis of personal narratives reveals the discursive strategies youth employ as they traverse the limits of hyphenation, constructing configurations of identity that reconcile conflicting discourses. Pre-contact narratives suggested considerable variability in processes of identity negotiation. Post-contact narratives were characterized by three patterns: (1) Palestinian identity accentuation, in which youth came to identify more strongly with their Palestinian national identity over their Israeli civic identity; (2) temporal stability, in which youth whose pre-contact narrative was already characterized by Palestinian identity accentuation maintained that configuration; and (3) life at the hyphen, in which youth actively struggled with and vacillated between states of conflict and integration of their disparate identities.

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1. Introduction

In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Dancing Arabs* (2004), Sayed Kashua’s “anti-hero” protagonist, a young Palestinian citizen of Israel, reflects on his experience at a predominantly Jewish high school.

In twelfth grade I understood for the first time what ‘48 was. That it’s called the War of Independence. In twelfth grade I understood that a Zionist was what we called *Sahyuni*, and it wasn’t a swearword. I knew the word. That’s how we used to curse one another. I’d been sure that a *Sahyuni* was a kind of fat guy, like a bear. Suddenly I understood that Zionism is an ideology. In civics lessons and Jewish history classes, I started to understand that my aunt from Tulkarm is called a refugee, that the Arabs in Israel are called a minority. In twelfth grade I understood that the problem was serious. I understood what a national homeland was, what anti-Semitism was. I heard for the first time about “two thousand years of exile” and how the Jews had fought against the Arabs and the British. . . . In twelfth grade, the kids in my class started running in the parking lot, getting into shape for the army. They were taken to all sorts of installations and training camps, and I received a bus pass and a ticket to the Israel Museum. Sometimes soldiers in uniform came to

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our school to talk with students, and I wasn't allowed to take part. Our teacher always apologized. He was embarrassed to have to tell me it wasn't for me. (pp. 117–118)

As this excerpt from Kashua's novel illustrates, Palestinian citizens of Israel occupy a unique place within Israeli society in which they confront disparate narratives of history, identity, and life course possibility. Simultaneously minority citizens of Israeli society and members of an antagonistic outgroup that the majority Jewish Israeli society continues to fight and to fear (Canetti-Nisim, Ariely, & Halperin, 2008; Frisch, 2005), Palestinian–Israelis¹ must reconcile their conflicting civic and ethnic identities (Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997).

This paper examines the discursive strategies that young Palestinian–Israelis use to reconcile their “liminal,” hyphenated identity status through an analysis of life-story narratives. I call upon Schachter's (2004) notion of identity *configurations* to illustrate the process of identity negotiation as it is embodied in attempts to minimize the inherent conflicts posed by dual identity status. Given the intensification of conflict between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians in both Israel and the occupied territories since the start of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, an examination of identity configurations among contemporary youth reveals the consequences of conflict for individual development. The purpose of the paper is to document the identity configurations of contemporary Palestinian–Israeli youth in relation to intergroup contact with Jewish Israelis and West Bank Palestinians, in order to study identity development as a *process* of personal narrative construction (Hammack, 2008; McLean, 2008; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). In this article, I thus also seek to illustrate the utility of a narrative approach to the study of identity among individuals who occupy a particularly unique “hyphenated” status (e.g., Fine & Sirin, 2007; Lang, 2005).

1.1. *Israel's Palestinian citizens: identity and conflict*

Contemporary Palestinian citizens of Israel represent the roughly 160,000 Palestinians and their descendants who remained in the territory that became Israel in 1948. That is, they were inhabitants of Palestine who did not become refugees beyond the borders of the newly established State of Israel in 1948. Discursively stripped of their Palestinian identity through the creation of a new identity label—“Israeli Arab” (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), the new “Palestinians in Israel” were granted citizenship but were ruled by a military administration until 1966 (Tessler & Grant, 1998). Though they were secured citizenship and its essential benefits following the military administration, there were and continue to be a number of ways in which they are institutionally discriminated against and not equal to Israel's Jewish citizens (Abu-Saad, 2004; Canetti-Nisim et al., 2008; Peleg, 2004; Sa'di, 2004; Tessler & Grant, 1998).

The historical narrative of the Palestinian–Israelis centers on themes of discrimination and subordination within Israeli society, the “double marginality” of a hyphenated identity (Suleiman, 2002a; i.e., stigma from both the larger Jewish and Arab communities), and existential insecurity as a demographic group. Israel's “peculiar” (Sa'di, 2002) character as an “ethnic” Jewish democracy (Smootha, 2002) creates a condition of intrinsic subordination for the Palestinian–Israelis. While the Israeli Proclamation of Independence (1948/2001) does indeed promise to “uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race, or sex” (pp. 82–83), its definition as an ethnic Jewish state automatically creates a hegemonic situation in which Jewish citizens are privileged over Arabs (Ghanem, 1998; Peleg, 2004; Rabinowitz, 2001; Yiftachel, 2000).

Subordinate social status creates a context ripe for discrimination and subordination of the Palestinian–Israelis. Systematic discrimination against the Palestinian citizens has been well-documented, particularly with regard to land expropriation (Elrazik, Amin, & Davis, 1978; Lustick, 1980; Peleg, 2004; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005; Tessler & Grant, 1998), unequal resource allocation compared with Jewish communities (Ghanem, 2002; Hareven, 2002; Peleg, 2004; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), inequalities in education and economic attainment (Abu-Saad, 2004; Al-Haj, 2002; Hareven, 2002; Lustick, 1980; Nasser & Nasser, 2008; Peleg, 2004; Pinson, 2007; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005; Rouhana, 1997; Sa'di, 2002; Tessler & Grant, 1998), differential treatment in the justice system (Peleg, 2004; Sa'di, 2002, 2004), and exclusion from policies and influential aspects of government (Ghanem, 2002; Ghanem & Rouhana, 2001; Hareven, 2002; Peleg, 2004; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005; Rouhana, 1997, 2006; Rouhana & Sultany, 2003; Sa'di, 2002, 2004; Tessler & Grant, 1998). Palestinian–Israelis thus occupy the classic position of a stigmatized minority group in a society in which they can assume limited power and social roles as a consequence of their social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Yet, as a national indigenous minority within a state whose identity excludes them, they are unique relative to ethnic minorities in pluralistic states (Rouhana, 1997).

It is important to note that the subordination of the Palestinian citizens and their exclusion from social institutions such as the army is connected to perceived insecurity among the Jewish majority, particularly with reference to Arabs more generally. In other words, hegemonic relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel is intimately linked to the ongoing conflict that Israel has with several neighboring Arab states and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Comparing attitudes toward Palestinian citizens versus non-Jewish Russian immigrants, Canetti-Nisim et al. (2008) discovered that perceived security threat was the key predictor of exclusionist political attitudes toward these distinct minority groups (see also

¹ I use the term “Palestinian–Israeli” to refer to this population for consistency with other recent scholarship in the social sciences (e.g., Pinson, 2007, 2008; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005). It is important to note that members of this demographic employ a diverse number of labels to describe themselves, which is in fact a major focus of analysis in this article.

Canetti-Nisim & Pedahzur, 2003). Thus it is likely existential insecurity that motivates Jewish Israeli discrimination against Palestinian citizens (see also Pettigrew, 2003). Within the context of collective insecurity among Jewish Israelis, the loyalty of the Palestinian citizens has remained a question that seems to legitimize differential treatment within the state and its institutions.

As a consequence of its place in the matrix of social identities in Israeli society, Palestinian–Israeli identity may be considered a “negative” (Erikson, 1968) or “spoiled” (Goffman, 1963) identity. As an inferior, stigmatized identity, an Arab identity in Israel is automatically “discrediting” (Goffman, 1963). The construction of Israel’s Palestinian citizens in these terms may have served an important role in Israeli society as a clear contrast between Jews and Arabs was necessary to maintain the security and reproduction of the early state (Bar-Tal, 1998). This social psychological process of group distinctiveness is by no means confined to Israeli society and in fact characterizes many contexts (Brewer, 1991; see also Bronfenbrenner, 1961). As Erikson (1968) once stated, “Our God-given identities often live off the degradation of others” (p. 299).

