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The Emerging Second Generation of Immigrant Israelis

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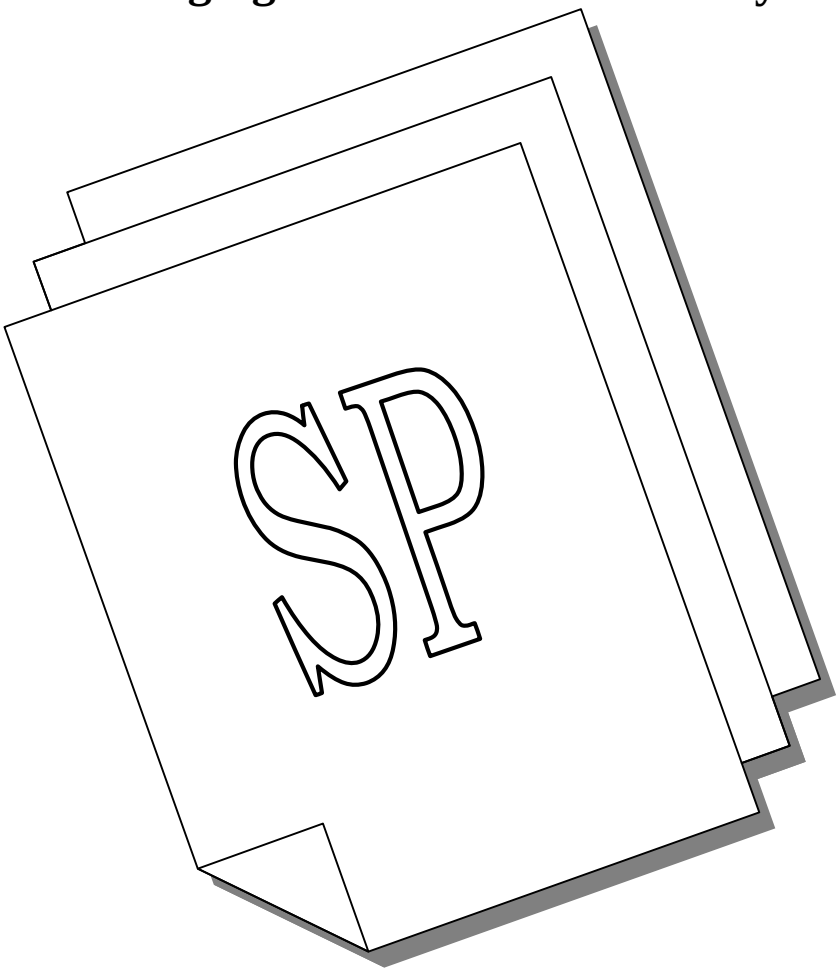

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Trajectories of Adjustment and Maladjustment among Russian Immigrant Adolescents at Risk

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Abstract

The present study assessed the sample of immigrant youths, who manifested signs of maladjustment at school, over a period of one year in terms of significant psychological and behavioral outcomes. The respondents were 167 immigrants from the former Soviet Union, aged 12-15, who immigrated to Israel over ten years prior to the study and resided in the Negev area. They were assessed in the beginning of two consecutive school years using standard instruments measuring their school functioning, psychological wellbeing, family and peer relationships. In addition, in depth interviews were conducted with 17 respondents. The results revealed two trajectories of adjustment over the course of one year: respondents who displayed more severe problems at the outset deteriorated, while those with relatively mild problems improved. Risk factors identified in the study were male gender and living in a single-parent family. Although the association between family composition and functioning and adolescents' adjustment was not statistically significant, in the qualitative study family factors emerged as very prominent.

Introduction

Adolescent immigrants cope with the adjustment to a new culture during a developmental period already characterized by rapid conflicts and changes (Erikson, 1968). In addition to meeting the challenges of this development stage, they must negotiate the stresses that are inherent in the immigration process. As a result immigrant adolescents are often reported to exhibit more psychological, social and educational difficulties than their non-immigrant peers (Janssen et al, 2004; Isralowitz & Reznik, 2007; Mirsky, 1997; Oppedal & Roysamb, 2004; Slonim-Nevo et al, 2006; Ullman & Tatar, 2001) and are often defined as a risk group in migration.

