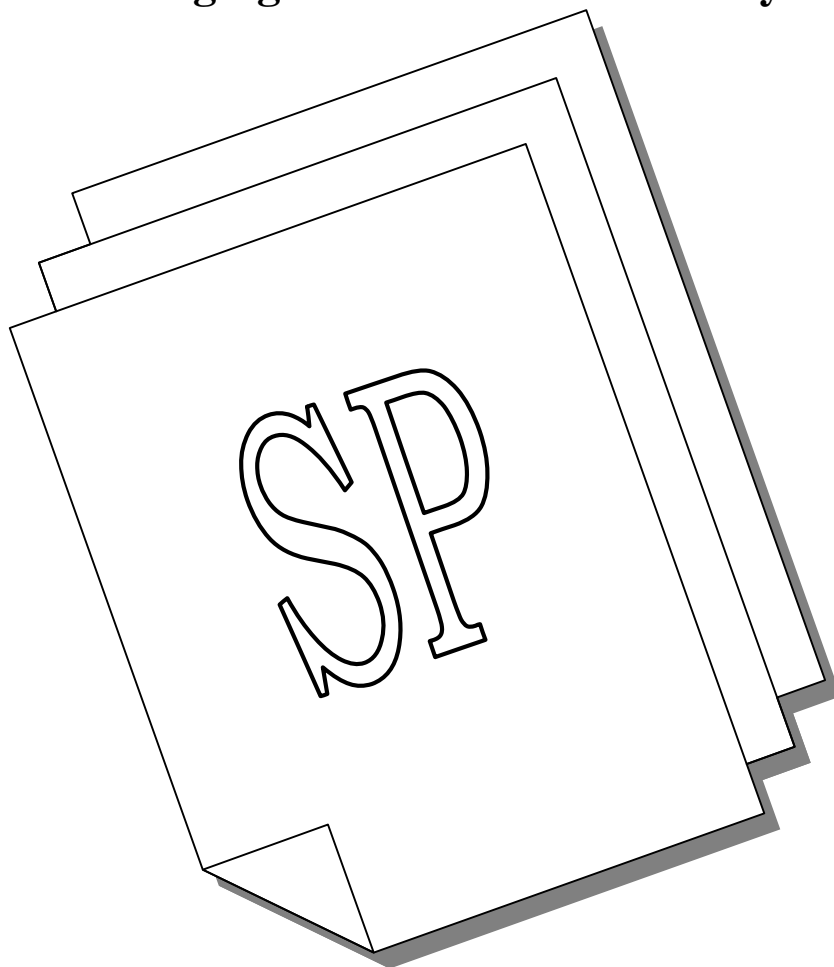


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**The Emerging Second Generation  
of Immigrant Israelis**

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BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

# **The Children of 'Russian' Immigrant Parents in Israel: Identity and Social Integration**

**Larissa Remennick**

**Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
Bar-Ilan University**

**Paulina Celnik**

**Beit-Berl Academic College**

## **Abstract**

The paper is based on a recently-completed study among Israeli school students born of 'Russian' immigrant parents of the 1990s wave, who comprise the emerging 2nd generation of Russian Israelis. Over 300 middle- and high-school students from six schools located across Israel completed structured questionnaires, participated in focus groups and in-depth interviews. The findings shed light on the identity dilemmas of 2nd generation 'Russians' and underscore the crucial role of their early school and peer experiences in the overall adjustment and integration in Israeli society. We conclude that local-born children of immigrants may still experience significant adversity, both at school and in social contacts, particularly if their families are single-parent and/or have limited personal resources for protecting their offspring from the 'pains of absorption'.

## **The emerging second generation of Russian Israelis**

The 'Great Russian Aliya' of the 1990s was a seminal event in Israel's history that has redrawn its social, political, and cultural landscape in multiple ways (Remennick 2007, 2011; Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, 2007). After 20 years of coexistence between Israeli Hebrew mainstream and the virtual 'Russian Street,' it is hard to deny that a new ethno-cultural community has firmly established itself in Israel's complex social mosaic (Kimmerling, 2004). Carriers of a Russian accent are found in all occupations and walks of life, from Knesset members and senior scientists to street cleaners and supermarket cashiers. The Russian-based material and cultural infrastructure is scattered across Israeli urban spaces: groceries, bookstores, clubs, kindergartens, after-school classes for the children, etc. – especially evident in the

cities with dense Russian presence such as Beer-Sheba, Ashdod, and Haifa (Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, 2011).

Nowadays, the older children and adolescents, who immigrated with their parents or alone as part of Youth Aliya programs during the 1990s (the 1.5 generation), became young adults, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of native-born Russian Israelis is coming of age. Those who were born in the early-mid 1990s are now in the middle or high school, while some of them are already in the military or entering college or navigating Israeli labor market. Some of these girls and boys are indistinguishable from their Sabra peers, while others still look and sound different, have distinct cultural tastes and prefer co-ethnic company, despite speaking Hebrew to each other (Niznik, 2004, 2011). In the light of difficult acculturation and economic adjustment of the parental generation (Leshem, 2009) and uneasy insertion of 'Russian' children of the 1.5 generation in Israeli schools and peer groups (Sever, 1999, 2006; Shamai and Ilatov, 2001, 2005), the legitimate question is if the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation youth has experienced a smoother insertion in the school and youth culture of Israel. What is the linguistic and ethno-cultural identity of these adolescents, given that many of them are partly-Jewish or non-Jewish? Does literary Hebrew pose a problem for their comprehension of language-rich subjects, such as the Bible, Jewish and Israeli history and literature? Why do many of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children and youths show clear preference for the schools with high 'Russian' presence, in both the student body and teaching staff? These were the main topics we addressed in the study presented below. We start by looking back on the earlier years of social integration of Russian-speaking immigrants and their children that set the stage for our research.

### **Parents and children of Perestroika in Israel<sup>1</sup>**

Despite governmental aid in the form of various loans and benefits, the conditions for initial accommodation of former Soviet families were harsh. Soaring housing costs of the early 1990s compelled many of them to lump together scant resources, leading to co-residence of three generations in small rented flats. Few newcomers had financial assets to take a fresh start in Israel; in fact, their key personal resource was the high level of education and aspirations for upward mobility. Around 60% of adult immigrants had post-secondary degrees, and before emigration most were professionals or white-collar workers (Remennick, 2007). Small and saturated economic marketplace of Israel offered slim chances for occupational integration for tens of thousands of immigrant engineers, physicians, and teachers. Some professional niches were more ready to expand than others (e.g., the high-tech industry and health care that accommodated thousands of technical specialists, doctors and nurses) Yet, only about one-third of former Soviet professionals managed to find work in par with their qualifications, while the rest made a living by unskilled or service work (Remennick, 2007). By the late 1990s, the economic situation of most Russian immigrants has improved, but their average income remains below the national average (reflecting poorer terms of employment), and co-residence of nuclear families with the elderly parents is still fairly common (Leshem, 2009).

By the mid-1990s, former Soviets (i.e. Russian-speakers) comprised about 20% nationally and over one-third of the population in some localities where they settled. Most adult immigrants, especially older ones, found mastering Hebrew very tedious

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<sup>1</sup> Borrowing from the edited volume by Tamar Horowitz "Children of Perestroika in Israel" (1999).

and many of them abandoned this project, given their slim occupational prospects in the mainstream economy and abundance of co-ethnic cultural and media resources. Many also considered this effort unworthy, regarding modern Israeli culture with its Levantine overtones as inferior vis-à-vis their own 'high European' standards (Epstein and Kheimets, 2000). Since the late 1990s, ethnically mixed families (often with a single person who was partly-Jewish while the rest were not) became predominant among FSU arrivals (Tolts, 2003). Both adults and children in these families typically kept regular ties with their relatives remaining in the FSU and made frequent visits there, which sustained Russian linguistic and cultural continuity in this segment of 'new Israelis'. Alienated from Israeli Hebrew mainstream and endowed with rich cultural resources of its own, the 'Russian' community has gradually built its own social and cultural microcosm in Israel, the so-called 'Russian Street' including both consumer outlets (food and book stores, tourist companies, and other small businesses), educational projects (like the below-mentioned *Mofet* schools), and cultural venues (libraries, amateur and professional theatres, book publishers, and the thriving media – in print, broadcast, and later also on-line).

Under conditions of mass influx of Russian Jews, most Israeli schools received large numbers of new immigrant students, who knew next to nothing about Judaic subjects (quite prominent in the curriculum), had poor Hebrew proficiency, and socially tended to lump together into Russian-speaking groups. No wonder that often these novices faced a rather unfriendly social environment, which aggravated the challenge of studying many new subjects in the new language (Kraemer et al., 1995; Sever, 1999). The initial years of Russian students' insertion into Israeli school were marked by inter-group violence, learning problems, and high dropout rates from high school. This was in sharp contrast with the pre-migration school life of Russian Jewish youth, who had often studied in elite schools and had excellent academic record. In response to this crisis, the Association of Russian Immigrant Teachers set up the *Mofet* project – first in a form of evening classes in exact sciences and humanities, and later also full-time schools attended mainly by Russian students (*Shevah-Mofet* high school in Tel-Aviv remains the largest one till this day). Russian-speaking teachers of *Mofet* (who teach in Hebrew, with self-translation if needed) exposed immigrant children to the high standards of Russian school in math and physics, covering for the lacunae in the Israeli curriculum, and at the same time created a friendly and familiar atmosphere in class. The *Mofet* system, having about 20 branches across Israel, has been the only channel for the regular study of the Russian language and literature for the immigrant students, since in the mainstream school system Russian is uncommon even as foreign language (Epstein and Kheimets, 2000). However important as an immigrant cultural project, *Mofet* could only cater for a small minority of the 1.5-generation Russian youths, while most of them remained semi-literate in their mother tongue. The linguistic shift towards Hebrew, plus the need to study English as a mandatory foreign language and also French or Arabic as additional languages, resulted in the process of mother tongue attrition (Kopeliovich, 2011).

During their initial years in Israel, Russian-speaking teenagers were often reluctant to socialize with their Israeli peers, forming groups of their own both at school and outside it. Often this attitude was reactive, given hostile (to the point of bullying) or indifferent reception by most Sabra students of the Russian newcomers, despite their apparent need for help (Shamai and Ilatov 2001, 2005). Some qualitative studies have shown that Russian youngsters share a sharp feeling of their otherness in terms of

mentality, interests and cultural codes, which prevents them from seeking contact with native youth even after their Hebrew becomes fluent. Like their parents, many young 'Russians' believe that their cultural heritage and upbringing (that they associate with the European tradition) are superior to those of Israeli peers, often describing by them as 'wild', 'primitive,' 'violent,' and 'pushy' (Kraemer et al., 1995; Markowitz, 1997; Lerner, 1999). Typically raised in educated families, Russian Jewish youths who immigrated in the early 1990s had broad cultural interests and usually read more than their Israeli peers (Lerner, 1999; Epstein and Kheimets, 2000). Sensing this otherness, Israeli youths also tended to exclude Russian peers, describing them alternatively as arrogant or insecure, but always as dull and falling behind youth fashion - in brief, anything but 'cool' or popular (*mekubal* in Hebrew).

Reflecting the negative coverage of 'Russians' in the Israeli media (Lemish, 2001), the menu of humiliating labels used by Sabras against their immigrant peers has soon expanded to include 'prostitutes', 'pimps', 'dirty cleaners' or unspecified 'stinky Russians.' Lately, these offensive labels increasingly imply non-Jewish origins of the newcomers rendering them unworthy, second-rate or hinting at their being imposters who faked Jewishness to take advantage of the benefits provided by the state (Remennick, unpublished findings). As a result of persistent exclusion, a Russian youth subculture has gradually appeared in Israel, with its own clubs, discos, and other social venues (Niznik, 2004, 2011). Mutual negative stereotypes are somewhat attenuated during the years of mandatory military service, when 'Russians' pay their patriotic dues to the State and mix up with Sabras of different ethnic origin and other immigrants in the same units; joint hardships and dangers are often conducive to stronger mutual trust and out-group friendships. Yet, as opposed to most Sabras, Russian youths rarely sustain their military friendships after demobilization and do not construe them as salient 'social capital' to be relied on for years after the service (Eisikovits, 2006). Although friendships and dating patterns among the 1.5 generation became more diverse over time (including Sabras, other immigrants, and co-ethnics), their marital partner choice reflects lingering in-group preference: an estimated two-thirds marry other 'Russians' (Remennick, 2009).

## **Participants and methods**

The target population for this research was the second generation of Russian Israelis, i.e. the children of the former-Soviet immigrants who were born in Israel or immigrated before the age of 10. The older segment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation – born in the early to mid-1990s – are teenagers today, and the only practical way of locating them is via school system. Students with a Russian background were recruited in various schooling frameworks (regular day schools, boarding schools, and complementary classes for school dropouts) located in cities and towns across Israel. About 60% of the study sample came from the two schools in Central Israel with a significant Russian immigrant presence, both among the students and pedagogical staff. The rest (40%) came from the four regular Israelis schools where the students of Russian origin comprise a minority. The respondents studied in the middle school (50%) or high school (50%) and their mean age was close to 16 (+/- 1.82) – see Figure 1.