Beyond the condition of a negative, spoiled identity within Israeli society, though, Palestinian–Israelis experience “double marginality” and must reconcile their disparate national and civic identities (Suleiman, 2002a, 2002b; Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997). In this article, I appropriate this common terminology to describe Palestinian–Israeli identity, using “national” to refer to the Palestinian side of the hyphen and “civic” to refer to citizenship status within the Israeli state (e.g., Suleiman, 2002a, 2002b). While the marginalization of Palestinian–Israelis as a minority group is not necessarily unique to the Israeli context of ethnic hegemony, the nature of Palestinian–Israeli history and intergroup relations creates unique challenges for Palestinian–Israeli identity development. The conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians that frames intergroup relations is lived “within” the Palestinian citizens of Israel, as they are stigmatized from within Israeli society for being Arab and from the Arab world for being Israeli citizens.

The identity space that Palestinian–Israelis occupy can thus be characterized as *liminal* (Turner, 1967)—fixed between two highly polarized identities (Hammack, 2006), occupying neither fully. The politics of Palestinian–Israeli identity has been framed by a history of negotiating the boundaries of hyphenation and this liminal place. The study of “hyphenated” identities has increased in the context of the immigration that characterizes our era of globalization and technological innovation (see Deaux, 2006), when the movement of both populations and ideas has been facilitated (Arnett, 2002). In a major study of Muslim–American youth, Sirin and Fine (2008) document the identity challenges faced by this unique group, particularly as they navigate contentious political contexts and the experience of increased discrimination and surveillance following 9/11 (Fine & Sirin, 2007; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Sirin et al., 2008; Zaal, Salah, & Fine, 2007). While most examinations of identity hyphenation have similarly focused on immigrants or ethnic minorities (e.g., Golash-Boza, 2006), the current study is unique in its focus on an indigenous population occupying a place of particular political contention associated with members of a constructed antagonist of the state (i.e., Palestinians in the occupied territories).

The negotiation of the boundaries between national and civic identity has in fact been a focus of scholarship on the Palestinian–Israelis since the end of the military administration in 1966. In Peres and Yuval-Davis’ (1969) study of Palestinian citizens just prior to the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, the majority of participants ranked their self-categorization preferences as follows: (1) Israeli, (2) Israeli–Arab, (3) Arab, (4) Palestinian, and (5) Muslim or Christian. In their follow-up after the war, the ordering had changed significantly: (1) Arab, (2) Muslim or Christian, (3) Israeli–Arab, (4) Palestinian, and (5) Israeli. In 1975, only 12% of the population preferred either the term “Israeli–Palestinian” or “Palestinian–Israeli”; by 1987 the figure had increased to 40% (Smootha, 1988). Since the second intifada and the events of October 2000, in which Palestinian–Israeli political protests were met with lethal force by the state, scholars have suggested that a preference for inclusion of “Palestinian” in identity label continues to increase (e.g., Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005).

The negotiation of a hyphenated identity has thus changed over time for Israel’s Palestinian citizens, depending significantly on the larger Arab–Israeli conflict, Israel’s perceived security, and the nature of Israel’s relationship with the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005) have suggested that the historical contingency of Palestinian–Israeli identity creates distinct generations within this demographic whose processes of identity negotiation diverge considerably. The “Survivor” generation, whose members witnessed firsthand the Palestinian loss of the 1948 war and the subsequent refugee crisis (Morris, 1987), may have accentuated their new Israeli civic identities out of fear. The subsequent generation sought to impact the Israeli political system from within in order to achieve equality within the state (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005). The current generation of Palestinian–Israeli youth—those who entered adolescence during the second Palestinian intifada and thus were significantly affected by the October 2000 events—have been termed the “Stand Tall” generation (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005). This generation stands in marked contrast to prior generations of Palestinian–Israelis for the accentuation of their Palestinian national identities and their political activism.

Drawing on the idea of dual identity development, Smootha (1999) argues that Israel’s Palestinian citizens undergo two parallel socialization processes, which he calls “Israelization” and “Palestinization.” While he argues that Palestinization has increased significantly since the 1967 war, what is most striking about Smootha’s (1999) findings is the extent to which Israelization was demonstrated to have occurred among the Palestinian–Israelis (see Table 1). Smootha’s (1999) survey results reveal a general pattern of Israelization among the Palestinian citizens, with increases in Hebrew language use and fluency, acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state, and acceptance of the Israeli identity label as some component of identity (although “Arab” was also considered in this same question, which complicates interpretation of the results).

Table 1

Indicators of Israelization among Arab citizens of Israel, 1976–1995 (percent). Adapted from Smootha (1999). (*) Indicates question was not asked.

	1976	1980	1985	1988	1995
Speak Hebrew	62.3	69.9	68.8	74.2	80.8
Read Hebrew newspapers	27.1	42.4	49.8	53.1	65.4
Accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish-Zionist state	*	*	37.9	36.8	64.6
Regard Israel's flag as representing themselves	*	*	*	*	71.3
Define self as Palestinian, Palestinian Arab	32.9	25.7	29.2	27.1	10.3
Define self as Israeli, Israeli Arab, Arab	54.7	45.4	32.1	33.2	53.6

Smootha's (1999) data also demonstrate a powerful decrease in self-definition as Palestinian. These data suggest the success of Israelization and the gradual eradication of a strong Palestinian consciousness among the Arab citizens prior to the second intifada. But it is important to note that these data do not extend beyond 1995 and thus do not include the period of the second intifada and the responses of the "Stand Tall" generation, who would have been too young to participate in Smootha's surveys in the 1990s. (Their members were born during the first intifada.) It is also important to bear in mind the historical context of the 1990s as a time when the possibility of genuine peace with the Palestinians and the fulfillment of Palestinian national identity at last seemed to be emerging, which may have impacted these indicators.

In 1997–1998, Schiff (2003) collected life-story narratives of Arab students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He focused specifically on the narration of collective identity among Palestinian–Israelis, examining the relationship between *affiliation* (e.g., "Palestinian," "Western") and *relationships*. He found that (a) Palestinian–Israelis negotiate a number of discourses on affiliation and collective identity and must therefore manage their multiple affiliations, and (b) social relations with Jews appeared to assume a role in processes of affiliation. Using a theoretical and methodological approach similar to that employed in this paper, Schiff (2003) revealed the extent to which young Palestinian–Israelis confront the complexities of hyphenation and construct life stories that reflect the uniqueness of this challenge. The significance of social relations revealed in his data suggests that intergroup contact might possess profound consequences for the development of the life-story narrative. Schiff (2003) concluded that a reduction in power asymmetry between Jews and Arabs might facilitate more social relations between them, which, he argues, would have positive implications for improving intergroup relations in Israel.

In sum, the Palestinian citizens of Israel represent a subordinated minority group in a state characterized by ethnic hegemony (Kimmerling, 2001; Peleg, 2004), framed and maintained by longstanding intergroup antagonism centering on territorial control and mutual recognition. The historical narrative of the Palestinian–Israelis shares general features of both Jewish Israelis (Hammack, 2009b) and Palestinians in the occupied territories (Hammack, *in press*), such as the perception of existential insecurity (Pettigrew, 2003). Yet the Palestinian–Israelis occupy a particularly liminal identity space as citizens of the Jewish state whose national identity is considered a threat to the Israeli state (Canetti–Nisim et al., 2008). In other words, their dual identity as Palestinians in the Jewish state inherently involves conflicting allegiances and complex processes of identity negotiation.

A review of social science research on the Palestinian–Israelis suggests that discrimination, double marginality, and existential insecurity characterize the dominant tropes in their historical narrative. The connection of identity processes to the larger historical context of the intractable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has been well-documented, yet very little scholarship has extensively queried the process of identity negotiation among contemporary youth. Schiff's (2003) study represents a notable exception to this gap in the literature, though his data were collected prior to the second intifada, which has radically altered the sociopolitical context for Palestinian–Israelis. The current study uses a narrative approach to examine the reconciliation of disparate identities among a group of young Palestinian–Israelis living the "weight of the hyphen" (Zaal et al., 2007).

1.2. Narrative and identity integration

The story of subordination and insecurity that frames the experience of the Palestinian citizens of Israel constructs a "master" historical narrative to which individuals are exposed in discourse and cultural practice (Hammack, 2008; McLean, 2008). At the collective level, narratives serve key social psychological functions that contribute to group solidarity (Liu & Hilton, 2005), particularly in contexts of intractable conflict (Bar–Tal, 2007). Narratives legitimize the experience of group members and create a sense of shared destiny (Rotberg, 2006). The concept of narrative is thus central to the study of culture, for narrative offers a tool for *sense-making* that binds a community together through a shared interpretation of reality (Bruner, 1990; Hammack, 2008; Wertsch, 2002, 2008).