However, from the salutogenic perspective stressful life events are viewed as a normal part of human experience. As opposed to the pathogenic perspective, which emphasizes the negative effects of such events, the salutogenic perspective stresses their challenging elements and their potentially positive outcomes such as empowerment, a sense of meaningfulness etc. (Antonovsky, 1987). Research conducted with the salutogenic perspective searches to understand how individuals and families overcome stressful life events (Sagy and Antonovsky, 1998) and proposes the existence of 'individual resilience', a protective factor that helps cope with stressful life events (Hansson & Cederblad, 2004, Sagy & Dotan, 2001). Immigration is, indeed, a distress-provoking life event. It puts to the test all the strengths of the immigrants' personality and may cause distress or impairment.

However, with good enough internal assets and external conditions migration may become an opening for psychological growth and development (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006; Mirsky, 2007; Roer-Strier et al, 2005). In this study, we combine the salutogenic approach with the traditional pathogenic model and look at immigrant adolescents who succeeded and those who did not succeed in overcoming their difficulties. The understanding the processes of success and failure over time may help identify risk and resilience factors for the adjustment of immigrant adolescents and develop helpful interventions.

Psychological distress among immigrant adolescents is usually attributed to immigration-related losses that may complicate the process of identity formation (Blos, 1967; Erickson, 1968; Mirsky & Kaushinsky, 1989). Especially disruptive is the loss of the peer group (Goodenow & Espin, 1993), which is essential to adolescents. The other painful loss, that of reliable parental figures, is caused by the immigration-related crisis in parental functioning, which may force adolescents to function on a pseudo-mature level (Birman & Taylor-Ritzler, 2007: Jones & Trickett, 2005). The situation may be further complicated as very often adolescents' rate of acculturation to the new society is faster than that of their parents and inter-generational gaps and conflicts arise (Kim, et al., 2006; Tardif & Geva, 2006).

Findings on immigrant adolescents in Israel support the international findings on elevated psychological, social and educational difficulties in this immigrant group. Immigrant adolescents were found to be more apprehensive about their future; more socially isolated and psychologically distressed, and had more difficulties at school than their Israeli-born peers (Sharaga & Slonim-Nevo, 1993; Mirsky, 1997). The difficulties of immigrant adolescents worldwide as well as in Israel are often manifested by psychological distress, disruptive behavior, poor educational achievements, school dropout, social isolation, familial problems, and engagement in deviant behavior (e.g., crime, substance abuse, school truancy, and unprotected sex).

Like educational systems in many other immigration countries, the Israeli educational system seeks ways to cope with the special needs of children from immigrant families. However, in spite of these efforts, even initial enthusiasm, the achievements in this area rather modest. High rates of psychological distress (Tatar et al, 1994) long term social difficulties (Freund et al, 1994) and extremely high rates of drop-out (Sever, 1999) that characterize this immigrant pupils bear witness to these modest achievements.

A variety of factors have been found to be significantly related to the adjustment process of immigrant adolescents: among them were individual traits family characteristics, peer relationships, socio-demographic, cultural and political factors (Birman et al., 2002, Jasinskaja et al, 2003; Mirsky et al., 2002; Oppedal & Roysamb, 2004; Sabatier & Berry, 2008; Sharaga and Slonim-Nevo, 1993; Slonim-Nevo and Sharaga, 1997, 2000; Sullivan et al, 2007). Family emerges as a focal factor in migration. International literature suggests that in migration, the social and psychological functioning of the family greatly affects the adaptation of its individual members, especially that of children and youth (Birman & Taylor-Ritzler, 2007; Dekovic & Buist, 2005; Kwak, 2003; Tseng, 2004; Qin, 2008; Rice, et al., 2006). Israeli findings on the focal role of the family in the adjustment of immigrant adolescents corroborate this approach (Mirsky et al. 1999; Roer-Strier, 2001; Schwartz, et al., 2005; Slonim-Nevo & Shraga, 1997; Slonim-Nevo et al, 1999; 2009). Therefore, the present study explores the level of family functioning and adolescents'

relationships with their parents and hypothesizes that they will be positively associated with adjustment.

The aim of the present research is to study more closely the trajectories of adjustment among immigrant youth at risk over a period of one year in areas central to their lives: language proficiency, psychological wellbeing, risk behaviors, peer relationships and school achievements and satisfaction. This exploration will help identify individual, familial and school-related factors that contribute to the success or failure of these adolescents to cope with their initial difficulties and overcome them.

Research methodology

Our research project combined quantitative and qualitative techniques to study immigrant adolescents at risk. The quantitative study comprised a psycho-social and educational assessment of 167 immigrant adolescents who have begun to manifest adjustment difficulties. Data was collected at two points of time: Time I - in the beginning of the school year (September-November 2002) and Time II - 10-12 months later (September – October, 2003). The qualitative study comprised semi-structured interviews with 17 of the assessed adolescents.