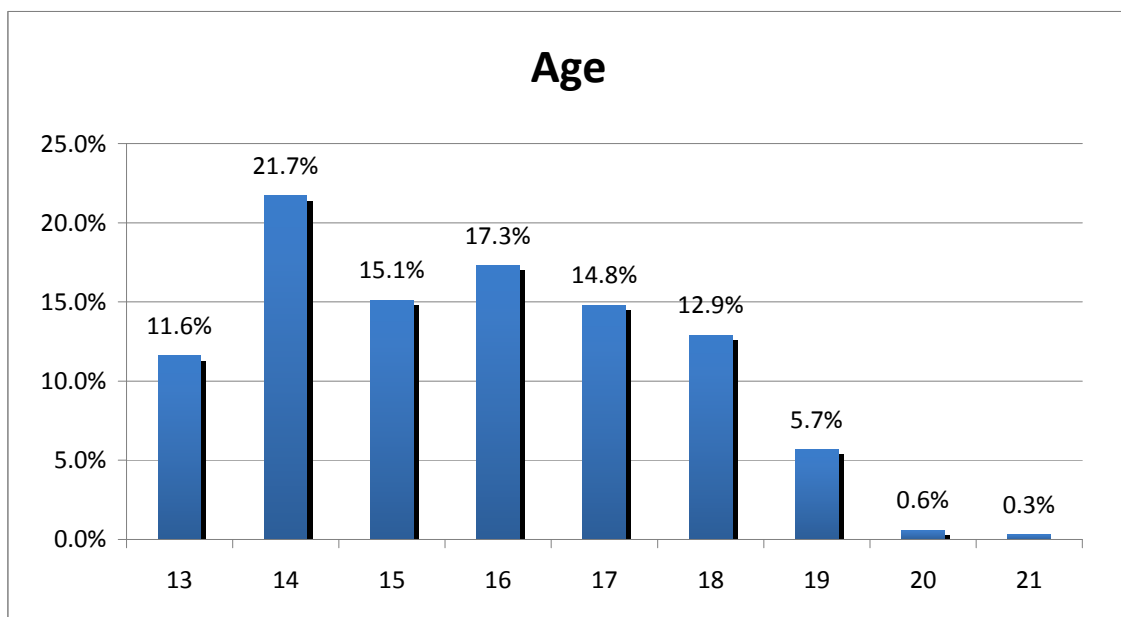


Figure 1. Age distribution of survey respondents

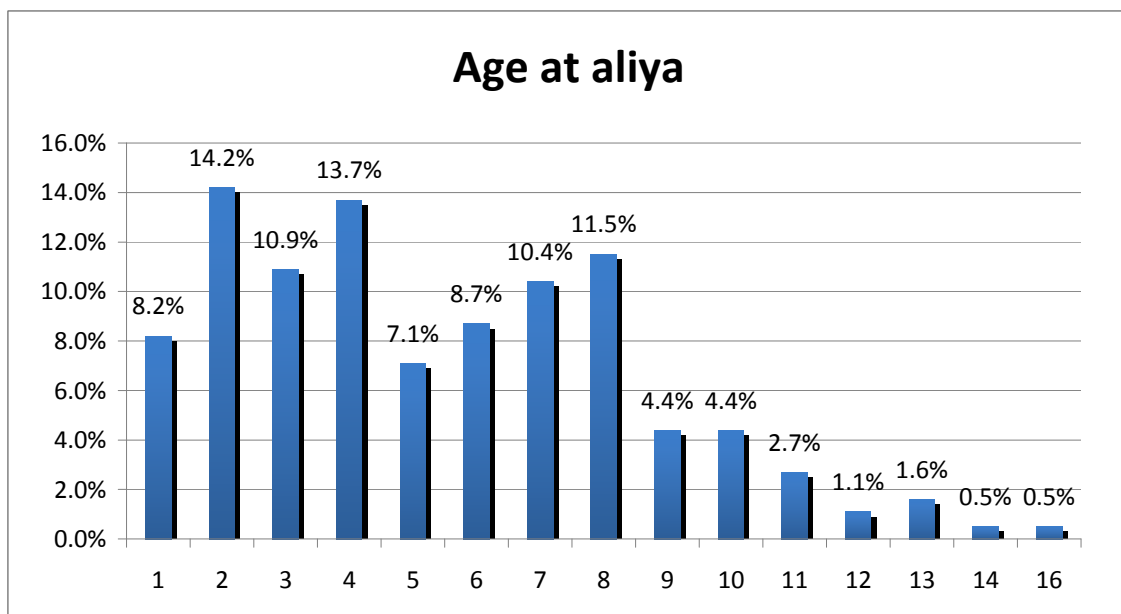


Figure 2. Respondents' age at the time of immigration (aliya)

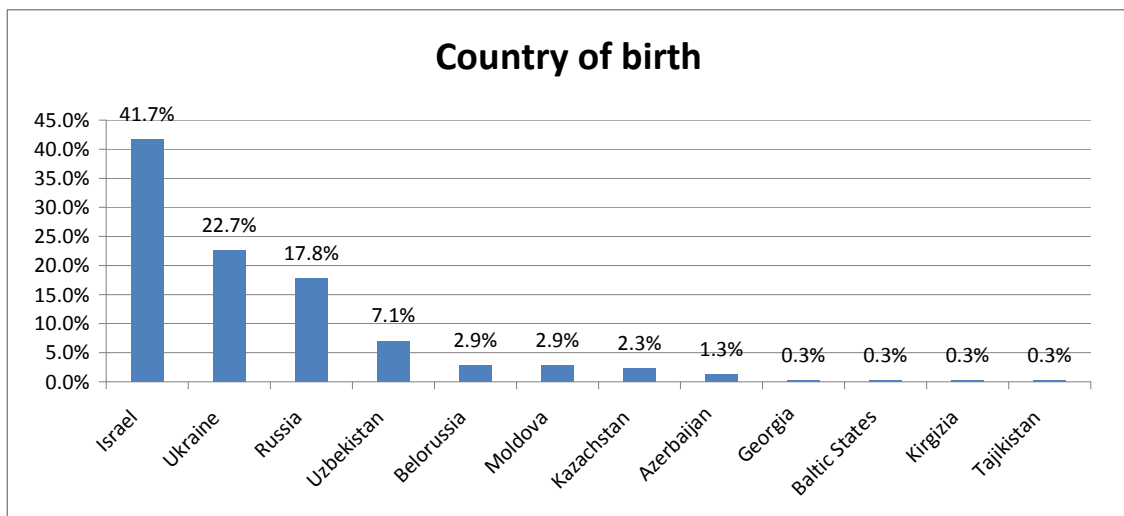


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by country of birth

Among 318 respondents, 53% were girls and 47% were boys; 42% were born in Israel and 58% came to Israel with their families at the mean age of 5.3 (+/- 3.2) years (see Figure 2). Of those born in the FSU, 23% came from the Ukraine, 18% from Russia, and the rest from other former Soviet countries (See Figure 3). In Israel, most respondents (87%) lived in the towns of the Center (between Hadera and Rehovot); 59% characterized their towns or neighborhoods as mixed in terms of resident population, while 17% lived in the locales populated mainly by 'Russians,' and 24% in the areas with predominantly native (Hebrew) residents. As for the family composition, 96% of respondents lived with their mothers, but only 76% had resident fathers; 24% reported that their parents were divorced (including fathers staying in the FSU). Most respondents (77%) had one or more siblings and 23% were single children.

The majority of respondents' parents had post-secondary education (62% of the mothers and 61% of the fathers). About one-quarter of them worked in professional occupations (doctors, teachers, engineers, etc.), another third were white-collar and service-sector occupations (e.g. in travel, sales, insurance, nursing, etc.), and the rest were in blue-collar jobs or unemployed. Thus, many parents experienced occupational downgrading in Israel, at least vis-à-vis their formal levels of education. However, most respondents considered their families' economic situation as average or fairly good (71%), with 24% describing it as excellent and only 5% as poor (see Figure 4). In the light of the large survey data on the former Soviet immigrants (Leshem, 2009), and considering that every fourth respondent was raised by a single mother, these self-reports of economic well-being seem overly optimistic and probably reflect naiveté and/or social desirability among these young respondents. The qualitative data reported below support this assumption.

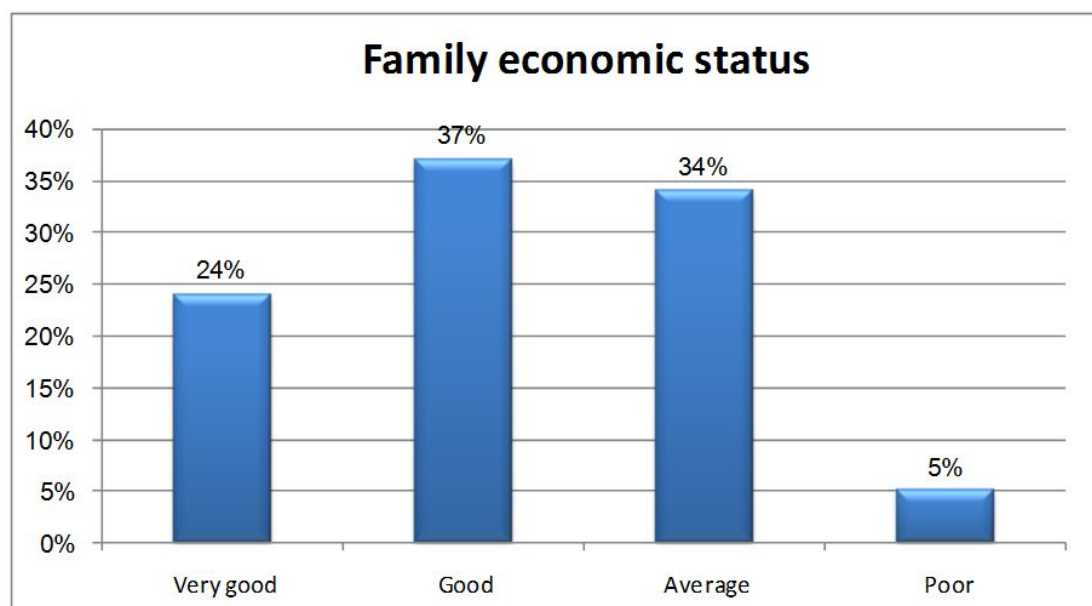


Figure4. Self-assessed economic status of respondents' families

The data collection for the study took place during 2010; it included a quantitative phase (filling in the structured questionnaires with several open-ended items) and a series of focus groups with the students in all participant schools. In addition, a small series of pilot interviews was conducted among young Israeli adults of Russian origin who largely grew up in Israel. The questionnaire and the group discussion/interview guides were designed by the authors on the basis of their own and others' prior research; they focused on the issues of ethno-cultural identity, relations with native and immigrant peers, school-related experiences; relations with the parents; Russian and Hebrew proficiency; cultural preferences (in music, reading, etc.); attitudes towards Israeliness and Russianness, life satisfaction, and plans for the future. The quantitative findings were processed by means of the SPSS statistical package (descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, tests of variance, and multiple regressions), and the transcripts from the focus groups and interviews were analyzed using topical and thematic coding.

### **Principal quantitative findings**

We start by reporting the main findings from the survey (first those based on the structured items, followed by the open-ended ones) and then proceed to describe some highlights from the group discussions and personal interviews. After collecting some background on the students and their families, the questionnaire opened with a section relating to the early recollections of immigration experiences, either of respondents themselves (if they migrated as children) or their parents and grandparents (if they were born in Israel). About two-thirds of respondents who answered this item wrote briefly that they hardly know anything, as the early years of Aliyah are never discussed at home. The remaining third wrote a few lines about their memories discussed below.



The following structured items addressed the respondents' proficiency in the Hebrew and Russian languages, the patterns of their cultural consumption and attitudes towards Russian and Israeli cultures, as well as learning experiences and social preferences at school and outside, relations with the parents and more. Students' responses to the selected attitudinal statements, stratified by the country of birth and gender, are presented in the four tables of the Appendix in the end of this paper.

### **Cultural, social, and linguistic dispositions**

The reported proficiency in Hebrew was very high among most respondents: 92% said their spoken Hebrew was very good or excellent, and 95% and 91%, respectively, characterized their reading and writing skills likewise. Conversely, the oral proficiency and especially literacy in Russian were much lower: 88% assessed as good or very good their comprehension of Russian, 83% said so about their spoken Russian, but just 55% and 50%, respectively, believed the same was true of their reading and writing in the 'heritage' language. As expected, the respondents who had higher levels of Russian proficiency in all four categories (comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing) were usually those attending schools with a higher 'Russian' presence, that also offer formal classes in the Russian language and literature. Yet, the symmetrical bilingualism was uncommon in this sample; respondents who were better in Hebrew were worse in Russian, and vice-versa. This means that the improvement of one language came about at the expense of losing the other (so-called replacive bilingualism).

The respondents who had a better command of Russian, were more prone to consuming Russian cultural products (music, books, Internet sites, etc.), but this usually happened alongside Hebrew-based products, at least to some extent; just a small minority limited their reading, Net surfing etc. to Russian sources only (see Tables 1 and 2 of the Appendix). The students, who spoke better Russian and were more immersed in the Russian cultural milieu, typically expressed more positive general attitudes towards Russian culture (both high and popular), Russian style in behavior and friendships (e.g., consideration for others, loyalty to friends) and, conversely, had more negative opinions as to the parallel notions on the Israeli side (e.g., rating Israelis low on responsibility and dependability – Table 2). As expected, the most prominent correlate of the Russian linguistic and cultural preference was being born in the FSU and coming to Israel at a later rather than younger age. The students of the latter category were typically of mixed ethnic origin (i.e. part Russian, Ukrainian, etc.), immigrated more recently, and had a more dense contact with their grandparents and other relatives in the FSU, including regular visits during summer vacations. Over half of them agreed with the statement "*I prefer to live in a neighborhood where most residents speak Russian*" and 88% with the saying "*I hope my future children will speak Russian*" (Table 1).