The *personal* narrative represents a coherent account of lived experience that provides meaning and purpose to the individual (Cohler, 1982; McAdams, 1988, 1990, 1997). Individuals construct life stories that integrate their life experiences and provide a sense of integrity, fidelity, and solidarity with a collective (Erikson, 1959; McAdams, 2001). The personal narrative thus represents a story that serves individual and social psychological functions for the provision of meaning. This process of narrative identity development begins in adolescence with the growth of awareness in the social environment (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McLean, 2008), and it occurs through social interaction (McLean et al., 2007; Pasupathi, Mansour, & Brubaker, 2007).

The process by which identities develop can be considered in terms of *narrative engagement* (Hammack, 2008). In other words, individuals construct their identities through a dynamic engagement with the discourse on identity available in their social surround (cf. Hammack & Cohler, 2009; Hammack, Thompson, & Pilecki, 2009). Identity development is thus a deeply *social* process that requires the reconciliation of sometimes conflicting discourses and master narratives. In terms of Palestinian–Israeli identity, youth are exposed to competing master narratives, pulled between their education as Israeli citizens in which they learn about Zionism and the history of Jewish persecution in the Diaspora and the Holocaust (e.g., Kashua, 2004) and as Palestinians who inhabit a place of subordination in Israeli society (Abu-Saad, 2004).² The central purpose of the current study was to document the consequences of this exposure to multiple and conflicting master narratives of history and identity for the initial construction of a personal narrative in adolescence.

Schachter's (2004, 2005) concept of *identity configuration* offers a useful theoretical mechanism for the study of identity integration through narrative. Inspired by Erikson's (1959) theory of identity formation as an "evolving configuration," Schachter argues that identity configurations indicate "the different possible ways in which individuals configure the relationship among potentially conflicting identifications in the process of identity formation" (p. 167). In other words, a key process of identity development involves the *reconciliation* and *integration* of conflicting sources of identification, such as master narratives or dominant discourses (Hammack, 2008; Hammack et al., 2009), through the construction of a personal narrative that provides coherence to the individual across the life course (e.g., Cohler, 1982). Thinking of identity as a configuration provides space for conflict within individual life stories, revealing identity development as a dynamic process of human development.

1.3. *Identity and interaction: Jewish–Palestinian contact*

Rather than viewing the narratives of Palestinian–Israeli youth as static renderings of the life story, this study examines the narration of hyphenated identity in relation to the social experience of intergroup contact, thereby viewing identity development as a dynamic process (e.g., McLean et al., 2007; Peacock & Holland, 1993). In this frame, identity is viewed as emergent in and through social interaction and practice (e.g., Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; McCall & Simmons, 1966; Mead, 1934), which provide individuals with the "tools," including discursive resources (Bekerman, 2002), with which to understand themselves and their social realities (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, the identity configurations constructed by contemporary Palestinian–Israeli youth must be examined as narratives in an active state of construction and revision, and this study used the experience of intergroup contact with Jewish Israelis and West Bank Palestinians to query Palestinian–Israeli identity development over time.

Contact between Jewish and Palestinian citizens in Israel has a rich history, with many institutional efforts to promote positive intergroup relations through interpersonal acquaintanceship (see Abu-Nimer, 1999). More recently, scholars have taken a critical approach to studies of intergroup contact in Israel, with greater recognition of the impact of asymmetrical status on the process and outcome of contact (e.g., Bekerman, 2002; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004a, 2004b; Maoz, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001a, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006; Maoz, Bar-On, Bekerman, & Jaber-Massarwa, 2004; Maoz, Bar-On, & Yihya, 2007; Maoz & Ellis, 2001; Maoz, Steinberg, Bar-On, & Fakhereldeen, 2002; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002; Suleiman, 2004).

A hallmark of more recent work on Jewish–Palestinian contact has been an interest in the extent to which the micro-reality of the contact setting reflects the macro-reality of intergroup dynamics, particularly with regard to issues of power and social structure (e.g., Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004a, 2004b; Suleiman, 2004). Much of this work challenges conventional social psychological paradigms of conflict, cooperation, and contact (e.g., Allport, 1954; Sherif, 1958) by revealing the ways in which the larger social structure and identity politics assume a significant role that cannot be "controlled" within a contact setting (e.g., Hammack, 2009a). Maoz's extensive work on Jewish–Palestinian contact within Israel provides a vital window into the process of power and identity negotiation in such encounters (e.g., Maoz, 2000b, 2000c). Maoz has found that, although Palestinians use classic strategies of minority influence (Maoz, 2000c), Jewish Israelis seek to dominate such dialogues (Maoz, 2001a; Maoz et al., 2004), and even the basic agenda for such encounters is a point of significant competition (Maoz, 2000b), reflecting the larger struggle for dominance and control between groups (see also Maoz, 2005). Thus, for Palestinian–Israelis, contact likely activates a process of identity exploration in which they must confront issues of subordination and hyphenation.

The experience of dialogue-based contact between Jewish and Palestinian Israelis may be particularly central to identity development, as these dialogues tend to be framed by discourses of "nation" and "culture" that *require* individuals to make decisions about their identifications (Bekerman, 2002; see also Bekerman & Maoz, 2005). In a study of a Jewish–Palestinian dialogue group in Israel, Steinberg and Bar-On (2002) found that changes in the discourse from "ethnocentric" talk to a "dialogic moment" occurred—a moment characterized by greater equality and reciprocity. Yet the continuing power asymmetry in Israeli civic society (Rouhana & Fiske, 1995; Rouhana & Korper, 1997), in which Jewish citizens are favored and Pales-

² It is important to note that youth are not evenly pulled toward these narratives. Rouhana (1997) distinguishes between *sentimental* and *instrumental* identification among the Palestinian citizens. Sentimental identification is linked to an emotional response based on solidarity with Palestinians in the occupied territories, whereas instrumental identification concerns the desire for rights and inclusion within the Israeli state. See also Mavroudi's (2007) study of Palestinian citizens of Greece.

tinians are marginalized, complicates the maintenance of such dialogic experiences into everyday interaction (Abu-Nimer & Lazarus, 2007).

Interestingly, research on Israeli–Palestinian contact has *either* focused on contact between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians from the occupied territories *or* between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel. To my knowledge, no studies have investigated contact among members of all three of these demographics simultaneously. The current study is thus unique in its examination of the narratives of Palestinian–Israeli youth who have undergone such contact. It is likely that such tri-group encounters possess slightly different dynamics than Jewish–Palestinian encounters in Israel, given that the Palestinian–Israelis are faced with a particular competition of discourses about conflict and identity that are likely to present unique challenges for the narration of a hyphenated self.

1.4. The current study

The current study represents an examination of the life stories of contemporary Palestinian–Israeli youth in relation to their participation in intergroup contact. Following a theoretical and methodological approach that is both *idiographic* and *interpretive* (Allport, 1937; Hammack, 2008; Tappan, 1997), I analyze the narration of a hyphenated identity for young Palestinian–Israelis. My intent is to examine existing speculations on the shifting “weight” of the hyphen (from *Israeli* to *Palestinian*) among members of the “Stand Tall” generation (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005) through a process of “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of individual life stories in the early stages of their construction. Such an endeavor preserves the integrity of individual voices as it illuminates the relationship between individual experience and a larger social structure, with its matrix of social identities, thereby studying individuals within the power relations that frame their experience (Gjerde, 2004; Tappan, 2005).

Given that the current study is concerned primarily with “thick description” rather than hypothesis testing, I sought to remain open to the potential “anomalies” (Kuhn, 1962) that might arise from the personal narratives of youth. That is, I attempted to conduct my fieldwork, interviews, and data analysis open to unexpected findings and without hypotheses, consistent with a general grounded theory approach (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, the literature on Palestinian–Israeli identity development suggested a number of important narrative themes to explore in the life stories of youth, as well as possible configurations that might characterize personal narratives. Thus I interweaved inductive and deductive modes of analysis, treating each life story as a unified text.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The current sample was taken from a larger study of intergroup contact between Israeli and Palestinian youth. Twelve Palestinian–Israeli participants were selected from two American-based contact programs. Of the 12, five were randomly selected in one program in 2003 and 2004, and the other seven consisted of all Palestinian–Israeli participants in 2004 and 2005 in another program. Demographic details are presented in Table 2.

The participants represent a non-representative sample of Palestinian–Israeli youth on at least two indicators. First, they were all motivated to pursue dialogue with Jewish Israelis and Palestinians from the occupied territories, which suggests an immediate interest in peace through non-violent means and perhaps an interest in identity exploration through exposure to members of the two groups between whom they are positioned. Second, they are all proficient English speakers, as was required for participation in the two contact programs, given that English represented the “common” language between them. Although education in the English language begins at a very young age in Israel (for both Jewish and Palestinian citizens), and thus proficiency in English is common, the English skills of the current sample suggest a high level of educational achievement.

