



The 1.5 generation of Russian Jews in Israel - between Integration and Separatism

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The 1.5 generation

- what does it stand for?
- Its importance vs. the Israeli society.





The Survey

- among Olim students as the most upwardly mobile and integrated sector of Russian youth in Israel— a barometer of future change for other groups.
- Entry criteria: Russian as mother language; Arrival in Israel between ages 11 and 18; 6 or more years spent in the country.



380 respondents – profile:

- Women 56%, men 44%
- Ages: 20 - 29
- Origin: 20% from Moscow and St. Petersburg, 46% from the largest cities of the FSU with population over 1 million, and 34% from the middle-sized and small cities
- The mean age at migration 14.7, average tenure in Israel 8.8 years



Family composition

- 51% migrated with parents and other relatives (extended families), 17% with parents only, 11% with one parent (usually mother), 8% came alone, and 13% came under youth resettlement programs.





adjustment in Israel

- 71% finished high school in Israel.
- 65% have served (after school) in the Israeli army
- 8% have completed one year of the 'national service'
- (the rest were exempt because of their being married, having a health problem or immigration after age 17).
- About 20% of male respondents who had completed military service served in elite combat units.



- Throughout their school and army records, these immigrant youths manifested good or excellent results: 44% had an average *bagrut* grade in the range 90-100 and 52% in the range 70- 90.



main difficulties

- during the period of initial adjustment in Israel :
 - *Mental and cultural differences with Israelis 41%*
 - *Facing language barrier and learning Hebrew 30%*
- About 70% said that, by now, these problems are behind them, while 25% said that some problems still bother them, mostly – the cultural gap.



Hebrew proficiency

- 36% of respondents said that they spoke pure Russian at home;
- 49% described their home language as Russian mixed with some Hebrew
- 9% speak HebRush (a 50:50 mix of the two languages).
- only 3% spoke mainly Hebrew at home.



Field of studies and the rate of satisfaction

- 75% university students and 25% studied in regional colleges.
- The main areas of study: computing / engineering (37%), natural sciences (23%), social sciences (20%), medicine/nursing (15%), the arts and journalism (5%)
- Most students were doing well academically, with the average grades in the range of 70-90 (83%).
- Their satisfaction with the studies on the 5-point scale was rather high (the mean 4.2, SD 0.9)



- The setting for the cross-cultural encounter between Russian immigrant students and Israeli academic environment could be described as generally positive and conducive to social integration.



Informal social networks

- Among 60% who worked part-time :
 - 15% worked in the Russian sector (stores, etc.)
 - 25% catered for Russian clients in telemarketing, polling etc
 - 20% had sector-neutral jobs



“Whom do you mainly communicate with?”



	At the U / Coll.	Spare time
With other Russian Olim	15%	43%
More with Olim, but some Israelis as well	48%	37%
Roughly 50:50	28%	13%
Mainly/only with Israelis	9%	7%
Total	100%	100%



Language spoken with other Russians

- 13% spoke pure Russian with their Russian-speaking friends and coworkers/clients
- 76% often added to it Hebrew idioms
- 11% mixed some Russian into their Hebrew-based speech.
- despite the increasing use of Hebrew, the share of cross-cultural contacts (Russians with Israelis) was significantly greater in the *public realm* and around instrumental issues (studies and work) than in the *private realm*.





- Outside academic and work settings, most Russian students preferred to network and spend their free time with other Russians.



dating patterns

- Both men and women preferred co-ethnic romantic partners.
- When asked if they have ever had a romantic relationship with an Israeli :
 - 32% answered positively (42% of the women and 23% of the men).
 - about one half (48%, more women than men) answered that a relationship with an Israeli partner **was in principle possible** for them.



popular Israeli stereotypes

- The three most typical positive qualities that best describe young Israelis in the Russian students opinion: self-confidence (67%), assertiveness (61%) patriotism (49%)
- The negative features: boldness / “chutzpah” and bad manners (72%); limited cultural interests (68%), and too direct / blatant style of communication (55%)



- Many respondents noted on the margins that Russians and Israelis have grown 'on different planets' and have different cultural codes, with a clear indication that they saw their own culture as superior.
- In sum, the relations between Russian and Israeli students were mostly instrumental and seldom spilled over campus limits



Transnational networking with co-ethnics

- Another salient component of the informal co-ethnic networking among young immigrants is emerging along transnational lines, i.e. within the global Russian Jewish diaspora:
 - About 50% said they maintain **contact** with friends in the FSU





Transnational networking with co-ethnics in the west

- A large part of the transnational links was with co-ethnics in the **US, Canada, Germany, and other host countries**
- Almost 77% maintain regular or periodic contacts with their Russian friends living in the West.
- The usual means of communication: phone calls (60%), e-mail (47%), letters (26%), mutual visits (10%)
- About 50% said they had sporadic or regular Internet contacts with other Russians living in the FSU and in the West



Connection with the past and the wish for cultural continuity

- Expressed in trips to the places of origin. About **47%** of respondents said that they went back to their home cities in the FSU, half of them more than once.