Most respondents, regardless of their place of birth, expressed clear social preference for their co-ethnics as friends and dates: about 80% said that their best friends are other 'Russians,' and 64% spend their free time with the immigrant friends (the rest have a mixed circle of friends). At school, 'Russian' students inevitably have to mix with native Israeli peers: about half of all respondents said they socialize with both categories equally, but 43% still preferred being with other 'Russian' kids. However their choice of friends outside the school – in the neighborhood, after-school

activities, etc. – was skewed towards co-ethnics (Figure 5). Moreover, the schools with a ‘critical mass’ of Russian students were described by respondents as less violent than the schools where ‘Russians’ were a minority group (reported episodes of violence in 60% vs. 77% of the answers). A minority of respondents (25%) disagreed with the statements “*My classmates don’t bother me because of my being Russian,*” i.e. indirectly admitted to hostility from their Sabra peers (Figure 6). A large share of respondents (67%) agreed with a softer statement: “*I feel significant mental and cultural differences between myself and my Israeli mates*” Among those who agreed with these statements, more students were born in the FSU and migrated as older children (75%-85%). Subsequent group discussions and interviews showed that the actual picture of Russian-Sabra relations at most schools was more complicated (see the qualitative section). Following social desirability, our respondents tended to under-report their problems with Israeli peers, perhaps feeling that this exposes them as weaklings or underdogs, the image they clearly wished to avoid.

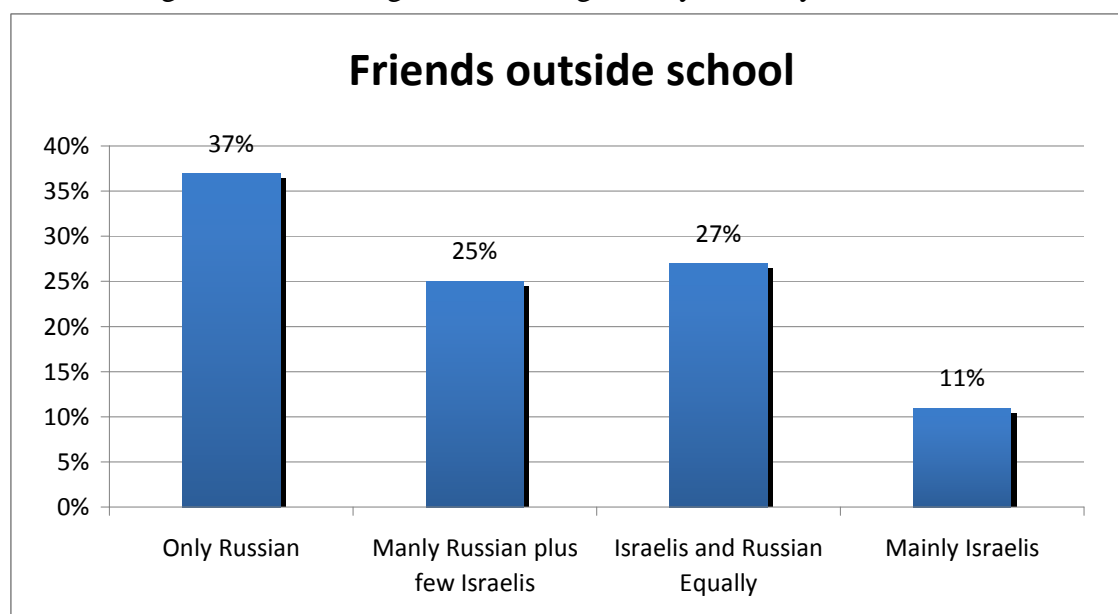


Figure 5. Friends respondents have outside of the school context

Gender differences have surfaced in several variables related to identity and Israeli acculturation included in this analysis (see Tables 1-4). The girls manifested better command of Hebrew and more positive attitudes towards Israeli society and culture than did the boys. Girls were also more satisfied with and better adjusted at school and experienced fewer problems with the peers and teachers than did the boys. Only 15% of the girls and 29% of the boys reported feelings of animosity and alienation from their non-immigrant peers. At the same time, there were no significant gender differences in the Russian language proficiency, the attitudes towards Russian culture, and the distribution of identity categories described above. By and large, female adolescents seem to be more positively disposed towards Israel, Hebrew and native Israelis than are male adolescents, leading to better outcomes in their social integration. The causality can work here both ways: more positive perceptions of Israel and Israelis among the girls boost their motivation for learning Hebrew and

using it more often than Russian (also in communication with ‘Russian’ peers), which in turn improves the relations with the Hebrew-speaking majority at school and outside it.

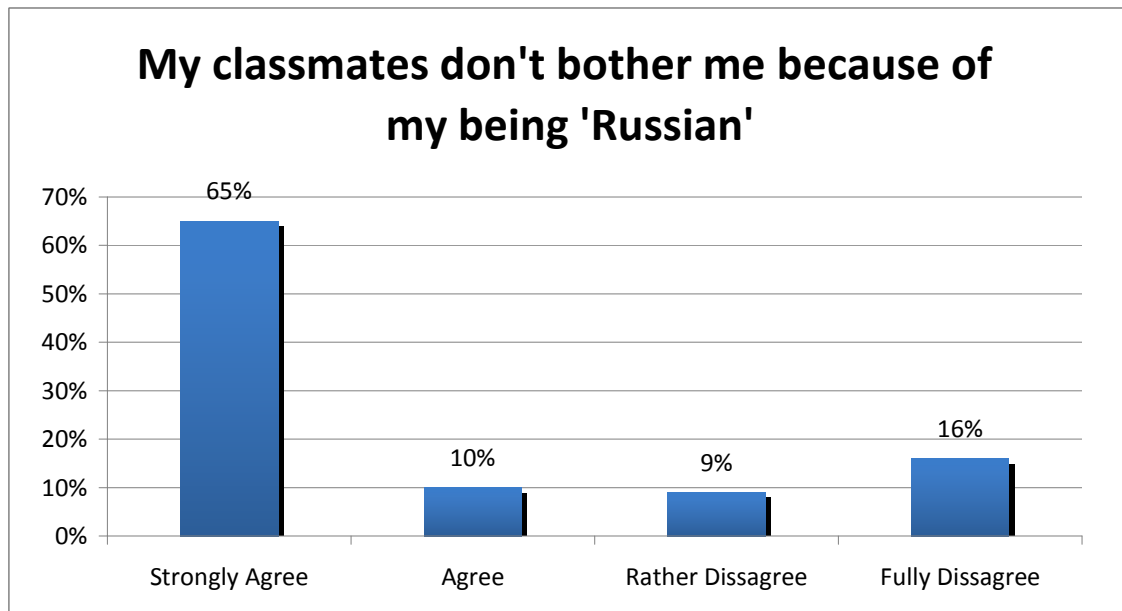


Figure 6. Reported current bullying by native classmates

### **Identities and integration**

Identity questions often cause a lot of difficulty, especially for younger respondents and those of immigrant background. Building the survey tool, we tried to approach the identity issue from different angles and in different sections of the questionnaire. First, identity was assessed in the section addressing attitudes and feelings towards Israeli and Russian/FSU culture and lifestyle (e.g., “*I feel Israeli in most contexts and situations*”; “*I am proud to be Israeli*”; “*Israel feels like home to me*”). These answers were later used for constructing an identity index. In order to focus and contextualize this question even more, another questionnaire item asked the students to define their national identity in a hypothetical situation of an international youth event taking place outside Israel and bringing together students from a dozen of countries. Every participant had to represent him/herself before others and answer a few basic questions about who s/he was. Answering the open-ended question “*How would you describe your national identity today,*” 48% of respondents wrote the answers that included the word ‘Israeli’ and 54% chose categories that included ‘Russian/Ukrainian/ Other former Soviet’ – either alone or in a mix with others. Thus, 26% said they were just Russians/Ukrainians/etc.; 24% called themselves just ‘Israelis,’ and 23% opted for complex categories like Russian-Jewish-Israeli. Only 7% chose ‘Jewish’ as their primary national identity, and 15% did not answer this item (Figure 7).

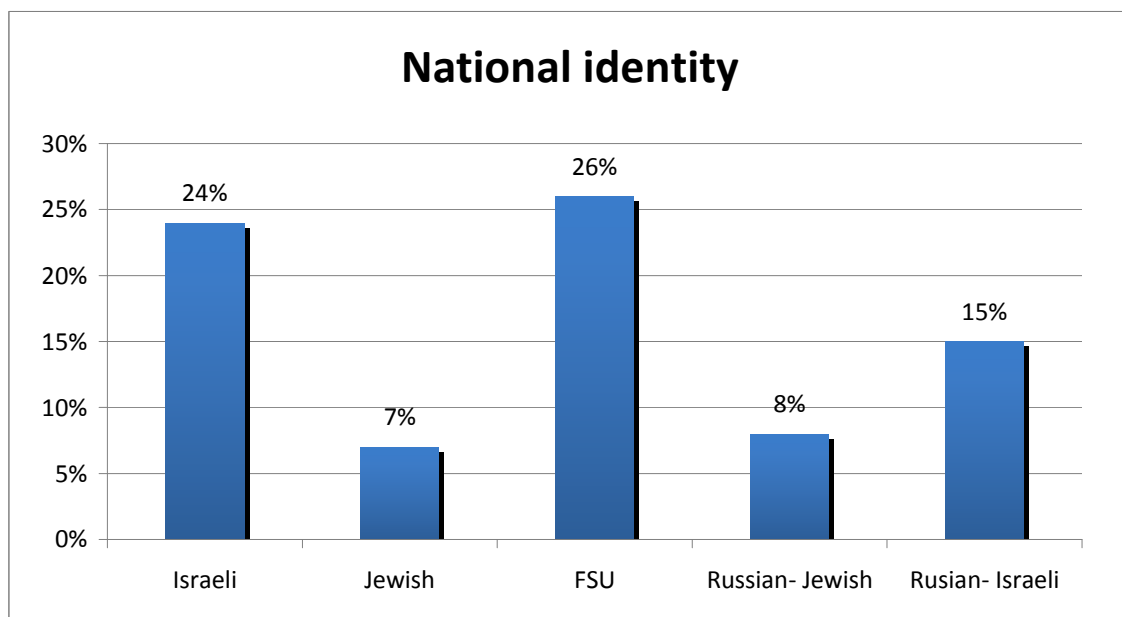


Figure 7. National identity chosen by respondents in an open-ended entry.

Thus, it turns out that country-of-origin identities (36% of the total) are still rather common in the second generation, followed by the Israeli identity (32%), and then so-called hyphenated identities. A significant share of adolescents (15%) were unsure or confused about their identities and skipped this item altogether. To diversify the concept of identity, including both its self-related and social aspects, an index was constructed based on cluster analysis of six questionnaire items (Russian and Hebrew proficiency, perceptions of and feelings towards Russian and Hebrew culture, social preferences, and general ethno-national identity). Three identity clusters have emerged: total Russian/FSU identity (19%), total Israeli identity (14%), and complex or split identity including FSU, Israeli, Jewish, and other elements (67%) – see Figure 8. Apparently, monolithic identities of any kind are relatively uncommon among young immigrants, including those born in the host country.

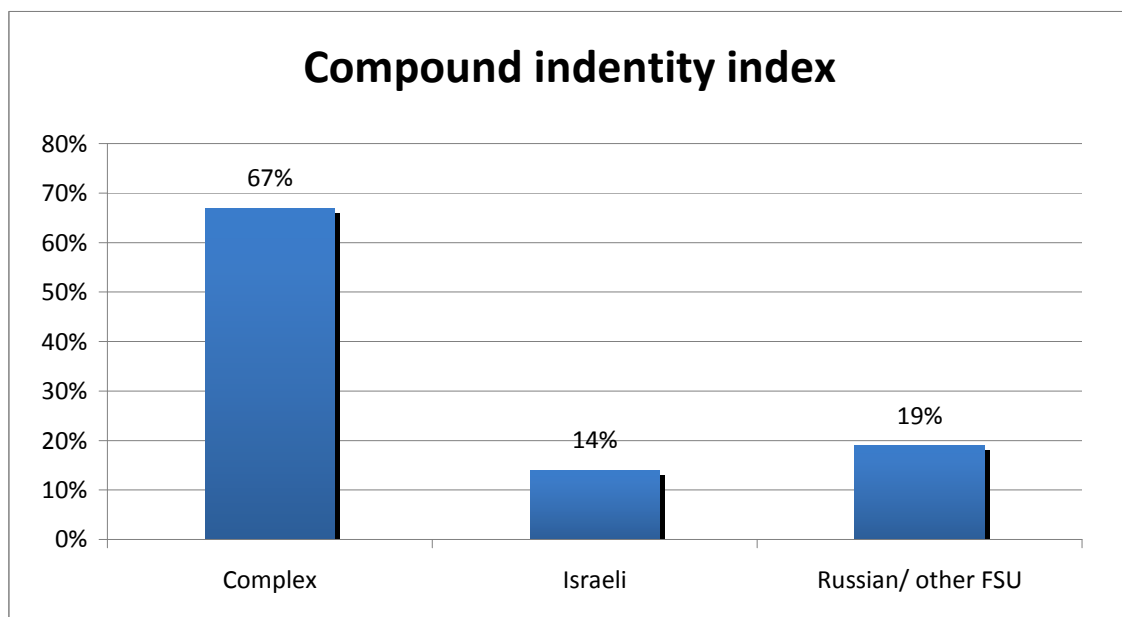


Figure 8. Compound index of identity based on six items

The distribution of identity categories differed significantly between those born in Israel and in the FSU: among the former, almost half (46%) defined themselves as 'Israelis,' while among the latter a similar share (47%) defined themselves as 'Russians/Ukrainians, etc.' The latter identity group was more common among those who moved to Israel as older children. The students from the schools with dense 'Russian' presence more often tended to choose identity labels that included country of origin (over 50% of the students vs. 29% in mixed, Hebrew-dominated schools). All three sets of differences (by place of birth, age at migration, and school type) were significant – as proven by t-tests and chi-squares (data not shown). In multiple regression analysis, the factors that significantly affected the choice of identity label (Israeli vs. origin country) included: Being born in Israel or FSU (those born in Israel being 4 times as likely to identify as Israelis); frequency of summer visits to relatives in the FSU (the more frequent and regular visitors identifying as 'Russians'); positive or negative perceptions of Israeli culture and society; and general satisfaction with life in Israel.