Table 2
Demographic details of participants.

Pseudonym	Sex	T1 age	Geographic locale	Religion	T1 interview	T2 interview
Ahmed	Male	14	Village	Muslim	5/2004	6/2005
Haya	Female	14	Village	Muslim	6/2004	6/2005
Jibril	Male	15	Village	Muslim	6/2003	5/2004
Laila	Female	16	Village	Muslim	6/2003	5/2004
Lana	Female	15	Urban	Muslim/Christian	5/2004	6/2005
Lina	Female	17	Village/urban	Christian	6/2005	8/2006
Miriam	Female	16	Urban	Christian	5/2004	6/2005
Nizar	Male	15	Village	Muslim	6/2004	5/2005
Rania	Female	15	Village	Muslim	6/2003	12/2005
Rashid	Male	16	Village/urban	Druze	6/2005	6/2007
Salma	Female	15	Urban	Christian	6/2005	6/2007
Sami	Male	16	Urban	Christian	5/2004	6/2005

Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the research, the use of a non-representative sample is not problematic, as my intent is not to generalize to the entire population of Palestinian–Israelis. Rather, in examining the process of narrative engagement among this unique group, I wish to explore the theoretical questions outlined in the introduction and to stimulate further scholarship on the “Stand Tall” generation of Palestinian–Israelis (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005). It is my hope that the strategies employed in this analysis can be expanded with a larger and more representative sample of youth.

Despite its non-representative nature, the sample does indeed reflect the diversity of Palestinian–Israelis in terms of religious identity and geographic locale. Of the 12 youth, 6 identified as Muslim, 4 as Christian, 1 as Druze, and 1 as Muslim/Christian (with the father being Muslim). Six of the youth resided in a village, while four resided in a large urban context and two resided in a village but commuted to an urban setting for school.

2.2. Interview procedure and protocol

This field study relied upon ethnographic and interview methods. Youth were interviewed either at the very start of their participation in the contact program in the United States ($n=4$) or in Israel approximately 1 month prior to their participation in contact ($n=6$). Two youth were interviewed only after, rather than prior to, contact (Laila and Miriam), though a longitudinal design was still adopted for these two youth, such that all participants completed two interviews over a 3-year span. These two youth were excluded from the present analysis because of the lack of pre-contact interview data.

A modified version of McAdams' (1995) Life Story Interview (LSI) was administered longitudinally. Participants were initially instructed to “draw a line that represents your life, with its ups and downs reflecting good times and bad times.” This initial procedure, similar to Runyan's (1980) Life Satisfaction Chart, provided participants with the opportunity to construct the form of their present personal narratives. Prior to the administration of the formal protocol, participants were invited to tell their life stories using the life-line drawing.

The LSI contains questions about basic demographic data as well as the “chapters” that make up one's life and critical life events such as peak experience, nadir, and turning points. There are also numerous questions about sources of social reference and personal/political ideology. A number of questions were added to specifically tap the identity configurations of Palestinian–Israeli youth, including questions about preferred identity label and sense of connection to the Israeli state or to the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The LSI was administered at more than one data point for all participants. The most typical interview pattern involved administration of the LSI prior to or at the immediate start of contact and then approximately 1 year later. In some cases, though, the second LSI occurred beyond 1 year post-contact. The dates of LSI administration are indicated in Table 2. Interviews were conducted in English and lasted from 45 min to 2 h. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

2.3. The field setting

Though the focus of this analysis is on the personal narratives of youth before and after formal participation in the contact program, and thus not explicitly on the process of dialogue-based contact itself, it is useful to know something about the contact experience participants underwent. Youth participated in either the Seeds of Peace program in rural Maine or the Hands of Peace program in suburban Chicago, Illinois. As I have described elsewhere (e.g., Hammack, 2009a), the philosophical underpinnings of these program curricula are rooted in classic social psychological approaches to intergroup contact (e.g., Allport, 1954; Brewer & Miller, 1984), in which the goal is to reduce prejudice through activating processes of personalization and decategorization, largely by promoting cross-group friendship (Pettigrew, 1998). Consistent with more recent social psychological theories of intergroup contact designed to speak to the context of multiculturalism (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), the primary aim of both programs is to foster a sense of “superordinate,” common identity among participants, such that they come to “transcend” the divisiveness of their polarized ingroup identities (Hammack, 2006). While these interventions are modeled upon the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), it is dubious that the conditions of optimal intergroup contact are indeed met, given that the asymmetrical conflict between Israelis and Palestinians remains intractable and ongoing (see Hammack, 2009a).

What is most important about this particular contact experience for Palestinian–Israeli youth is that the emphasis on a common, superordinate identity, which infuses all aspects of the programs (Hammack, 2009a), intentionally avoids recognition of power asymmetries between groups, thus discouraging such dialogue. In other words, the emphasis on *sameness* that occurs in the program favors the group in power (i.e., Jewish Israelis) by avoiding confrontation and thus reproducing, rather than challenging, the status quo (see Suleiman, 2004). More recently, this approach to contact has been repudiated in Israel for being too connected to the unique American context of intergroup relations (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004a), from which social psychological theories of contact admittedly emerged in the mid-twentieth century (Hammack, 2009a).

2.4. Analytic strategy

Each personal narrative was subject to thematic content analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) in which the three dominant themes related to the master narrative of Palestinian–Israeli identity (i.e., discrimination and subordination, double marginality, and existential insecurity) were coded in each interview. Themes related to identity configuration (e.g., civic identity accentuation) were also coded within each interview. The small sample size allowed me to blend a holistic

approach to narrative analysis in which the integrity of a whole narrative is maintained with a categorical approach that considered narrative elements across a group of cases (Lieblich et al., 1998).

I thus viewed contemporary Palestinian–Israeli identity development vis-à-vis intergroup contact as an empirical *question* to be probed for its implications for other situations of conflict and identity complexity. As a “stranger” (Simmel, 1971) with no personal connection to or investment in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the outcome of this question bore no implications for me, and thus I believe I was able to remain open to the empirical realities that emerged in the narratives of youth. In addition, my outsider status likely maximized the honesty of youth, as our interactions lacked the potential pressure of identification that might occur with either a Jewish or Palestinian investigator.

3. Findings

3.1. Pre-contact findings: master narrative themes

3.1.1. Discrimination and subordination

Across pre-contact interviews, there was considerable variability in the presence of themes related to discrimination and subordination. Excerpts from three interviews illustrate.

Jibril, a 15-year-old Muslim from a village between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, discusses how anti-Arab discrimination has increased in Israel since the beginning of the second intifada in 2000.

Before the intifada, we would go to the Jewish cities, there was freedom. But since the intifada, the people in the Jewish cities do not accept Arabs. They think all the Arabs are terrorists. So when we went to this one Jewish city, about 15 people attacked us, my family. Fortunately, there was a police car there, and they stopped them. And after the intifada, the relationship between Arabs and Jews changed so much.

This episode in Jibril’s narrative reveals the extent to which he perceived his own status within Israeli society as inherently “spoiled” (Goffman, 1963) and perceived as threatening by the Jewish majority (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2008).

One of the most common stories of discrimination centered on travel outside of Israel. Rania, a 14-year-old Muslim from a small village in northern Israel, describes this experience.

It’s not difficult to travel from Israel. Although when we traveled [to the U.S.], from the Israeli airport, they took the Arabs, and looked through all our bags. And the others just went through.

The experience of Palestinian–Israelis in contexts like the airport serves to remind them of their subordinate status relative to Jewish citizens (Khalidi, 1997), thus embedding within their life stories an identification with the master narrative theme of discrimination. Yet, Rania’s acknowledgment that she *can* travel from Israel positions her narrative in a place of relative privilege vis-à-vis the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

More broadly, young Palestinian–Israelis discuss the absence of equal rights for Arabs in Israel. Haya, a 14-year-old Muslim from a village between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, argues passionately about this issue in her personal narrative:

As Arab-Israelis, we don’t get our full rights as the Jews do. . . . There’s a lot of stuff, let’s talk about the army stuff. We don’t go to the army, so there are universities and jobs that don’t accept people who don’t work at the army, and they use it—for a job, let’s say, or a university, or for studying some subject—they say, “You have to serve in the army,” or stuff. They sometimes use it to say, “If you’re Arab-Israeli, don’t come.”