A sizeable fraction of Russian immigrant students was involved in different kinds of co-ethnic networking across borders – an important channel for the maintenance of socio-cultural continuity.





The patterns of cultural consumption

- Over the last decade, the Russian-speaking Israelis have created a multifaceted cultural world of their own:
 - tens of newspapers and magazines
 - 3 radio stations
 - 5 TV channels transmitted from Russia and one Israeli-made Russian channel
 - a network of clubs, libraries, theatres, and shows from the FSU





The consumption of cultural and media products in Russian



	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Seldom/Never</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Read in Russian</i>				
- newspapers/magazines	15	48	37	100
- books (fiction)	38	37	25	100
- books (non-fiction)	26	43	31	100
<i>Watch TV</i>				
- Russian channels	36	44	20	100
<i>Visit Russian websites</i>				
	26	28	46	100
<i>Attend shows and concerts by touring Russian artists</i>				
	26	47	27	100



Interest in Russian-language cultural/media products

- There is no reduction of interest in the Russian-language cultural/media products in spite of the increasing tenure in Israel.
- The share of respondents who read Russian literature (fiction and other) remains constant over time.
- The same is true about attending shows and concerts of touring artists from the FSU – the interest is stable but more of them can afford the tickets.



Identity

- **68%** define themselves as “**Russian Israelis**”
- **only** 11% thought of themselves as “Regular Israelis”
- **14%** as “Russians/Ukrainians/Other” Former Soviets living in Israel
- **7%** - various open answers - “Russian/Ukrainian/Georgian Jew”

The prevalent choice of a hyphenated Russian-Israeli identity in this sample is yet another indication of biculturalism of the 1.5-generation.



Attitudes towards Russian origin



- In terms of economic adjustment and social status, 35% considered their Russian origin as facilitating, 18% as hampering, and 47% said it had no clear effect
- In terms of cultural standards and richness of cultural life, 83% believed that Russian immigrants have advantage over their Israeli-born peers, 17% assigned no difference



Attitudes towards Russian origin



- In terms of informal communication, friendships and networking, **57%** said that **Russian origin** is beneficial, 6% said it was a barrier, and 37% believed it was neutral.
- A very high share of young respondents believing in their cultural superiority is in line with some earlier findings among adult Russian immigrants in Israel (Epstein and Kheimets, 2000).



The future - 10-15 years down the road

- Would they remain largely Russian or their Russian-ness would disappear over time and they would be undistinguishable from other Israelis of their generation?





- About 25% answered that they would probably remain Russians for life, regardless of the years spent in Israel
- 50% believed that they would stop mid-way between Russian and Israeli mindset and lifestyle
- 11% answered, “Don’t know, anything may happen”
- Only 8% expected to turn into “regular Israelis” over time, and another 6% already saw themselves as regular Israelis



Men VS Women

- More men than women believed they would remain Russians for life (32% vs. 21%)
- added to the above mentioned co-ethnic preferences in socializing and dating, this finding suggests that **men are more inclined to cultural retention than women**





Conclusion

- This group of young immigrants is prone to keep and cherish their identity as Russians, with the ensuing patterns of communication, language use, and cultural consumption
- Yet, the formation of biculturalism is clearly underway and most young immigrants perceive it as an asset rather than limitation
- The most prominent expression of integration is the increased use of Hebrew cutting across different life realms



- Russian-speaking immigrants in various host countries develop their own distinct pathway between the home and host cultures, augmented by the new transnational opportunities
- young immigrants retain the core mindset shaped during their formative years in the FSU although adopting multiple elements of the local lifestyle and fashion



- As a result, a new hybrid cultural realm is emerging, typified by hyphenated identities (Russian-Israeli, Russian-German, Russian-American), lifestyles (Russian discos and clubs that feature Russian, Israeli and MTV-style music), and mixed lingoes such as HebRush
- In the Israeli context Russian speakers will be able to maintain their cultural autonomy and transnational networks in the near future



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תודה