Subsequent regression analysis explored the main influences on identity and social integration, as well as the ties between self-identity, attitudes towards Russian and Israeli culture, and different indicators of well-being. In general, respondents whose identity was mainly or only Israeli, were more satisfied with their lives than those whose identity was based on the country of origin. The attitudes towards Russian and Israeli culture were inversely related, i.e. the students who expressed greater liking of all things Russian usually disliked most expressions of Israeli culture, and vice versa. Those, who perceived all things Israeli in the negative light, were typically less adjusted and happy than those who approved of everyday Israeli culture.

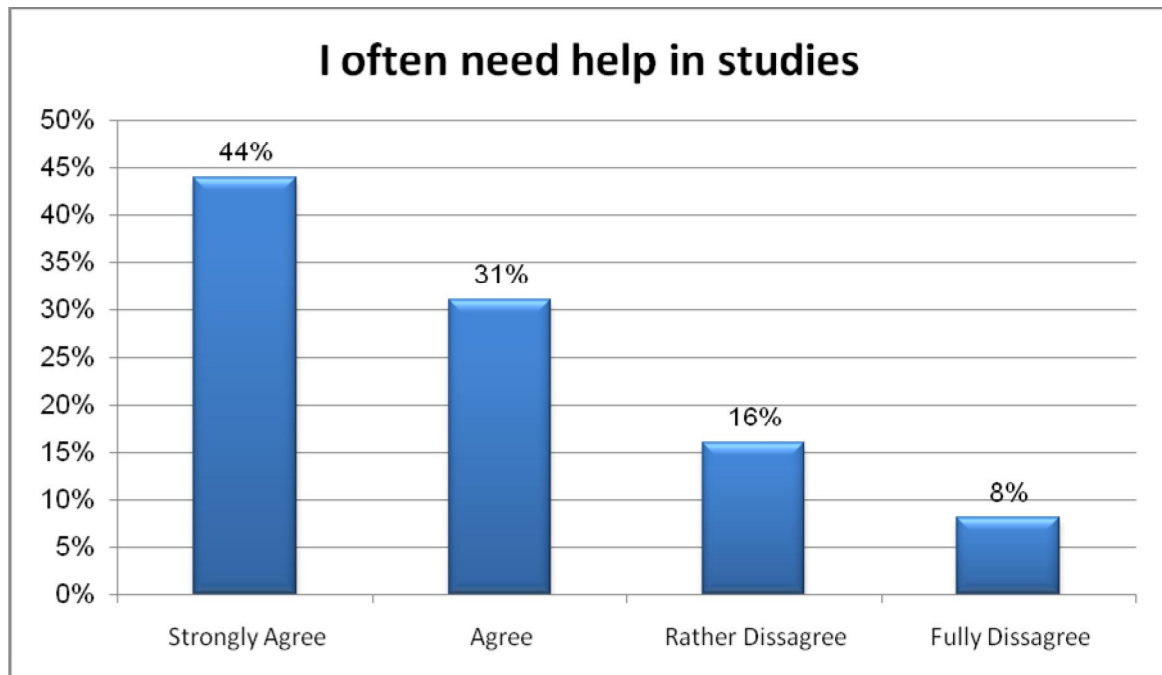


Figure 9. Reported need in teachers' help in academic matters

### **School experiences**

Generally, our respondents manifested high motivation for education and realized its role in their future social mobility. Over 86% agreed with the statement “*My education is important to me,*” with no tangible differences by the country of birth or gender (Table 4). Somewhat fewer students said “*I love to study*” (56%, girls more often than boys and FSU-born more often than Israeli-born). Despite their allegedly good command of Hebrew, 75% of the students admitted they had academic difficulties and needed external help (Figure 9). The subjects requiring the highest Hebrew proficiency (humanities and Bible studies) typically caused more problems than math or the sciences. About two-thirds of the sample believed they could get help from teachers in their studies (not necessarily turning for this help), and 69% said they tried not to miss the classes which they found difficult (Figure 10). About 78% said they never felt that teachers treated immigrant students differently (or worse) than native students, while only 6% strongly agreed with this statement and 16% agreed to some extent (Figure 11). Despite all their academic difficulties, most students (94%) were sure that they will complete high schools with full diploma (*bagrut*) and 90% intended to go to the university or college (Table 4).

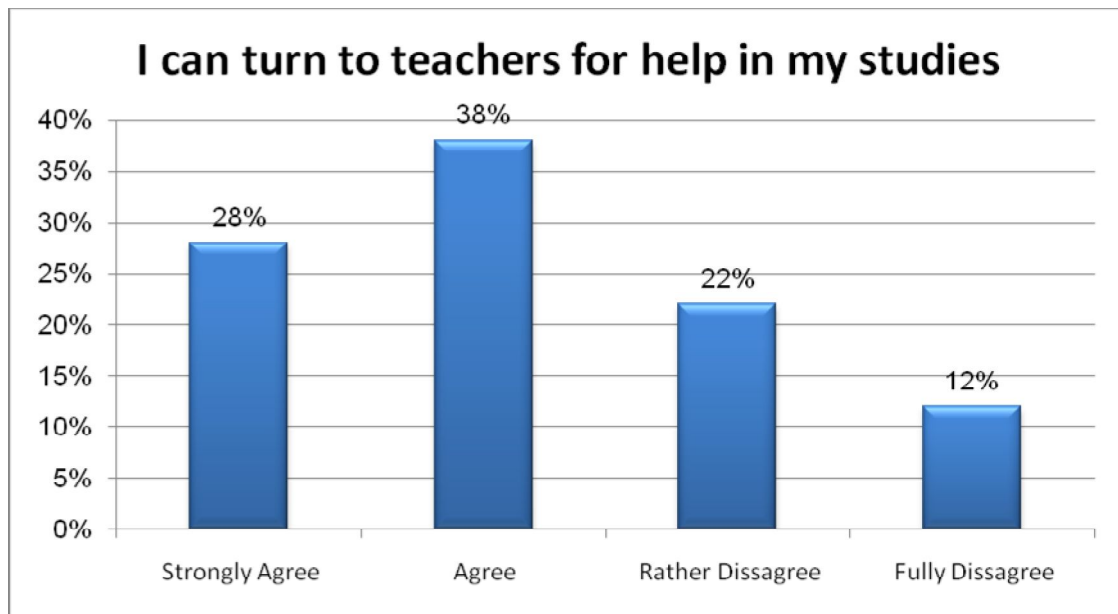


Figure 10. Availability of teachers' help when needed

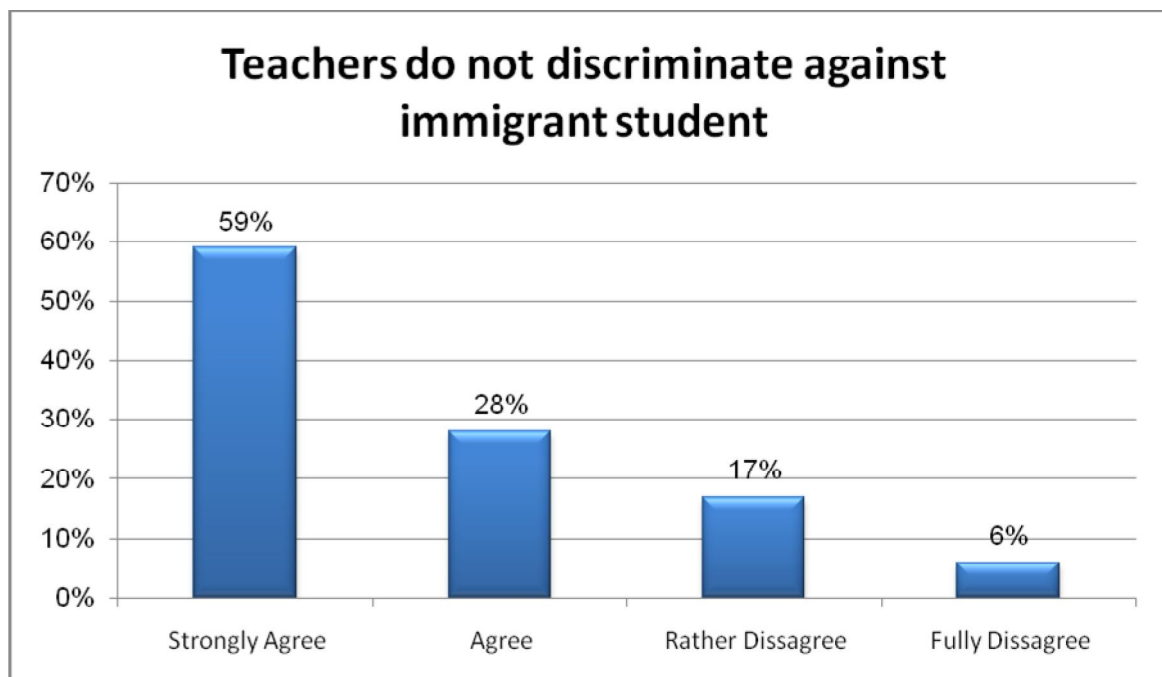


Figure 11. Perceived discrimination of immigrant students

Another set of tests was applied to the links between different identity aspects and school experiences. It showed that respondents who identified as 'Russians/other FSU' more often reported negative feelings and events at school than those identifying as 'Israelis'. Poor evaluations of the school life were more often given by respondents who viewed their Israeli peers as a 'different human species' in terms of their mentality and behavior, as well as those who felt second-rate citizens in Israel

due to their Russian origins. These two factors explained about 11% of observed differences in the answers to the school-related items. Altogether, 21% of respondents reported feelings of rejection by their Israeli peers. The factors significantly associated with this outcome included: being a boy (29% vs. 14% among the girls); being born in the FSU (28% vs. 14% among Israeli-born); and being older, i.e. studying at high school rather than middle school. The youths, who felt rejected by their native peers, also reported more negative attitudes towards Israeli culture, poorer relations with their parents, and lower general life satisfaction.

The association between school type (in terms of immigrant presence) and students' chosen self-identity was rather complex and mediated by the perceived school quality and amount of time spent in the school framework. Thus, boarding school students, who are exposed to both their immigrant and native peers for most of the week, more often defined their identity as Israeli (monolith or mixed) compared to the regular day school students, who spend less time at school and are more prone to other influences (parents, non-school friends, etc.). 'Russian' students in the schools with high academic reputation (e.g. *Shevah-Mofet* in Tel-Aviv) tended to underscore their Russianness and be proud of it. In group discussions, *Shevah-Mofet* students often underscored the fact that their school traditionally achieves one of the highest matriculation (*bargut*) rates in Israel. Taking pride in their identity, these students spoke Russian to each other more often – by contrast to most other immigrant students who usually speak Hebrew, also with their co-ethnics. Accordingly, over 50% of *Shevah-Mofet* students chose primary Russian identity labels, compared to just 13% in a southern day school with minor Russian presence; Israeli-centered identity labels were chosen by 29% and 61%, respectively.

### **Feelings of belonging and life satisfaction**

Another multiple regression model tested the variables that may explain observed differences in the feelings of belonging to Israeli society among the respondents. The factors that emerged as important (in descending order of significance) included: Attitudes towards Russian cultural legacies; school-related experiences; and relationship with the parents. Age was indirectly related to the host of Israeli experiences due to its association with the country of birth: 68% of high school and 51% of middle school students in this sample were born and spent their early years in the FSU. These students were clearly inclined towards all things Russian, socialized mainly with other 'Russians,' often visited their relatives in the FSU, and had more interest in Russian cultural products (music, Internet, books, etc.). The Israeli-born respondents (32% and 49%, in the two school tiers respectively) more often considered themselves Israeli and expressed higher satisfaction with the school and peer relations, consumed mainly/only Hebrew-based cultural and media products, and generally belonged to Israeli society on most measures included in the study. The factors of socio-economic situation of the family and residence in the 'Russian' or mixed neighborhood exerted a weaker influence that did not reach statistical significance. Together this model explained 17.2% of observed variance in the expressed feelings of belonging in Israel.