Similar to many other discussions of discrimination in the narratives of youth, Haya describes an experience very common to young Palestinian citizens as they seek employment or to pursue a particular course of study. Military service represents a critical rite of passage for Jewish citizens (Kimmerling, 2001; Seginer, 1999), and the exclusion of Arab citizens from this rite automatically places them in a place of subordinate status in the larger society.

3.1.2. Double marginality

Key to the master narrative of Palestinian–Israeli identity is the lived experience of hyphenation through the recognition of double marginality (e.g., Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997)—that one’s identity is discreditable in *both* Jewish Israeli and Palestinian communities by virtue of its hyphenated status. Relative to other major themes of the master narrative, explicit acknowledgment of double marginality was less common among the youth in this study.

Salma, a 15-year-old from a large city, describes the sense of *multiple* marginality as a young Christian Palestinian–Israeli.

I think being Christian is like, when Jews or Americans, or people in the world, think about the Palestinian terrorists, or who they think they are terrorists because they are doing suicide bombing, they think that these men are Muslims, just Muslims. . . . I think being Christians it’s being in the middle, because Jews are like, they think those that commit suicide are Muslims, and they are all that are making the problems in the conflict. So I’m in the middle. I feel stuck in the middle between both sides. Not only as a Christian as a person too. . . . Because I don’t live in Palestine, and I don’t suffer like all of them. And I’m not a Jew. . . . so I’m like stuck in the middle. . . . I feel empty with this. . . .

For youth like Salma, hyphenation is not simply a “binary” matter in which she is caught between the national poles of Israel and Palestine. Rather, as a minority *within* a minority, her narrative is characterized by its recognition of multiple

marginality. She locates her identity in a place of “emptiness” because it is neither fully Palestinian nor Israeli, nor, by implication, Palestinian–Israeli.

In discussing her decisions of how to identify herself at the contact program, Rania describes the reaction of her peers.

... When you say you're Palestinian, the Israelis say, “No you're not. You came with our delegation. You have to say you're Israeli.” But if you say you're Israeli, the Palestinians say, “How can you say you're Israeli? You want to give up your rights?”

Young Palestinian–Israelis traverse the impact of double marginality as they begin to make decisions about their identity configurations. The fact that most of the youth were less explicit about the immediate impact of double marginality may be related to the fact that, as adolescents, they are only beginning to construct integrative life stories (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1996, 2001). As indicated below, findings related to their current identity configurations clearly reveal the complex psychosocial dynamics of life at the hyphen.

3.1.3. *Existential insecurity*

Across pre-contact interviews, youth described a number of instances of existential insecurity. Youth discussed two distinct sources of existential insecurity: (1) threat from the Jewish majority and state forces, and (2) threat from the possibility of a Palestinian attack.

Existential insecurity at the hands of the state is prominent in Rania's narrative, as the October 2000 events have affected her life story intimately. When asked whether she had seen any violent acts related to the conflict, Rania narrated her experience of the October events, in which 13 Palestinian citizens were killed as they were participating in a protest.

It started with a demonstration, and that's when [my cousin] was killed. From my home, you could see everything, mountains of people. I didn't see anyone get shot, but I heard them. The first one was a guy in the village, dead immediately. Then we heard another shot. We thought it was someone else, and then we realized that it was [my cousin]. When the demonstration started, I just had this strange feeling that something bad's gonna happen. When I saw the policemen and the soldiers, I was convinced that something bad was gonna happen, and it happened.

This major life experience for Rania creates a powerful sense of collective insecurity. The recognition that one is not only a member of a subordinate minority but also one that the state is willing to use brutal force against inherently positions the personal narrative as insecure. The nature of this asymmetrical encounter (Maoz, 2001b) affirms the hegemonic nature of intergroup relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel (Peleg, 2004).

Lina, a 17-year-old Christian who commutes from a village to a large city everyday for school, describes the sense of insecurity at the possibility of a Palestinian attack in Israel.

My friend was in a suicide bombing—but she was hurt, but she didn't die. . . . Up until this point, I didn't think about the suicide bombings that were dangerous, and it was real in this country. And it was closer to us than I thought. As Arabic-Israeli, I didn't think they will bomb us—like we are on their side. But now it's everywhere.

Though the experience of existential insecurity at the hands of the state represents the major focus in research on the collective Palestinian–Israeli experience (e.g., Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), it is clear from the narratives of youth like Lina that the possibility of a Palestinian attack also configures Palestinian–Israeli life stories in a place of insecurity.

3.2. *Pre-contact findings: identity configurations*

The pre-contact narratives of youth were coded for identity-related content that suggested four processes: (1) Israeli civic identity accentuation, (2) Palestinian national identity accentuation, (3) civic-national identity integration, and (4) civic-national identity conflict. The pre-contact identity configurations of youth revealed multiple and varied responses to identity hyphenation. The narratives of youth revealed the process of identity development among contemporary Palestinian–Israeli youth as substantially more diverse than suggested by research that has focused on more collective processes (e.g., Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005). I will present evidence from the narratives of youth to reveal their multiple strategies for identity negotiation.

3.2.1. *Israeli civic identity accentuation*

As Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue in their classic treatise on social identity theory, one strategy to elevate the status of one's social identity is to attempt *individual mobility*—a strategy that typically involves an attempt to abandon one's subordinate group in order to assimilate into the majority group. Youth who favor the Israeli weight of the hyphen and thus accentuate their identity as Israeli citizens over and above their Palestinian identities appear to be engaged in this strategy.

The narratives of two youth in the current study suggest the use of an individual mobility strategy in response to subordination. Jibril's pre-contact narrative illustrates.

I'm an Israeli citizen. I live in Israel, I come from Israel! . . . School is run by the Israeli government, so not everybody can say, “I'm a Palestinian living in Israel,” cause they'll kick them out. They work for the Israeli government! When somebody says, “I'm Palestinian,” it's because somebody has told them, “You are Palestinian living in Israel. You must

remember your brothers who have been killed,” or something like this. And this happened with me. . . . [A Palestinian from the territories] came and asked me, “Who are you?” I said, “I’m Jibril. . . .” “Where are you from?,” they said. I said, “I’m from Israel. I’m Arab.” He said, “How can you say you’re from Israel?! You’re a Palestinian!” I said, “No. I’m Israeli!” He said, “You forgot your brothers; you forgot what the Jews did to us.” These kinds of things, this doesn’t help make peace. This makes it harder! . . . All these people, they say they didn’t know that there were any Arabs living in Israel. This is really hard for me.

This excerpt from Jibril’s narrative reveals a dynamic process of identity negotiation, characterized by a decision to accentuate his civic identity as an Israeli and to minimize his identification as a Palestinian. The fact that he situates his decision within fear of the state and its institutions is significant in that it reveals that Jibril adopts a strategy of individual mobility within the existing power structure. That is, he does not seek to *contest* Jewish hegemony but rather to live his life within it. Not surprisingly, Jibril prefers the identity label “Arab-Israeli” to one that contains reference to his Palestinian heritage.

Compared with other youth in this study, Jibril’s narrative is atypical in the extent to which civic identity accentuation explicitly dominates its content. Civic identity accentuation is also apparent when youth seem to adopt an interpretive frame more consistent with Jewish Israelis than Palestinians from the occupied territories. The best examples of this process occur when youth offer interpretations of suicide bombing and of the history of the conflict.

Sami, a 16-year-old Christian from a large city, offers an historical account of the conflict that more closely resembles a Jewish Israeli version (see Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006; Hammack, 2009b).

And then, after the Balfour Declaration, after the British occupation, the Jews started coming from all over the world. They came here and settled here, and this was the starting of the Independence War in 1948, when a lot of Palestinians fled out of the country, including some of my family members. . . . And then we had the ‘67 war, when Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, I think, attacked, at once, Israel. Israel had to defend the territory, and some of them they have taken them, territories from the other countries.

Sami’s historical account of the two most significant wars in Israel’s history—the 1948 war and the 1967 war—appropriates discourse more in line with the Jewish Israeli master narrative of those events than the Palestinian narrative. While Jewish Israelis refer to 1948 as the “War of Independence,” Palestinians refer to it as *al-Nakba* (“the Catastrophe”) (Hammack, 2008, *in press*; Jawad, 2006; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). While the Jewish Israeli master narrative often frames the refugees as having fled willingly in 1948 (as Sami’s narrative suggests), the Palestinian master narrative emphasizes their forced evacuation (see Abdel-Nour, 2004; Morris, 1987; Pappé, 2006; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). In addition, Sami’s notion that the 1967 war was provoked by an actual military assault is not historically accurate but is consistent with the Jewish Israeli emphasis on that war as a pre-emptive “defensive” offense (e.g., Eban, 2001).