The role of the socio-economic mobility of respondents' families in their integration was hard to assess due to an apparent positive bias in the self-assessments of economic status. Due to naiveté, social desirability or other reasons, most students



described their families as financially stable if not wealthy, which is rather counter-intuitive in the light of the general data on the Russian immigrant population (Leshem, 2009). A closer look at the questionnaires revealed lack of coherence in the answers to the SES item: Some respondents whose single mothers worked as cleaners described their economic situation as ‘good,’ while others with two parents who were doctors described it as ‘average.’ One should account for a popular Israeli stereotype of Russian immigrants as poor and working in low-tier manual occupations – a stigma that our respondents sought to attenuate by upgrading the living standards of their families, at least on paper. Since economic well-being was not measured reliably, it did not emerge as a strong determinant of identity and social integration in most sets of analysis. The only tangible link between the reported living standards and respondents’ integration and satisfaction outcomes was via the absence of the father: 16% respondents who lived only with their mothers reported poor economic situation, vs. just 2% in the two-parent families (although both figures are probably gross under-estimates). Most respondents, who said that their families were struggling financially, also admitted that the parental economic problems thwarted their chances for social integration in Israel. Families headed by the mother were more common among older (high-school) respondents than among middle-school ones (32% vs. 16%). These older adolescents were typically more troubled at school (both academically and socially), reported fewer friendships with Israeli peers, identified as ‘Russians,’ and were less satisfied with their lives in Israel. This cluster of outcomes was often related to broken family relations and lesser involvement of the parents (often meaning the mothers) in their lives.

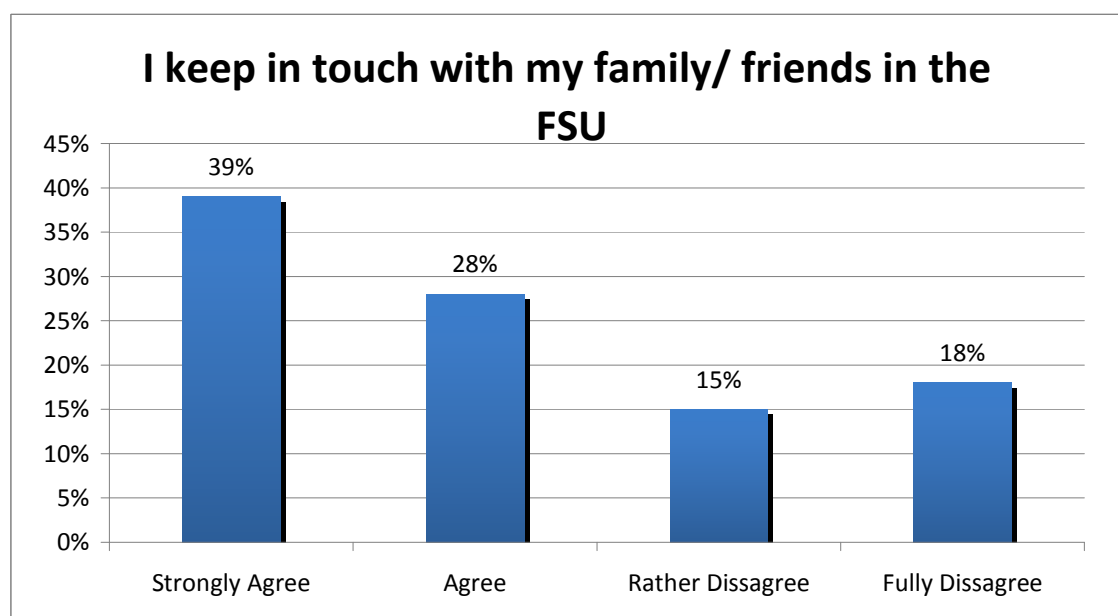


Figure 12. Keeping social ties with significant others in the FSU

The above-mentioned compound identity index was explored in association with several attitudinal and behavioral variables used in the survey. This analysis shows

that respondents with 'total Israeli' identity report higher life satisfaction than respondents with 'total Russian/FSU' identity, with those with complex or split identity in the middle. Most positive attitudes towards different aspects of school life (collapsed into an index) and higher satisfaction with relations with the parents have also been found among respondents with 'total Israeli' identity, followed by respondents with mixed identity and those with 'total Russian/FSU' identity. As expected (see Figure 12), carriers of the 'total Russian/FSU' identity reported regular summer visits with their relatives in the FSU (50% vs. 33% and 10% among the mixed and 'Israeli' groups, respectively), as well as staying in touch with family and friends in the FSU via phone, e-mail, etc. (82%, 70% and 49%, respectively, differences significant at  $p < .001$ ).

In all participating schools, the majority of respondents expressed different degrees of confidence about their future recruitment in the IDF, while only 17-27% said they did not intend to serve in the army. Significant differences between identity categories were found regarding future military service: 64% of those in the 'total Israeli' category were 'fully certain' about their IDF recruitment, compared to 49% and 32% among carriers of complex and 'total Russian/FSU' identity, respectively ( $p < .001$ ). Members of the latter group also reported the highest share of 'mainly/only Russian friends' (80%) than either mixed identity group (32%) or 'total Israeli' group (22%). Strong agreement with the saying "*My parents don't understand me because I was born/grew up in Israel*" was expressed most often by 'total Israeli' group (35%), while 57% of the 'total Russian/FSU' group strongly disagreed with it. No differences between identity groups were found in relation to the saying "*I usually respect people who are older than me and listen to them*" (87% agreed). This suggests that at least some common 'Russian/Soviet' values and behavioral codes – exemplified by respect for adults and elders – carry over to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, despite their absence in the local peer culture.

Finally, significant odds ( $p < .001$ ) were found in relation to the statement "*I belong to the Jewish people*:" while 89% of 'total Israelis' agreed, only 26% of 'total Russian/FSU' group did, with the mixed identity group in the middle (62%). Beyond varied subjective understandings of what it means to be Jewish, this gap reflects a much larger share of non-Jews and part-Jews (i.e. offspring of mixed families) among respondents with 'total Russian/FSU' identity. (No direct question on ethnic origin was asked, but this assumption is very probable). Similar differences typified the answer to the item about future plans to stay in Israel or leave: Over half of respondents who identified as Russians (and studied in more 'Russian' school contexts) were uncertain as to their future life in Israel, and about one-quarter intended to leave after school, the military and/or university. The opposite picture was found among those with 'total Israeli' identity: 80% among them were certain about their future living in Israel; the respondents with complex identities took position in the middle.

### **Open-ended items in the questionnaire**

The respondents were asked several open-ended questions seeking to expand on the issues of their memories of the initial years in Israel, school experiences, perceived identity, and life satisfaction. One of the initial entries asked for the **early recollections of immigration experiences**, either of the youths themselves (if they

migrated as children) or their parents and other relatives (for those born in Israel). Only about half of all respondents wrote answers to these questions: *What do you remember from the yearly years in Israel? How did you feel back then? Do you still recall these days now?* Most answers of respondents, who came to Israel as children, were brief and general, like *“Next to nothing, I was too little,”* or *“I remember living in an unpleasant neighborhood and having no friends”* or *“Not understanding a word in my prep school and crying a lot”* or *“The first year at school was hell, I was miserable and lonely and no one paid attention to me”* or *“I hated going to school and missed many classes but nobody noticed”* or *“At first I was very excited about all the new things and saw this as a cute adventure, but then I realized that we were going to stay here, and it was rather shocking.”* Others related to the parental problems: *“I stayed with my grandma and my parents were always out looking for work or doing some errands”* or *“My mom tried to study Hebrew in the Ulpan, but soon dropped out because she needed to work for a living. She doesn’t really speak Hebrew until this day.”* About one-third also mentioned some positive memories, of both sights and people: *“The sea, the palms and the ever-blue sky – like heaven on earth”* or *“Tasty food, lots of fruits and snacks like Babma – things we didn’t have back in the Ukraine”* or *“Israelis were so different from the people in Russia – suntanned, half-naked, loud and pushy, but friendly – many adults asked where I came from and if I needed any help”* or *“My first teacher at school was very supportive and helped me with Hebrew a lot.”*

By contrast, Israeli born respondents often wrote answers like: *“I don’t know much about it, as my parents never discuss their Aliya”* or *“I was born when my parents got settled and had a place of their own to live, so I grew up without much trouble”* or *“I assume that my parents had a hard time adjusting and finding good jobs, but this is all in the past”* or *“My mom struggled to make a living and often had to leave my older brother at home alone.”* A few students wrote things related to the language use in their families like *“I spoke only Russian till the age of four or five, so when I first went to the prep school in Hebrew it was hard on me”* or *“As a child I was a little confused about which language speak to whom, but I soon figured that Russian was for home and Hebrew for everything else.”* Two-thirds of those who answered this item wrote that the early Aliyah memories were not discussed at home. Apparently, the respondents did not broach this subject actively, unwilling to inquire about their parents’ past – neither in the FSU nor the first years in Israel. The paucity of intra-family discourse on immigration and the early years of adjustment is remarkable by itself, given the formative nature of these events in the life course of these immigrant families. The silence surrounding these past years of trial and error may reflect parental suppression of negative memories in order to protect the children from their lingering shadow. These explanations probably belong to the psychological domain, but in any case it is unfortunate that young 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants are deprived of this essential knowledge of their family’s past.

The following item addressed the students’ **perceptions of ‘Russianness and ‘Israeliness’** (88% have answered both items). The answers referred to a series of ethno-cultural images, suggesting that the perceived features of these two labels were more related to circumstances and activities than to values or ideas. All things Russian were mostly connected to the parental family and its origins, the language spoken at home, especially with the grandparents. *“Russian is my bridge to adults and elders, the way to connect to my family’s past, to learn at least a little about life in the old*

country.” *“I am clinging to whatever basic Russian I can speak and understand as a thread connecting me to my family. Many of my neighbors speak Russian and no Hebrew, so Russian allows me to be in touch with others. For the same reason, I’d like my future children to learn Russian – otherwise they won’t be able to connect to their own grandparents...”* *“Although Russian is no longer relevant or useful in my life (and will be even less so for my future children), I would like to keep it as a sentimental value and a link to my family’s past.”* The latter idea was expressed by about half of all respondents, who saw their heritage language mainly as the means for sustaining family ties. In addition, many respondents implicated the images of Russian food and family gatherings on the holidays; others mentioned reading books in Russian and surfing Russian internet sites or listening to contemporary Russian pop music. *“Russian is a useful language for reading and appreciating literature and fine arts, including music – songs and opera...knowing it gives you access to the cultural riches that Sabras cannot know and appreciate...”* Some mentioned the pragmatic value of knowing Russian as a language of a large and influential nation: *“I love both Russian and Hebrew, but one must admit that Hebrew is a local language that is not used anywhere outside Israel, while Russian is a world language...Wherever you go you meet Russian-speakers.”* A few students mentioned values and mental differences: *“Being Russian means decent behavior, relating to others with respect and tolerance...parents who encourage their kids to work hard and succeed...”* *“Russian girls love to dress up, to show style, to use makeup and high heels – they usually look better than Israelis.”*

Notably, the youths of non-European origin – Bukhara and Caucasus Jews – emphasized their separate identities, stating that they are not ‘Russians’ at all and that their culture of origin is very different. Several youths in the sample said that their place of origin made them proud and that they especially liked its food, music, and family traditions which emphasize mutual obligations and support even between distant cousins and other relatives. Another line of variance can be drawn between the youths born in Israel and those who spent their childhood in the FSU. The latter also had more tangible material ties with the people living in the FSU (relatives, friends), and some of them spent their summer vacations in their cities of origin in Russia or Ukraine. Respondents born in the FSU more often construed Russia or other FSU states as their true home and Israel – just as a place of current residence, perhaps temporary, that their parents took them to. *“I am here in Israel just by chance, it wasn’t my decision to come here. My parents decided to move, mainly for economic reasons. They try to send me to stay with my grandparents in the Ukraine whenever they can afford the airfare. I may go back there for good after school.”*

Similar differentials shaped the answers about how respondents understood “Israeliness.” Those who were born in Israel, described their belonging to the country as natural and taken for granted. *“Israel is my homeland, Hebrew is my language, and Israelis are my peer group, for better or worse. I see myself as one of them – some are my friends but others aren’t, but isn’t it always that way, in any country?”* *“I didn’t really think about what being Israeli means for me – this is simply my place, my people...”* Some respondents wrote about what they perceived as positive traits of everyday Israeli culture. *“Israelis are usually warmer and more accepting of people, unlike Russians, who are more critical and picky whom they would deal with, befriend, etc.”* *“For me to be Israeli means to love your country, to serve in the military, and then to travel in India or other exotic countries...Israelis are outgoing*

*and make friends easily... they basically see everyone as a potential friend, without special preference to a certain kind of people."*

A few others spoke of higher ideals they ascribe to the country: *"Israeliness for me is appreciation of freedom and pursuit of justice and human rights, an attempt to set a positive example for other nations both in material achievements and in moral standards."*

By contrast, youths who came to Israel as older children more often tended to see the country and its people more critically, and from the outside. Many of them identified with their place of origin and clearly distanced themselves from all things Israeli. Some of their descriptions were really explicit and hostile. *"Israelis are ignorant, rude and pushy; I can't really imagine any of them as my close friend."* *"Hebrew is a foreign and harsh-sounding language to me, I only speak it when I have to."* *"Israeli culture promotes idleness, avoidance of hard work, and being smart at fraud and shortcuts."* *"Israelis eat hummus, never let to other cars on the road, and jump the queues."* Some saying reflected respondents' negative experiences in their own social interactions with the natives: *"Israelis are a bunch of strangers who come in different shapes and colors [meaning different ethnic groups], and any of them can stick a knife in your back any moment."* *"In Israel, you feel foreign and out of place if you were not born here, or look different, or speak with an accent. Israeli kids are only interested in their own kind; if you are labeled 'Russian' you become transparent and cease to exist for them."* *"I have nothing to say about Israel – this is just the country of my citizenship and residence for the time being – I hope not forever."* *"Israelis for me are loud, rude and vulgar people who think of themselves too much. I wish I had this level of self-confidence..."* *"A foreign race; I have nothing in common with Israelis and don't want to be part of this culture."* *"Nobody asked me if I wanted to come here and I cannot really see this place as my home."*

The latter idea – of being in Israel as a result of parental decision and seeing this country as a temporary shelter rather than a permanent home – came to the fore time and again in the answers of respondents born in the FSU. Their disaffection with the adults' decision to emigrate – with harsh consequences, as many of them believe – was probably one of the reasons for these youths' more tense relationship with their parents, typified by conflict and lack of trust. The frustration at the very fact of living in Israel was never mentioned by the Israeli-born students. Apparently, the respondents' own location vis-à-vis Israeli majority – being an insider or an outsider – shapes their opinion on the range of issues, including the typical traits of Russian and Israeli cultures (e.g., the extent of tolerance towards 'others' among Israelis vs. Russians is construed by them in quite opposite ways). By contrast, no harsh, negative characteristics of 'Russianness' appeared in the written answers – suggesting an overall positive perception of all things Russian by all respondents, regardless of their place of birth.

Another open-ended item asked the students to name **one wish they would like to come true** if they were suddenly endowed with magic powers. We assumed that the answers would shed light on the greatest perceived predicaments in these adolescents' lives. Among 318 respondents, 253 (79%) wrote answers that referred altogether to 16 kinds of wishes. Below, we describe the most common categories named by the students, in the descending order of prevalence. Despite the fact that most students chose to describe the economic situation of their families as average or good, the most

common wish for change (about 17%) referred to material problems faced by the parents. *"I wish that my parents could earn enough so that they stop toiling so hard"; "I wish my mom won't be so dependent on her welfare check of 1,000 shekels [about \$280] and would stop complaining about the lack of money"; "I wish I could help my parents more with money and expenses"* – were typical sayings in this category.

The second most common category of answers (16%) boiled down to the word 'nothing' – meaning no change to wish for. *"I am happy with what I have and don't need miracles"; "I have learned to suffice with the things I can get, and this is good enough"* – were typical answers in this category. A few respondents manifested their pragmatic mindset, writing things like *"Wishful thinking is useless, so I don't fool myself with ideas of 'what could be if...'"*

About 15% expressed 'utopian' wishes that referred to human condition in general, both in Israel and globally. The answers ranged from *"To get enough money to feed all the hungry in the world"* to *"Change human nature, so that people won't fight about stupid things, stop cheating each other, and live in peace"* to *"Terminate all ethnic conflict in Israel and liberate Gil'ad Shalit [Israeli soldier kept as hostage in Gaza by Hamas]."* Some respondents wished for more personal things, such as *"To revive my grandparents and other dead relatives so that I can meet them," "Get to the ripe age of 80 and then start my life anew, as a sage," "To have more hours in the day to manage more things" or "To be happy every single day of my life."* Few respondents mentioned materialistic wishes like becoming a millionaire or winning in a lottery; most 'utopian' wishes were idealistic and souged common good.

About 10% wished to change some important aspect of their own personality, most often to add self-confidence and self-esteem; to be more popular among the peers; become more apt at interpersonal relations; to get rid of shyness and become more outgoing; to fight laziness and achieve more through hard work; to gain higher IQ and get a handle at every task easily; and last but not least – to get better looks generally or in specifics (height, weight, hair, etc.). The words 'laziness' and 'inefficiency' came to the fore quite often – indicating that the students realized their own deficiencies as lying at the root of their problems at school and in social relations.

Quite a few respondents (8.6%) wished a miracle to affect their family life, pertaining either to relations between the parents or between the parent(s) and oneself. Most often the students wished that their separated/divorced parents would get back together, *"to have a father like everyone else"* or *"to decrease tension and conflicts at home."* A few wished for a more expedient adaptation of their parents in Israel: *"I wish my parents to realize that here is not Russia and act accordingly"* or *"That my parents succeed in their work and feel better about living in Israel – to stop them from going back to Russia"* or *"That my mom learns Hebrew at last and gets a better job and a better life here"*. Typically for adolescents, many youths implied that their parents misunderstood them and/or treated them as children: *"I wish my mom becomes more open-minded like most Israeli parents and stops pestering me about late outings, extra expenses, and such"; "My parents want to raise me as a Russian kid, but I am no longer Russian."* The latter sayings reflect on the generational conflict in the context of immigration, whereby the pace of acculturation among the children is much faster than that of the parents. As a result, children of immigrants (especially those born in the host country and more distant from the heritage language and culture) experience even greater gap to their parents than non-immigrant adolescents.

The wishes referring to academic achievements were mentioned by 7% of the respondents, which is very low given that in the structured questionnaire over 75% admitted to having difficulties with their studies. These students wrote answers like *“I wish I could get full matriculation and study at a university,” “To receive good education and become a solid professional,” “I wish I could improve my grades by way of magic,”* or, conversely, *“I wish I could have a good life without full bagrut.”* The rare appearance of these wishes may be explained by several factors: Low relative importance of academic achievements on the students’ personal agenda (which is at odds with their own assertions in the questionnaire and parental background of education and social mobility); low expectations at the face of insurmountable barriers at school and in Israeli society generally or, alternatively, understanding that their academic outcomes have to do with their own hard work rather than external influences (including miracles). Given high prevalence of reported academic problems, it is hard to believe that most respondents were satisfied with the current state of affairs and hence had no wish for change.

About six percent expressed the wish to live in another country – to move back to the FSU or to the West, most commonly – to the US or Canada. *“I wish I lived in a normal country where law is respected and criminals go to jail...I doubt that Israelis can change, so I’d rather move elsewhere myself...”* Adjacent to this wish for another country was the wish to change the past, in the sense of reversing the parental decision to move to Israel and remain in their original homes (expressed by 3%). Thus, together some 9% voiced their rejection of Israel via the wishes to never have come here or emigrate elsewhere in the future.

To sum, the wishes for a ‘magic intervention’ expressed by our respondents point to the double jeopardy of coming of age in a country perceived by many as hostile and deficient in many ways. Anger towards Israel and Israelis accompanied by nostalgia towards the past and the old country (which most of them remember rather vaguely) were much more typical of the adolescents who spent their childhood in the FSU and were uprooted by their parents. Many of these youths find themselves living in the limbo – having lost their old home in Russia without gaining a firm foothold in Israel. These frustrations often draw on the memories of tough initial years of adjustment in Israeli neighborhoods and schools, while satisfaction (when present) reflects the ability to survive and manage relatively well in the Israeli ‘jungle.’ Another strong influence on these adolescents’ moods is the struggle of their parents in the process of economic and cultural adjustment in the new country. Over a quarter of our respondents live with their mothers with no paternal presence or support, and even in two-parent families the adults have had a hard time achieving reasonable living standards. The cultural and mental gap between parents and children is exacerbated by their differential pace of adjustment, Hebrew proficiency, and the permanent tension between past and present in their lives.

## **Qualitative findings**

To glean a deeper insight into the experiences and identities of our respondents, we ran five focus group discussions, each including 8-15 participants who volunteered for this research – most of them represented students with a more prominent ‘Russian/FSU’ identity. The students who identified as ‘Israelis’ were more reluctant to take part in the focus groups, which they perceived as targeting immigrants, and

hence were underrepresented among the discussants. All focus groups were mixed in terms of gender but more or less homogenous in terms of age and school type. The discussions were facilitated by the second author (PC), conducted in Hebrew, and lasted two hours on the average; they were taped and transcribed for subsequent thematic analysis. The main topics covered by these discussions included childhood memories of immigration and schooling, school choice, academic difficulties, relations with the teachers, friends inside and outside the school, and parents' role in the lives of these adolescents. The findings of the group discussions often stood in contrast to the largely-positive or neutral survey answers, revealing many traumatic experiences of the immigrant children and adolescents at school and in peer relations. The discussions started with the question about the reasons for choosing a school with dense 'Russian' presence, which served as a gateway to revealing many hidden pains in these adolescents' past.

Most informants, and especially high school students, usually explained their choice of school by "*the wish to be among kids like myself*," "*to feel normal and belonging to the majority*" (as opposed to the regular, Sabra-dominated schools where 'Russian' students were a minority). Since all informants were proficient in Hebrew, and all the studies (except the Russian language and literature) were in Hebrew anyway, language barrier was not a factor in the school choice. Most of them have made this decision together with their parents who heard about the school from their immigrant friends. Many students commuted to the school from the neighboring towns, which required some effort and additional costs. Many informants believed that it was worth it, since schools with half or more 'Russian' students (that typically have many 'Russian' teachers too) have higher academic standards vis-à-vis regular Israeli schools, giving the students a better chance to complete it with full matriculation (bagrut)<sup>2</sup>. Some mentioned economic advantages of the schools with large presence of the immigrants, e.g. state and municipal subsidies for transportation, lunches, cultural programs, textbooks, and more - to a great economic relief of immigrant parents<sup>3</sup>. Others stressed that they can always turn to the teachers for help if they fall behind in their studies, especially in the scientific disciplines and Russian-related classes (where most teachers are their co-ethnics). Somewhat less confidence was expressed regarding availability of help in Hebrew-rich subjects like the Bible, history or social studies - while most students, whose Russian side was more prominent, had a difficult time mastering these subjects.

Most informants admitted that their social preference for co-ethnic classmates reflected traumatic past experiences with the native Israeli (Sabra) children during their elementary school years. Most informants, especially the boys, were clearly reluctant to admit that they used to be victimized by the Israeli peers, seeing this as humiliating and casting them in the negative light. It took some effort for the group facilitator to win the students' trust and have them 'spill their beans' before the group. Once the ice was broken, the stories of abuse and alienation were plentiful. In one

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the matriculation rate at *Shevah-Mofet* school is close to 80%, with the national average for the Jews of 65% and for recent FSU immigrants - 55% [personal communication of the school counselor].

<sup>3</sup> In Israeli public schools, education is free but all the extras (cultural events, meals, transportation and textbooks) are purchased by the parents, reaching substantial sums of hundreds or even thousands shekels.



group, 9 out of 14 participants told the stories of social isolation (boycott), verbal abuse, and even bullying and violence they experienced as 'Russians' in the hands of their Israeli classmates. Despite the fact that many of these students were born in Israel and spoke Hebrew without an accent, they were constantly teased as 'dirty Russians' and 'fake Jews,' while their parents were called 'prostitutes and alcoholics', 'street cleaners' and other such names, reflecting negative stereotypes of the former Soviet immigrants that Israeli children apparently heard at home and brought to school. One boy quietly reminisced, with his eyes cast down, how during his first year at school his classmates often grabbed him by the legs and hung him out of the third-floor window "to teach him a lesson." Several boys, who had studied in the religious school *Shuvu*, mentioned that they never felt on equal footing with other students there because of their families' secular background and lack of familiarity with the Jewish customs and religion.

The forms of abuse by the class peers clearly differed for the boys and girls: boys more often engaged in inter-group violence (assault-retaliation pattern), while the girls typically used more subtle verbal and social tools, such as denying 'Russians' small privileges, not inviting them to group outings and birthday parties, calling them nasty names, stealing their things, etc. While 'Russian' boys often tried to stand up for their dignity and fight back, the girls typically remained passive and quietly suffered the attacks and humiliations. Most informants said that they avoided complaining against their torturers to the teachers and other adults, believing that this would only exacerbate the attacks. Besides inefficiency of such complaints, "*ratting on your mates*" to adults or any kind of authorities is against the "*honor code*" of ex-Soviets, adults and children alike. One is expected to be stoic at the face of conflict and solve his/her problems with peers by themselves. A few parents, who knew about their children's plight with Israeli peers, tried to complain to the teachers or principals but, according to our informants, this was pointless, since school staff had no means of enforcing good behavior on their students. "*We cannot tell the students whom to be friends with and whom to invite to their outings,*" was the typical response of school authorities. Only most blatant cases of violence received some administrative response, while most subtle abuse went unnoticed and/or unpunished by the adults.

Lisa (alias) came to Israel as a one-year-old and speaks fluent Hebrew without a trace of an accent. Yet, her appearance sets her aside in the crowd of Israeli peers - very fair skin, blue eyes and blond hair clearly point to her Slavic origins. Lisa recalled how throughout the elementary and middle school she was teased and verbally assaulted by her classmates, calling her names such as "*dirty Russian whore, false Jew, stinky Christian, ugly face, and a child of alcoholics*" – a hideous set of labels picked up from adults and voiced by young schoolchildren towards their mate, just because of her different looks. Notably, the curses thrown at Lisa often implied her allegedly non-Jewish origins or religion – the kind of negative stereotypes of Russian immigrants often circulated by the Israeli media during the 1990s and early 2000s (Lemish, 2001). She continued:

*When I was little, I came to believe that something was indeed very wrong with me, that being different from Sabra kids was a deviance, if not a sin. I kept asking my mom whether being different meant being bad or inferior... There was this Sabra boy who liked me and tried to show his affection, but the girls from my class took him aside and explained to him*

*that he shouldn't get near me so that 'not to get involved with gentiles...' – as if we were about to get married!.. It took me years to reject this external view of myself and accept my Russianness as a good thing... Now I am proud of my origins and of my parents, despite years of humiliation at school.*

Another group participant, Rina (alias) looks, by contrast, very Levantine – with olive skin, dark hair and eyes, has no accent in Hebrew, and was even born in Israel. This did not save her, though, from bullying of her classmates in the past, simply because of her former-Soviet origins. The curses were hurled both at her and her parents:

*I was so used to hearing curses day after day...You dirty Russian, cat-killer, streetwalker, daughter of pimps and waste cleaners* [her mother had worked as a cleaner for a while before Rina's birth, but all Russian mothers were labeled as cleaners for Israeli kids]... I was never invited to birthday parties and always denied small privileges given to popular kids – all because of my parents and a label 'Russian.'