Though youth such as Sami seem to possess identity configurations that lean toward an accentuation of civic identity, pre-contact configurations reveal a preliminary process of identity *negotiation*, rather than any definitive commitment to a particular configuration. In other words, the life stories of youth suggest strategies that seek to blend the relative weights of each hyphen. There are ways in which they appropriate discourse at odds with the Palestinian master narrative of history and identity (Hammack, *in press*) and favor instead an interpretation consistent with their Israeli civic identities or some improvised combination. Jibril is the only participant whose pre-contact configuration is clearly characterized by civic identity accentuation. This general trend away from civic identity accentuation is consistent with recent scholarship on this generation of Palestinian citizens (e.g., Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005).

3.2.2. *Palestinian national identity accentuation*

Consistent with the master narrative of contemporary Palestinian–Israeli identity, which suggests a growing process of “Palestinization” among youth of the Stand Tall generation (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), four of the 10 youth appeared to have pre-contact identity configurations characterized by the accentuation of their Palestinian identities. In other words, the weight of their hyphens leaned much more toward the Palestinian than the Israeli.

Rania offers a clear example of this process as she describes her decision to identify as “Palestinian,” rejecting the Israeli side of her hyphenated identity entirely.

I had a war with myself. To make peace, you have to go to war with yourself. And I made it, and I think I made the right choice. One time I sat and I asked myself, how should I answer if someone asks me that question—where I’m from, who I am? In my village, I go to the Jewish stores, but I can’t buy things there. I don’t feel right. . . . I am with the Palestinians. I understand how they feel. . . . Even if I say I from Israel, I can’t lie to my heart, to say I’m not Palestinian. So I made that choice, to say I’m Palestinian.

Rania’s narrative of coming to identify exclusively as Palestinian illustrates the “Palestinization” of the Stand Tall generation, particularly when we also consider her experience of the October events and the loss of her cousin at the hands of the state.

Lana is a 15-year-old from a large city whose father is Muslim and mother is Christian. Her pre-contact narrative, like Rania’s, suggests a configuration in which the Palestinian side of her hyphen is accentuated.

I was aware [of] political issues, but at . . . the beginning of eighth grade, I became aware of the [Palestinian] cause. I began to read books about political issues. . . . and to look at the news and the Internet. . . . And, for example, I went [to the] *Nakba* Day, and the Land Day. . . . And I think that the conflict made me more aware of what's happening. . . .

Lana's accentuation of her Palestinian identity is connected to her participation in commemorative practices related to the Palestinian–Israeli master narrative—the 2 days in which the experience of loss and injustice is memorialized. She currently identifies as “Palestinian,” thus abandoning the Israeli side of her hyphen entirely.

Lana's identity configuration influences both her historical interpretation of the conflict as well as an imagined trajectory toward peace.

[After the British Mandate,] the Jewish people came to settle in Palestine, and there was the agreement of Balfour, when they say that even [though] the Arabs are the majority, they give [the Arabs] the small [amount of land]. . . . [The Israelis] should leave the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Their armies should leave now. . . . The refugees should come back, . . . and not just from the West Bank, from Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, everywhere. . . . The Palestinian people, what they really want is to get all their rights and to be [in] their homeland. . . . I say that we should stop mak[ing] the Palestinian people suffer, and the settlements should leave, and the refugees should come back.

Lana's account of both the past and future of the conflict closely resembles that of a Palestinian, rather than Jewish Israeli, master narrative of the conflict (Hammack, 2009b, *in press*). Viewing the Jewish inhabitants as settlers who were unjustly awarded a greater share of the land represents a classic interpretation in line with the Palestinian master narrative (e.g., Hammack, *in press*; Jawad, 2006; Rodinson, 1973). Lana's envisioned settlement, with the repatriation of refugees so central, also clearly mirrors the Palestinian master narrative, with its unremitting focus on the refugee issue (Abdel-Nour, 2004; Hammack, *in press*).

The pre-contact narratives of Lana and Rania illustrate the way in which young Palestinian citizens appropriate a discourse and ideological perspective that accentuates the commitment to a Palestinian identity, with implications for their own processes of self-identification and political engagement. It is particularly noteworthy that the narratives of Lana, Rania, and Haya contained no evidence of a commitment to their Israeli civic identities at all, and these three young women reside in three entirely distinct locales in the country (a large city in the north, a village in the north, and a village in the center).

3.2.3. *Integrated versus conflicted configurations*

While I have thus far presented pre-contact identity configurations along a binary that involves the accentuation of one side of the hyphen over another, the nature of identity negotiation is far more fluid and complex than that dichotomy suggests. In other words, youth did not simply provide statements that could be coded along this binary; their narratives provided clear evidence of an ongoing *process* of identity negotiation that embodied instances of both conflict and integration.

Rashid, a 16-year-old Druze who lives in a small village but commutes to a large city for school, identifies as a “Palestinian–Israeli” but explains the internal conflict a hyphenated identity creates.

Look at where we are living in! We are living in the middle of the conflict. The Arabs that live in Israel, the conflict that they are living, it's much bigger. We are Arabs. We should be with the Palestinians, but we are living in Israel. We are living the daily [life in Israel]. . . . It's not easy to grow in a country when someone is telling you, “You're Israeli, you're born an Israeli.” And the other guy says, “You're Arab, you talk Arabic, you speak like Arabs.”

Rashid may be in a particular place of identity conflict, given that the Druze inhabit a very unique identity status in Israel: they are the only Arabs who are mandated to serve in the military and are generally fiercely loyal to the state (Kaufman, 2004). Thus Rashid's accentuated Palestinian identity marginalizes him within his home community.

Lina expresses similar frustrations about the way in which her hyphenated identity creates considerable conflict.

I'm stuck in the middle. I hear the Israelis making up excuses for their attacking of Palestinians, and the Palestinians' excuses for the suicide bombing, but I don't really think that each hear what the other side has to say. I think both of them are guilty, the same. So I think they should forget the past, start a new chapter in the conflict.

Lina recognizes that her hyphenated identity allows her to see the way in which both Jewish Israelis and Palestinians bear mutual responsibility for the conflict, yet she interprets this identity position as more of a burden than a benefit in her current life-story narrative.

In contrast to the narratives of Rashid and Lina, two youth narrated life stories that revealed a measure of *integration* of their civic and national identities. Nizar, a 15-year-old Muslim from a village in central Israel, describes the way in which a liminal identity status can confer significant advantage in the conflict.

I'm not on the Israeli side, and I'm not on the Palestinian side. I'm kind of in the middle. I think I'm a bridge between the two sides, keep the peace. I think the Israelis made a mistake when they occupied all the land in Palestine. And the Palestinians are wrong with their freedom fighters or what the world called them, terrorists.

Like Lina, Nizar's narrative reveals the belief that both Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are to blame for the absence of peace. But unlike Lina, Nizar clearly views his own status as a possible benefit in the larger process of reconciliation. He sees his

potential role as a “bridge” to “keep the peace,” given that he is able to transcend the polarized narratives that maintain the conflict (Hammack, 2006; Kelman, 1999).

Haya’s pre-contact narrative also reveals considerable evidence of integration as she negotiates the differential weights of the hyphen.

Well, it’s my fact, and I can’t change it. I was born in Israel. I have an Israeli passport, identity card and all that stuff. I belong in some way to everything in Israel. But if I look back in history, I just can find that I’m a Palestinian. . . .As a human, I just see that both sides are so wrong, I’m sorry for that, but the government needs to stop. . . . [I never see my identity as a negative], because everything in my life is just so good, because. . . I get to look at both sides. It’s not about just the conflict. It’s about my information about the cultures. And not just like the language. I can speak three languages—Hebrew, Arabic, and English too. It’s like a bridge between two nations. . . .

Like Nizar, Haya views her hyphenated identity as a personal asset in allowing her to see the mutual injustices that reproduce the conflict. She views her multicultural, multilingual identity as a “bridge between nations,” thus possibly contributing to conflict reduction in the future.

3.3. *Pre-contact findings: summary*

The narratives of youth collected pre-contact reveal the myriad ways in which young Palestinian citizens creatively respond to a hyphenated and potentially spoiled identity. Themes associated with the master narrative of collective identity, such as discrimination, existential insecurity, and double marginality, are clearly reproduced in the narratives of youth, revealing the way in which collective discourses of history and identity become affirmed in lived experience. Consistent with recent formulations of the consequences of a shifting sociopolitical context for Palestinian–Israeli identity development (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), the narratives of four youth were clearly configured toward accentuation of their Palestinian national identities over and above their Israeli civic identities. However, the fact that some narratives were configured in ways that either accentuated civic identity (e.g., Jibril) or suggested integration (e.g., Haya) revealed the extent to which contemporary youth are exposed to multiple and competing discourses of identity in the course of their development and actively make decisions about appropriation and repudiation (cf. Cohler & Hammack, 2007). As they strive to construct identities that provide meaning, purpose, and coherence (Cohler, 1982; McAdams, 1990, 1997), youth engage with multiple narratives and are in a constant process of selective appropriation.

The recognition of identity as a *process*, rather than solely a *product*, of human development mandates methods that can query the life story at several points in time (Peacock & Holland, 1993), since a single telling is itself a socially constructed moment (Mishler, 1986, 2004). In the next section, I consider the life story at a second telling for each youth—from 1 to 2 years following intergroup contact with Americans, Jewish Israelis, and Palestinians from the occupied territories—in order to chart the development of the personal narrative over time and in relation to a major life experience designed to expose youth to significant identity diversity.

3.4. *Post-contact findings*

An analysis of the change in personal narratives over time reveals identity as a dynamic process of human development. In particular, a longitudinal analysis of life stories gives voice to the process of *narrative engagement* that all youth undergo as they develop an awareness of the sociopolitical ecology of development (see Cohler & Hammack, 2007; Erikson, 1968; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). In the case of Palestinian–Israeli youth, it was clear that no single pattern emerged through the longitudinal analysis, but rather a variety of processes that I will illustrate through the voices of youth.

3.4.1. *From Israeli to Palestinian*

The narratives of four youth (Jibril, Nizar, Rashid, and Salma) suggested a process of shifting the weight of the hyphen from Israeli to Palestinian over time. These youth seemed to move away from some measure of civic identity accentuation toward a commitment to their cultural identities as Palestinians.

The evolution of Jibril’s narrative offers an excellent example of this process. Recall that his pre-contact narrative was characterized by an unusual degree of civic identity accentuation. I suggested that he was using a classic strategy of individual mobility (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to try to elevate his status within the matrix of intergroup relations by rejecting his Palestinian identity. One year after contact, he offers the following reflection:

I feel now I understand where I am on the map in this conflict. Now I understand that I’m Palestinian, and how important that is. After I came together with everyone involved, Palestinians, Israelis, other Arab-Isrealis like me, I realize I’m more Palestinian than Israeli. The Palestinians understand me, and I understand them. I side with them cause I’m Palestinian, and now I have a better sense of that.

Key to the shifting of his hyphen away from his Israeli identity are his experiences with anti-Arab discrimination and existential insecurity post-contact.

I feel I am more Palestinian because [the Palestinians] stand with me and they support me. So after the Seeds of Peace I feel more Palestinian than Israeli. You know, Avigdor Lieberman, the Knesset member, he said that in a few years, Bnei Sachnin [the first Arab soccer team to win the Israeli national cup] will be...in Shechem [Hebrew name for Nablus]. That means that the team will be in Nablus. So, there is no one in Palestine saying that thing about the Jews. It was Jews saying this about the Arab-Israelis. [That makes me] feel separated from the Israelis. If I said, in the news, I want to kick all the Jews out in the sea, everybody will be against me, but if one of them says like this. . . .

In this excerpt from his narrative, Jibril makes a direct connection between his experience of collective insecurity as a subordinated minority in Israel and his new configuration of identity. For Jibril, the contact experience and his growing sociopolitical awareness as a subordinated minority appear to converge to tip the weight of his hyphen away from the Israeli toward the Palestinian.

3.4.2. *Between integration and conflict*

For two youth (Haya and Sami), the most notable shift in their post-contact narratives centered on the frequency of statements that suggested either integration or conflict of their hyphenated identities. For Haya, the shift was from greater integration pre-contact to greater conflict post-contact.

It's really hard, . . . because it's not like we're comfortable with our situation in Israel, but we won't be comfortable in our situation in Palestine. It's just like we're in the middle, and we have to give us our own country or something. . . . In Israel, we are not liked, we don't have [rights]. . . . Some [Palestinians]. . . see Arab-Israelis as not Palestinians or as not Arabs anymore, and it's really annoying. But it's like, from the Jewish side, they see us as Palestinians or Arabs. It's like a whole mess.

Connected to her growing awareness of double marginality, Haya's narrative contains far more indication of a conflict at the hyphen of her identity, rather than the integration she had displayed pre-contact.

In contrast to Haya, Sami's narrative reveals the opposite pattern, of a shift from conflict toward greater integration post-contact.

[In the last year,] I started to build my own identity. . . . And now I'm trying new things, I'm taking a step ahead, taking the risk, maybe. And these are things that are building my personality. So, I'm still building myself, trying to put together all the pieces, all the opinions.

Sami begins his post-contact narrative with this reflective statement of his identity development process, and this opening statement suggests a strong desire for identity integration, from the fragmentation of hyphenation to the coherence and wholeness of integration. In reflecting specifically on the contact experience, Sami says,

[Before contact,] I wasn't aware of all the things that were happening on the Palestinian side. Because of all the people's stories, I related more to the Palestinian side, but it didn't weaken my connection to Israel. I'm still a citizen. I still know Jewish people. I think that my connection to the Palestinian side grew stronger, because I didn't have any face-to-face connection before. The Jewish people, I see them in the streets, I hear the news, I speak the language.

Sami interprets contact as enhancing his connection to Palestinians while not necessarily weakening his connection to Jewish Israelis. As a consequence of contact and his experiences in the year after contact, Sami now positions his identity in a delicate state of balance, seeking to live as comfortably as possible *at* the hyphen.

3.4.3. *Temporal stability*

At least two youth—two whose pre-contact configurations suggested an accentuated Palestinian identity—narrated life stories that were relatively similar at the two time points. The narratives of both Lana and Rania were characterized by relative stability over time in terms of their appropriation of master narrative themes and their identity configurations, though Rania reported more instances of discrimination post-contact. It is noteworthy that both of these youth identified as “Palestinian” both before and after contact, thus reporting no identification whatsoever with their Israeli civic identities.

4. Discussion

Israel's Palestinian citizens occupy a uniquely liminal place of identity hyphenation. As the trajectory of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians endures, so too does the struggle for identity negotiation and integration among young Palestinian–Israelis. Though a subject of social science inquiry since the 1960s (e.g., Peres & Yuval-Davis, 1969), a vast literature about the identity status and collective experience of the Palestinian citizens has emerged since the 1990s (e.g., Louër, 2003; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005; Rouhana, 1997). This work suggests that, as a collective, Israel's Palestinian citizens are increasingly tipping the weight of their hyphenated identities toward the Palestinian, rejecting the state's attempts at subordination and delegitimization (e.g., Nasser & Nasser, 2008; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to provide voice to young Palestinian–Israelis in the process of identity reconciliation and development. In assuming an interpretive, idiographic approach to the construction of individual life stories, I sought to query the negotiation of identity hyphenation and, in the process, examine the implications of collective processes promulgated by

sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists for individual lives. The descriptive, interpretive approach maximized the amplification of individual voices, thereby allowing unanticipated findings to surface (e.g., the unanticipated accentuation of Israeli civic identity among some youth). Finally, my longitudinal approach allowed for the consideration of narrative identity as a *process* of human development, thus bridging traditions in the narrative study of lives (see Thorne & Nam, 2009). While the idiographic nature of the study is intended to specifically address the case of Israel's Palestinian citizens, this study is part of a broader intellectual concern with the nature of hyphenated identities in other contexts (e.g., Fine & Sirin, 2007). The way in which indigenous national minorities such as the Palestinian citizens of Israel negotiate their hyphenated identity status is relevant to other cases of civic-national identity negotiation in postcolonial states.

Consistent with the master narrative of Palestinian–Israeli identity currently promulgated in Israel (see Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), the narratives of youth contained many references to discrimination. It is interesting to note that these references were not solely based on *individual* experiences with discrimination. Rather, they were often based on *stories* about discrimination circulated within their family or community, revealing the way in which personal identity development is intimately connected to the broader discursive community in which one is embedded. In other words, individual life stories are constructed through participation in a community of shared meaning and social practice (Bruner, 1990; Hammack, 2008; McLean et al., 2007; Thorne & Nam, 2007). It is noteworthy that experiences of discrimination and subordination for these youth were intimately linked to the political context of the second Palestinian intifada, characterized by significant political violence on both sides of the conflict. The experience of identity hyphenation for Palestinian–Israelis is, as for other youth in similar positions (e.g., Fine & Sirin, 2007), inherently linked to a context of political contention in which their identities are deeply relevant.