These narratives revealed a heavy load of hostility towards children coming from a Russian background in Israeli schools that was well-documented back in the 1990s, when these children comprised a large chunk of the student body often causing inter-group violence (Sever, 1999). Apparently, this problem has not disappeared also over the last decade, when 'Russian' students became a small minority in regular Israeli schools and could no longer be construed by the *Sabras* as a collective threat. There is little wonder that these adolescents tried to avoid this kind of milieu at least in the upper middle and high school, and when the opportunity presented itself, switched to the schools with a significant presence of their co-ethnics, where they could no longer be humiliated by the Sabra majority.

### **In-depth interviews**

In order to cast a glance at the older members of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of Russian immigrants and get their retrospective view of adaptation in Israel, several in-depth interviews were conducted with men and women now in their late 20s or early 30s. All of them arrived in Israel with their parents between the ages of 5 and 10 in the early 1990s and therefore were mostly educated and socialized in Israel. About half of them were married or lived with a partner and had children of their own. Most informants were upwardly mobile, either advanced students or young professionals. All the parents of these informants had higher education and worked in a range of white-collar occupations, both before and after immigration. The interviews focused on the recollections of their childhood and adolescence in Israel, relations with the parents and peers, identity and future plans.

While looking back at the initial post-migration years, all the informants stressed that they had to struggle with the challenges of Israeli schooling and peer relations on their own, since their parents were overwhelmed by the family's financial survival, occupational and cultural adjustment in the new country and could give them little time and support. *"I hardly ever saw my mom, she worked two or three shifts every day...So I had to take responsibility early, for myself and my younger brother..."* (Gadi, 27, graduate student). At the same time, the parents struggling for their occupational mobility set an example of ambition and hard work for the children. *"My parents worked hard to get back to their professions for almost ten years, but they*

*eventually made it! In my family, they saw immigration as a fresh start and a new opportunity, so I took this lead and pursued my own ambitions relentlessly...*”[Annie, 30, college graduate and NGO employee].

Most recalled their poor living conditions at the outset, lumping resources with grandparents and other relatives while renting small apartments together. Another typical memory was that of financial problems, chronic shortage of cash at home, and inability to compete with Israeli classmates as to fashionable clothes and various youth gadgets. At school many immigrant students felt bored and irrelevant – either because they did not understand the content of the lessons (particularly in humanities) or, conversely, because the material was too easy for them (e.g., in the math and sciences where the Russian curriculum is more advanced than the Israeli one). All of them mentioned exclusion by the *Sabra* peers in the early years, which gradually abated with better Hebrew command and incipient acculturation. *“I had no friends at school – for hours I would sit alone on a swing in the park and compose in my head long letters to my best friend back at home [in Latvia] – about how I’d like this adventure to be over and come back where I belong... Over time I realized with pain that I wasn’t going back...It was only after age 12 or so that I had someone to talk to here in Israel.”* (Lera, 30, a chemist). Different informants had a variety of experiences with *Sabra* peers, including some very positive ones – of support and good will. Some reported that their best friends in the middle and high school were native Israelis, especially if they found common interests, such as music bands or computing. Most informants said that their ‘Russianness’ largely stopped being a predicament (in terms of self-esteem and peer relations) in middle school, although they still felt different from their Israeli-born Hebrew peers until this day.

All but few informants confirmed the above-mentioned survey finding that the difficult years of initial adjustment in Israel have not been discussed with the parents – who clearly wished to forget these early humiliations. Annie told that she remembers how her mother – a school teacher of music – often returned from work with tears in her eyes, being hurt by the boldness of her students and the indifference of colleagues. Ronny (29, a programmer) recalled how they needed money so badly that his father – an engineer – took up any odd job in their neighborhood. Once he spent several hours lifting heavy boxes of tiles to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor by foot, receiving in the end 50 shekels (about 18 dollars). Reflecting differential pace of acculturation between parents and children, most informants helped their parents and other adults to read official Hebrew mail and settle various bureaucratic matters with the authorities – serving as guides to the new society. This role reversal with the adults endowed them with the sense of importance and responsibility. The parents, in turn, sometimes expressed their feelings of guilt at ‘abandoning’ their children in the early years of immigration in the sense of being unable to help them with their school and peer problems and not being present enough in their lives due to the need to make a living almost 24/7.

Some mentioned the parental attempts to set them strict limits during adolescent years in terms of outings, night curfew, and peer sleepovers – ‘Russian style parenting’ they called it – resulting in conflict and tense relations. Others mentioned that their parents took ‘therapeutic approach’ in cases of their acting out and some mild deviance (missing classes, shoplifting, incidents with alcohol, etc.), the way such behavior is treated in Israel, and sent their children to psychologists and youth counselors instead

of punishing them. Thus, Lera told how she was almost-expelled from her middle school for disrupting the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony. She loudly protested the lack of emphasis on the active resistance and heroism of many Jewish fighters during the War, exemplified by her own grandfather who was a colonel in the Red Army decorated by many medals for heroism. This grandfather was also an ardent Zionist who initiated the whole family's move to Israel and served as a role model for Lera and her parents in overcoming the hardships of resettlement. As Lera saw it back then, this alternative kind of Jewish family narrative was ignored by the Israeli hegemonic ideology (stressing only victimization and passive suffering), at least as it came to the fore in official school ceremonies. Lera was a rebellious adolescent, and it was more than once that she protested the established Israeli routines and acted out, to the point of dropping out of school for a few months, changing schools, and being a permanent headache for her family called to settle the conflicts at school and at youth groups she had joined. In any event, by the time of early adulthood, most parent-children conflicts have been solved, and our informants typically spoke of close relations with their parents and grandparents.

Answering the question: *"Do you still feel Russian and, if so, how is it expressed?"* most informants answered in a strong affirmative. The features that they considered Russian most typically included their cultural tastes in literature, music, leisure activities, etc. and the connection with their parental families. *"Things we do together as a family are clearly Russian – our picnics, nature hikes, holiday celebrations – all include Russian food and drink, Russian story telling and anecdotes... the style is very different from that of Israeli families (Lera, 30)"*. *"I often read Russian books and surf ru.net – this is more pleasurable and informative than reading things in Hebrew"* (Ronny). Some informants mentioned that, unlike their Sabra peers, they have been economically independent for a while and even helped their parents every now and then. *"I realize that no one can help us buy our first apartment or pay the rent – like many Israeli parents do for their children. This makes life more difficult, but, at the end of the day, gives you more self-respect."* Feeling their cultural distinctiveness, most informants chose other Russian immigrants as their best friends, dates and spouses (most of the married informants had co-ethnic spouses). *"My rational self understands that I should not prefer Russians over Israelis, but my emotional self still disagrees"* (Ronny). This latter comment attests to the adoption of the popular culture discourse on the self by these young adults – universal in Israel but rather uncommon in Russia. It also alludes to the lingering sentimental value of the heritage culture that is of no apparent instrumental value in the Israeli context.

Our next question was: *"What bothers you in Israel and Israelis?"* Some typical answers were: *"Extreme directness and lack of tact"*; *"Israelis are overly self-confident, pushy and lack self-criticism"*; *"Fanatic adherence to religion and Jewish traditions are still weird for me."* *"I am annoyed by high theories and left politics of the wealthy parents' kids living at their expense in hype Tel Aviv neighborhoods like Florentin or Neve Tzedek. Their philosophy and moral principles don't lead to any action and they won't give up a bit of their privileges."* *"In many ways, I'll never feel fully Israeli however hard I'd try – my inner self is split. I read Edgar Keret's [popular Hebrew novelist] stories, watch Israeli movies and TV dramas, but I respond to them differently than my Sabra peers."* These comments reveal several lines of perceived cultural differences between young Israelis of Russian origin and their Israeli peers – some pertaining to the communicative style (directness and self-

confidence), others to the role of Jewish traditions in Israeli way of life, and yet others to the idle lifestyle of young Sabra elites who dwell on their inherited wealth and preach 'high principles' without actually living by them.

*"How do you define yourself?"* Although it was implied by the question, most respondents did not start their identity description from ethno-national labels, and some skipped altogether the notions of Israeli, Russian or former Soviet. Some informants spoke about their professional ambitions, others about their favorite writers and books, yet others about personality traits (adventurous, social, etc.) or family relations and parenting. Only about half mentioned their self-identity as Israelis, their love for the country and the wish to contribute to its prosperity. When they mentioned their Israeli-acquired features, most spoke of sociability, ingenuity, impatience, and the search for quick fixes to complex problems – so the perceived Israeliness also pertained to the behavioral and psychological rather than political domain. The same applied to the question on the future plans: most informants related to the personal and occupational aspects of their lives (and future changes they desired), while few of them mentioned national or political topics. *"I hope I can complete my doctorate and work as social researcher in the future"* (Gadi); *"At this moment, my soon-coming baby is the most important preoccupation for me"* (Lera, who was pregnant); *"I wish to improve the work milieu and productivity at my firm and wherever else I'd work in the future"* (Ronny). Indirectly, most informants implied their intention to stay in Israel for the years to come. Under the same breath, several informants mentioned their self-concept as global citizens and looked forward to future travel, perhaps working elsewhere, etc.

Thus, the narratives by the children of immigrants, who came of age in Israel, highlight several common features of their social trajectories: the deficit of parental support and the need to survive and advance independently from early age on; parental strife for social and occupational mobility as a role model; the switch from controlling and punitive to therapeutic approach in parent-children relations; the role of grandparents in their lives, and more. Standing out in these narratives is a critical perception of many Israeli traditions, lifestyle and behavioral traits, cultural and media products, etc. –analyzed by these youths as 'external observers' rather than insides or full participants. The intrinsic ambivalence of the self-concept and ethno-cultural identity of these young Russian Israelis (that can also be interpreted as bi-culturalism) is construed by most of them as an asset rather than liability in the increasingly cosmopolitan Israeli society.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Although most former Soviet immigrants of the last wave have spent between one and two decades in Israel, their social incorporation is still challenged and subjected to sociological inquiry (Remennick, 2007, 2011; Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, 2007; Leshem, 2009). The focus of researchers' interest is gradually moving from adult Russian-speaking immigrants to their children – the 1.5 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation – yet the completed studies of this new generation are still very few (Eisikowits, 2006; 2008; Niznik, 2011). Since the children of Russian immigrants born in the early and mid-1990s are now adolescents who study in the middle and high school, this study targeted students of six Israeli schools located across the country.

Assuming that the composition of the student body and teaching staff (in terms of the share of co-ethnic immigrants) has important implications for students' social networks, language use and identity, we tried to diversify the participant schools in this respect. Of the six public schools in this study (four day schools and two boarding schools), two included a small minority of students with a Russian background (up to 10%), two others had a larger minority (10%-25%), and the remaining two schools (including *Shevah-Mofet* in Tel-Aviv) included over half of such students. The de-facto study population included 42% of adolescents born in Israel and the rest came to the country from Russia (18%), Ukraine (33%), and other FSU countries as children under the age of 10 (the mean age at migration was 5.3 years). To capture more fully the experiences of coming of age in Israel as a Russian immigrant child, the data collection embraced three methods: a survey is a larger sample, focus groups with student volunteers, and in-depth interviews with older representatives of this generation now in their late 20s. By approaching the subject from three different methodological angles (structured survey, focus groups and personal interviews) we tried to sketch a more balanced profile of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation youths of Russian origin. The research questions centered on the factors shaping identity of these youths, their attitudes towards Israeli and Russian cultures, the role of parents and schools in their socialization, and their general life satisfaction.

Our findings point to a significant heterogeneity in the ranks of Israeli-Russian adolescents and young adults in terms of national identity and cultural continuity. Since direct questions on identity often cause confusion, particularly among younger respondents (Niznik, 2004; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2006), we tried to glean understanding of these youths self-concept by different means in different sections of the questionnaire. The central item was framed as a vignette – a hypothetical international youth event placing national and ethnic identities in the spotlight. The item was deliberately open ended, which is also unusual in social studies of identity. As could be expected for young immigrants, a complex picture has emerged: 26% said they were just 'Russians/ Ukrainians or other former Soviets'; 24% called themselves just 'Israelis,' and 23% opted for mixed categories like Russian-Jewish-Israeli. Only 7% chose 'Jewish' as their primary national identity, and 15% did not answer this item. Over half (54%) chose identity categories that included their parents' country of origin (Russia, Ukraine, etc.). Thus, our findings are in line with some international and Israeli studies that point to significant ethno-cultural retention among 2nd generation immigrants (Eisikovits, 2000; Portes et al., 2001; Farley and Alba, 2002; Remennick, 2003; Kasinitz et al., 2008).

The tendency to identify as Russian was corollary to a higher Russian language proficiency and its more frequent usage outside of the home (i.e. with friends, teachers, etc.), Russian preferences in reading and media consumption, the predominance of co-ethnic friends, and positive attitudes towards both Russian high and everyday culture (e.g., expressed in politeness, self-restraint, respect for elders, and other such behaviors uncommon among young Israelis). The preference for all things Russian was often combined with clear dislike of all things Israeli, reflecting a replacive rather than additive relationship between the two cultures – making true biculturalism rather uncommon in this sample. The regression analysis of the survey data has shown that the stronger correlates of Russian cultural continuity and self-identification were: being born in the FSU and migrating as an older (rather than younger) child; sustaining regular contacts with significant others remaining in the

FSU (including prolonged summer visits), living in the neighborhood with the high presence of co-ethnics; spending fewer years in Israel, and living with mother only (rather than two parents). All these features typify the relatively recent arrivals from the FSU, who are often of mixed ethnicity (half or quarter Jewish) and of lower pre-migration socio-economic background (Tolts, 2003). These immigrant families (both parents and children) often manifested poorer adjustment in Israel, both in the labor market and in social interactions with the receiving society – vis-à-vis their counterparts who arrived in the early 1990s (Leshem, 2009).