The life stories collected for this study reveal initial attempts to integrate life experience into a coherent and workable whole for most youth. Thus, at these developmental moments, youth were only beginning to realize the implications of identity hyphenation for personal identity construction. As a likely consequence, explicit references to double marginality in their life stories were relatively uncommon. The experience of double marginality was nevertheless encoded into their narratives through content that revealed the “war within,” as Rania described it, to reconcile their disparate identities. Salma's narrative as a Christian Palestinian–Israeli was particularly noteworthy for the place of multiple marginality in which it was positioned.

As many scholars have suggested, the perception of existential insecurity has increased for Palestinian–Israelis since the second intifada and the events of October 2000. The growing politicization and “Palestinization” of the Stand Tall generation has been met with a harsh response both by the Jewish majority in Israel and the state's forces (e.g., Maoz, 2001b; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005). The success of Avigdor Lieberman's nationalist party in the 2009 Israeli election, during which he explicitly advocated transfer of a portion of the Palestinian–Israeli population, adds legitimacy to concerns of collective insecurity. Consistent with this salient theme in the Palestinian–Israeli master narrative, the youth in this study narrated life stories that contained references to existential insecurity. However, their references to insecurity included not just fear of direct violence from the state but also the threat of a Palestinian attack inside of Israel, which was indeed a possibility at the time initial interviews were conducted in 2003–2004.

While the thematic analysis of life stories generally revealed a close relationship between master narrative and personal narrative themes, thus suggesting reproduction of this master narrative among contemporary youth, an analysis of current identity configurations revealed far more fluidity, improvisation, and complexity than a monolithic master narrative would suggest. The diverse strategies youth employed to respond to the state of identity hyphenation and subordination reveal the *idiographic complexity* of individual lives (Hammack, *in press*)—the notion that lives do not conform to preordained group patterns but rather reveal dynamic processes of dialogue across sites of influence. In other words, individuals creatively respond to the larger matrix of power, identity, and domination through integrating *polyphonic* discourses of identity that provide a sense of agency and coherence (Holland et al., 1998; Tappan, 2005; see also Bakhtin, 1981). The individual becomes *author* to his or her own story in ways that position him or her within this matrix (McAdams & Cox, 2009), embodying “ideology in speech” (Gjerde, 2004) by specifying a set of commitments within the personal narrative.

The youth in this study constructed configurations of identity that suggested a fluid process of *narrative engagement* (Hammack, 2008; cf. Cohler & Hammack, 2007). Thinking of identity as a process of narrative engagement and as an inherently *dialogical* process (Bakhtin, 1981; Hermans, 2001; Tappan, 2005) allows us to view identity configurations as momentary responses to a state of hyphenation among Palestinian–Israelis. Thus while the narratives of some youth clearly reflected the prototypical storyline of the Stand Tall generation, characterized by Palestinian identity accentuation and praxis for political transformation (e.g., Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005), the narratives of other youth challenged the historical linearity of this account. Youth like Jibril instead accentuated their Israeli civic identities, preferring a strategy of individual mobility in the face of subordination (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Thinking of identity hyphenation in binary, purely dualistic terms might be inappropriate for Palestinian–Israeli youth, as my analysis of *integration* and *conflict* suggests that many youth inhabit a configuration that is literally *at* the hyphen, acknowledging its dueling sides. The small, non-representative sample interviewed for the current study does not allow me to make general statements about the Palestinian–Israeli population. Yet such generalizations are not really my concern in the current study. Rather, my intent has been to reveal the extent to which life at the hyphen is dynamic, fluid, and constantly a source of internal interrogation for youth. An examination of their personal narratives provides a conceptual approach that resolves problems of reification in research on culture and identity (see Gjerde, 2004; cf. Adams & Markus, 2001), by allowing us to study identity formation in its inherent idiographic complexity. Thus thinking of identity config-

urations not as static “objects” of analysis, my analysis of integration and conflict allowed for a consideration of identity as process.

Considering the evolution of personal narratives over time, and in relation to intergroup contact, three general patterns emerged. Youth whose pre-contact identity configurations were characterized by Palestinian identity accentuation (Lana and Rania) suggested no significant change over time. Other youth seemed to move toward accentuation of their Palestinian identities (e.g., Jibril and Salma), both in response to the intergroup comparisons afforded by contact and to more salient personal instances of subordination in Israeli society. It is likely that the ongoing setting of intractable conflict, with its affective and cognitive “repertoire” (Bar-Tal, 2007; Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera, 2007; Halperin, 2008), conspired against the intent of the contact hypothesis to work toward prejudice reduction. To the extent that the ongoing conflict mitigates against the positive affect likely needed for optimal intergroup contact (e.g., Tropp & Pettigrew, 2004), these kinds of outcomes become expectable. Finally, some youth remained actively *at* the hyphen, negotiating the inherent conflict of the hyphen with the desire for identity integration (e.g., Haya and Sami). These patterns suggest multiple and varied configurations of identity *formation* among youth, as they make decisions about the appropriation and repudiation of particular discourses related to a hyphenated identity.

The specific role of intergroup contact in the evolution of life stories over time cannot be isolated in the current study, given the many other experiences that youth underwent in the year following contact and the absence of a comparison group whose members did not experience contact. But the primary aim of the current study was not to make any definitive claims about intergroup contact. Rather, I sought to explore the way in which the narration of the life story changed over time for youth who are motivated to pursue contact. The findings of this exploration suggest a diversity of responses, but they also suggest that central features of Palestinian–Israeli identity are not connected to *individual* experiences in the course of development (such as intergroup contact). Rather, the narratives of youth reveal the deep and abiding connection to a sociopolitical reality of nationalist conflict between Israelis and Palestinians—a conflict that is lived at the hyphen of Palestinian–Israeli identity. The themes related to the master narrative of Palestinian–Israeli identity, as well as the demands for identity development created by the need to construct workable configurations, are entirely dependent on the direct, structural, and cultural violence (Galtung, 1969; Galtung, 1990) encountered by Israel’s Palestinian citizens.

As noted, this study was limited by its focus on a small, non-representative sample of youth, as well as the absence of a systematic controlled design that would allow for causal statements about the relationship between intergroup contact and identity development. However, my aim was not to produce knowledge that might generalize to the entire population of Palestinian–Israeli youth. Nor was it to produce causal statements about intergroup contact. Rather, I sought to explore an important theoretical question—the relationship between a shifting master narrative of identity and the personal narratives of youth—through the “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of individual lives. The findings of this study provide voice to members of a population typically silenced and subordinated—the Palestinian minority in Israel. A central aim of narrative psychology is, in fact, to provide space in the production of knowledge for subaltern voices (McLean, 2008; see also Sampson, 1993), lurking below a discourse of domination.

Future research with Palestinian–Israeli youth might adopt the general theoretical and methodological strategy employed here to examine this question with a larger sample of youth, possibly identifying factors that appear to delineate processes of identity development among youth. In addition, studies of intergroup contact might examine the ways in which youth engage with disparate narratives related to a hyphenated identity *within* the dialogue that occurs in contact itself. Although research on intergroup contact generally reveals its effectiveness in the reduction of prejudice (Pettigrew, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), scholars agree that contact situations call for critical interrogation (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005), and a focus on individual prejudice reduction might, in fact, support a status quo of power asymmetry (Suleiman, 2004). At minimum, contact must be studied through the amplification of the voices of those who undergo it, thus moving beyond a simple study of the “effectiveness” of contact toward the probing of the psychological processes it activates.

The aim of this study was to simultaneously provide voice to this typically silenced minority, constructing life stories in a place of hyphenation, and to contribute to broader conversations in personality and social psychology on identity, narrative, and intergroup contact. Connected to historical traditions in personality, social, and developmental psychology that recognize the value of a holistic approach to the study of lives in context (e.g., Allport, 1937; Erikson, 1959; Murray, 1938), I employed a theoretical and methodological approach designed to preserve and amplify the voices of my research participants. A focus on individual lives provides a valuable corrective to other social science research on the Palestinian–Israelis, which has tended to emphasize collective experience absent empirical inquiry at the individual level. Empirical inquiry at the level of the individual reveals far greater fluidity and dynamism in the process of identity development for Palestinian–Israelis. In spite of the apparent variability of life at the hyphen for young Palestinian–Israelis, their voices are united in revealing the injustice of subordination, multiple marginality, and identity threat, suggesting the need for structural and political change to reconfigure the intergroup relations that characterize Israeli society and exacerbate the conflict among its citizens.

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