In this sense, Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> generation youth manifests clear signs of segmented assimilation (Portes and Min Zhou, 1993) whereby their trajectories and outcomes in Israeli society follow several possible scripts. The successful ones often manifest the signs of rapid Israelization (generally and at school), but at the same time strive for academic excellence – performing the Russian-Jewish cultural script (Eisikovits, 2008). A good high school diploma opens many doors for these youths, including serving in elite IDF units, admission to the best universities, and subsequent professional careers. The parents of these achievers are usually achievers themselves, who managed to secure well-paying skilled jobs (and the ensuing higher quality of life for their families) despite harsh competition and built-in immigrant disadvantage on the labor market. By contrast, the downwardly-mobile youths of ‘Russian Aliyah’ typically live in ethnic enclaves, are often raised by single mothers who struggle for economic survival, get less adult support and supervision, and as a result have academic and social problems and may drop out of high school altogether (Sever, 2006). This precludes their further educational mobility and keeps them in the lower tiers of the labor market (where their parents toil) after completion of the army service (if any). Thus, parental background and personal resources may have a strong influence on the integration scripts of their children (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009; Remennick, forthcoming).

On the opposite end of the identity scale (a singular Israeli one), one finds a cluster of characteristics suggesting a more positive adjustment in the family, at school and among the peers. These students (most of whom were born in Israel) tend to report their full affinity with the Hebrew language and Israeli culture, consume mainly Hebrew-based media and have a majority of Sabra friends. At the same time, they express more positive feelings about their school experience and closer relationships with the parents. Most of these students come from two-parent families that are financially secure and reside in the mixed or native-dominated neighborhoods. The parents of these students are relatively well-adjusted economically and socially and can offer greater support to their children in the matters of peer relations and schooling. Being firmly rooted in Israel, these immigrant families (including our young respondents) are less inclined to keep dense contacts with the former homelands and seldom/never send their children to prolonged visits in the FSU. They also prefer to send their offspring to regular Israeli schools rather than immigrant-dominated educational frameworks. Thus, the Israeli identity of these students results from, and is daily reinforced by, their families successful integration in Israel. In other words, immigrant parents, who are less inclined to Russian cultural continuity and feel more secure and content in Israeli society, often transfer these qualities and attitudes to the children (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009; Remennick, forthcoming).

Yet, most students in this study chose identity categories based on the Israeli-Russian-Jewish mix rather than singular categories discussed above. These 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Russian Israelis represent common hybridity of immigrant identities that draw on both heritage and host cultures, which is augmented by ambivalence and self-search typical of adolescence (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2006, 2009). The students who manifested complex identities took position between 'Israelis' and 'Russians' in terms of peer relations, school adjustment, and general life satisfaction. More of them admitted to the conflict with the parents due to the cultural gap (parents enforcing Russian rules, while these youths tried to live by Israeli ones) and had a mixed circle of friends at school but mostly Russian circle after school. At the same time, many respondents in this group manifested an emerging bilingual and bicultural identity, feeling comfortable in both Israeli and Russian settings and easily switching between the two. Thus, in a way, these youths were better adjusted to the bicultural situation they actually lived in (Russian on the inside and Israeli on the outside). Bilingual and bicultural personality has been suggested as an optimal way of adjustment for the first and second generation immigrants who seek a compromise between their heritage and current needs (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2006; Portes and Hao, 2002; Portes et al., 2009). Unfortunately, many other immigrant children and youths of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation followed an unfortunate pattern of semi-lingualism, i.e. gradual attrition of the mother tongue (Russian) with modest advances in the host language (Hebrew) beyond the necessary minimum, leaving them in the linguistic and cultural limbo (Niznik, 2004). Quite a few students in this study did not manifest a firm command of either language and admitted to their poor literacy, especially in Russian.

Many of the youths with complex ethno-cultural identity opted for the school settings with significant presence of co-ethnics (as both students and teachers) feeling at a greater ease socially and believing in academic advantages of such schools. Indeed, schools with a strong 'Russian' presence in Israel usually offer higher standards in teaching of scientific disciplines, as well as humanities (including Russian, literature and the arts). In addition, some of them offer subsidies to the students from poorer families in transportation, meals, textbooks, etc. – which is a great relief for their parents. Students in schools with a higher share of Russian immigrants enjoy a less violent school environment and greater access to help in academic matters (particularly in the Hebrew-rich disciplines like the Bible). Along with a denser safety network they offer to the immigrant students, such schools allegedly reinforce the Russian elements in their identity and lifestyle, facilitating cultural continuity in the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. However, our findings suggest that the school setting often exerts a subtle and indirect influence on the reinforcement of the Russian identity among the students, whereby several other factors are at work (perceived academic standards, contacts with Sabra peers, teacher-student relations, and more). Generally, at the schools where pedagogical staff encouraged multi-cultural interaction and expressions of student individuality and talent the immigrant youths felt more legitimate to keep and manifest their Russian side. Similar findings pointing to the salience of micro-policy and general atmosphere at school were reported by Niznik (2004) and Shamai and Ilatov (2001, 2005).

The focus groups revealed additional layers in the students' experiences that could not be captured by the structured survey. While most respondents (about 80%) described their current peer relations at school as peaceful, friendly or at least neutral, many of them had experienced severe episodes of exclusion and bullying by native Israeli



peers in the past, mostly in elementary school. The evidence of Sabra peers' hostility towards 'Russian' newcomers (who often formed a large chunk of a class) and inadequate response of the teachers and principals was abundant in school-based studies of youth absorption during the 1990s (Sever, 1999; Eisikovits, 2000, Shamai and Ilatov, 2001). One could assume that, by the early-mid 2000s, relatively few newcomer children from the FSU would be received by their *Sabra* peers more amicably or at least neutrally – but our findings refute this assumption. Judging by several stories told by focus group participants, the negative labeling and humiliation by the *Sabra* majority was experienced both by the kids born in Israel of 'Russian' parents and (especially) those of a more apparent immigrant stock, i.e. born in the FSU, looking and sounding more 'Slavic'. Having an immigrant parent or manifesting any cultural traits associated with 'Russianness' in popular stereotypes (e.g. in clothing, content of school lunch or music tastes) was enough to trigger different acts of exclusion, compelling 'Russian' kids to lump together for self-protection and company. Notably, fluent Hebrew free of any Russian accent was not enough for these students to pass as regular Israelis. 'Othering' of the students with former-Soviet background gradually ceased towards middle school, but many of them still felt estranged from the *Sabra* majority. For these students and their parents alike, the choice of a middle/high-school with a strong imprint of 'Russian' pedagogical and cultural tradition meant a safe haven, in addition to better education.

Finally, the interviews with the older members of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation suggest that immigrants' early experiences at school and other peer groups make a significant imprint on their subsequent attitudes towards Israel and social relations with Israeli peers. Given that most immigrant parents were immersed in their own economic and social hardships (and had few cultural tools to help their children socially or at school), these children had to learn how to swim in the new waters all on their own. For some, this harsh experience reinforced their fighter spirit and facilitated a rapid social learning and eventual adjustment to the new rules of the game. For others, more vulnerable or slower learners, the immersion into local schooling and 'peer jungle' led to mental trauma and rejection of all things Israeli, while seeking shelter in the familiar immigrant networks. The salient role of early experiences with *Sabra* peers in shaping subsequent social and cultural preferences of young immigrants was also shown in an earlier study among members of the 1.5 generation, who came of age over the late 1990s-early 2000s (Remennick, 2003). These findings underscore the need to redirect the flows of institutional and private support towards immigrant children in the early years of their encounter with local schools that is potentially traumatic and counter-productive for further integration. By contrast to a common wisdom, immigrant children do not have an easy time entering schools and peer groups in their new countries of residence (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2006; Rubinstein et al. in this volume). Our findings point to the fact that local-born children of immigrants may still experience significant adversity both in learning and in social contacts, particularly if their families are single-parent and/or have limited personal resources for supporting and protecting their offspring from the 'pains of absorption.'

## Appendix

Below we show selected survey findings – students' responses to the statements reflecting attitudes and experiences on the range of subjects. Most statements offered

a four-point response scale: *strongly agree* – *mostly agree*– *mostly disagree*–*strongly disagree*, and a few were offered in a YES-NO format. The tables below present the percentage of positive answers – Strongly Agree/Mostly Agree or YES.

**Table 1. Elements of Russian/former Soviet Preferences and Cultural Identity**

<i>Attitude or Statement</i>	<i>Total (N=318)</i>	<i>Israel- born (N=129)</i>	<i>FSU-born (N=189)</i>	<i>Boys (N=167)</i>	<i>Girls (N=151)</i>
Feel Russian/f. Soviet in most contexts and situations	73.1	67.8	76.5	76.0	69.9
Read Russian books	38.3	19.3	50.8	36.4	40.3
Listen to Russian music	68.1	52.0	78.6	65.0	71.4
Surf Russian Internet	48.2	26.2	63.3	51.9	44.4
Prefer Russian dates & girl/boyfriends	71.4	67.5	74.1	72.5	70.3
Russians are more reliable friends than Sabras	74.6	61.3	81.7	78.2	69.5
Wish to visit parental/own country of origin	78.4	73.0	81.9	76.1	81.0
Visits with family in FSU during summer vacations (every summer + sometimes)	36.2	25.7	46.2	35.8	36.5
Keep in touch with family & friends in FSU (on-line, tel.)	67.1	55.4	75.0	61.7	72.8
Prefer living in mostly 'Russian' neighborhood	52.9	46.7	56.9	57.1	48.3
10 years from now Israel will have a PM of Russian origin	74.5	81.0	70.1	73.0	76.0
Feel 2 <sup>nd</sup> rate citizen in Israel	23.4	12.5	31.0	28.7	17.6

**Table 2. Elements of Israeli Preferences and Cultural Identity**

<i>Attitude or Statement</i>	<i>Total (N=318)</i>	<i>Israel- born (N=129)</i>	<i>FSU- born (N=189)</i>	<i>Boys (N=167)</i>	<i>Girls (N=151)</i>
Feel Israeli in most contexts and situations	68.7	78.7	61.8	65.3	72.5
Like open and direct style of Israeli culture	58.1	64.6	53.8	55.5	61.6
Read books in Hebrew (beyond school texts)	69.8	79.5	63.3	58.4	82.6
Serf in Hebrew-based Internet	86.1	93.8	80.9	82.5	90.0
Israelis are rude and uncultured	38.1	39.4	37.3	35.8	40.7
Sabras are often unreliable; one can't trust their promises	41.7	35.8	49.9	50.6	38.2
Have no ethnic preference in dating and friendships	51.0	56.3	47.3	51.2	50.7
Serving in IDF is central to being Israeli	72.8	78.0	69.2	71.5	74.1
Wish to serve in IDF	76.4	79.5	74.3	75.5	77.4
I belong to the Jewish people	58.8	75.2	47.8	56.4	61.5
Sure to stay in Israel in future	56.2	62.3	52.0	52.9	59.6
Love going on nature/history trips in Israel	80.6	81.3	80.1	75.6	86.0
Interested in Israeli politics	68.3	66.7	69.4	67.0	69.8

**Table 3. Family and relations with parents**

<i>Attitude or Statement</i>	<i>Total (N=318)</i>	<i>Israel- born (N=129)</i>	<i>FSU- born (N=189)</i>	<i>Boys (N=167)</i>	<i>Girls (N=151)</i>
Economic problems hinder my family's integration in Israel	14.1	6.5	19.2	16.8	11.3
I am very different from my parents as I was born/grew up in Israel	45.5	50.4	42.2	46.2	44.9
My parents often don't understand me due to the culture gap	84.3	84.1	84.4	84.6	84.0
My grandparents don't understand Israel and Israelis	57.0	51.2	61.0	56.8	57.8
Language and culture gap with my grandparents	81.1	79.7	82.1	82.9	79.2

**Table 4. School experiences, education and peer relations**

<i>Attitude or Statement</i>	<i>Total (N=318)</i>	<i>Israel- born (N=129)</i>	<i>FSU- born (N=189)</i>	<i>Boys (N=167)</i>	<i>Girls (N=151)</i>
Education is important to me	86.1	88.5	84.4	85.3	86.9
I love to study	56.0	53.1	58.0	49.7	62.9
I need a lot of help in studies	75.9	80.5	72.7	77.4	74.2
Hebrew-based disciplines are more difficult for me	75.6	86.8	67.8	75.8	75.5
Sciences and math are more difficult for me	62.2	65.3	60.1	65.2	58.9
I can turn to teachers for help in my studies	67.0	65.1	68.3	61.6	73.0
Most teachers are friendly to me	73.2	74.2	72.6	70.1	76.7
I miss school at least once a week	84.3	92.2	78.9	81.0	88.0
I am sure I'll get full <i>bagrut</i>	93.6	98.4	90.2	91.4	96
I wish to continue studies at the university/college	90.1	93.7	87.6	87.0	93.3
I feel culturally very different from my Israeli peers	67.4	56.3	75.0	69.3	65.3
I feel hostility from Israeli peers	22.1	14.4	27.5	28.9	14.6

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