Respondents

245 respondents were assessed in the first wave and 167 – in the second wave.

Reported are the results on the 167 respondents who participated in the two waves. They were immigrant adolescents from 22 different types of schools in the South region of Israel (the Negev) who had immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union in the ten years prior the study. At the time of the study the respondents were aged 12-15 years (average 14.5 years). They were identified by their classroom teachers as manifesting adjustment problems (school truancy, covert dropout, fighting in school, social isolation, discipline problems, verbal and physically violence, substance use and abuse, arrest by police, and an apparent discrepancy between cognitive ability and grades). Only adolescents who manifested two or more of the above problems were included in the sample. Reasons for attrition between Times I and II were: moving to other schools or boarding school, dropping out of school, addresses changes; or refusal to participate in the second assessment (very few). No significant differences were found on the research variables between the attrition and retention groups of respondents.

Research variables and instruments

The quantitative data was collected with a structured self-report questionnaire developed for the purpose of the present research. It included demographic characteristics (gender, age, ethnic background (Jewish/non-Jewish), immigration year, family composition, socio-economic status (SES), and parental levels of formal education), as well as psychometric items measuring dependent and independent variables.

The **dependent variable** in this study was the change in individual adjustment between Time I and Time II. The following measures were used to assess individual adjustment:

Language proficiency: The ability to comprehend, speak, read and write Hebrew (on a 5- point Likert scale).

School-related behavior: Achievements in major subjects at school (on a 4-point Likert scale), satisfaction with teachers and schools (on a 4-point Likert scale), learning difficulties, (on a 5-point Likert scale), school-related difficulties such as truancy, verbal and physical fights, discipline problems (In the last two months, how many times…)

High-risk behaviors: Alcohol (In the last two months, how many times…) and drug consumption, smoking, being arrested and running away from home (Yes or no).

Relationship with peers: Peer-relationships were assessed with a standardized 5- item Likert scale (Hudson, 1986), with a higher score indicating better relationships with peers. The instrument manifested satisfactory psychometric properties in previous studies in Israel (Slonim-Nevo and Sharaga, 1997), and in the current research Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.89 to 0.93. The number of friends, including Israeli-born or immigrant friends, was also a measure of peer relationships.

Behavioral problems: The Youth Self Report (Achenbach, 1991), a widely utilized standard instrument with good psychometric qualities was used to assess behavioral problems in the sample. YSR scores range from 0 to 202, with higher scores indicating more behavioral problems. In the current research the YSR showed Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.57 to o.85.

The **independent variables** in this research were:

Perceived family functioning: The General Functioning sub-scale of the McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD) (Epstein et al., 1983; Miller et al., 1985) was used to assess the respondents' perception of their family functioning. The answers on FAD are given on 4-point Likert scales, with higher scores indicating a greater number of problems. In previous studies with immigrant adolescents from the FSU in Israel this scale showed satisfactory psychometric qualities (Slonim-Nevo and Sharaga 1997). In the current research Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.74 to 0.76.

Parent-adolescent relationships: Parent-adolescent relationships were measured with a standardized scale (Olson et al. 1985). The answers are given on a 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating better communication with the parent. The scale has shown satisfactory psychometric qualities, and in the current study Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.80 to 85.

Sense of Coherence (SOC): The short version (13 items) of a Sense of Coherence standard scale (Antonovsky, 1987, 1993) was utilized to assess to what degree do respondents perceives their lives as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. This scale showed satisfactory psychometric properties (Sagy and Antonovsky, 1998), and in the current research Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.73 to 0.77.

The qualitative data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with 17 of the informants at Time II. Eight informants were sampled among those who improved most over the year, and nine – among those who deteriorated most. The informants were asked to describe their families, interactions with their parents and peers, their school life and extracurricular activities; they were also directly asked to reflect on the factors that affected their functioning over the last year (either success or deterioration).

Data collection

The self-report questionnaires were handed out by trained bilingual interviewers (who answered the respondents' questions) in Russian or Hebrew, according to the students' preference. They were typically administered in schools, and only few in students' homes. Prior to the data collection, a formal approval for the project was obtained from the Israeli Ministry of Education, and the respondents signed informed consent forms.

Data analysis

For the qualitative data, a change score was calculated on each variable as the difference between the respondent's scores at Times I and II. The score was computed as an absolute value by subtracting the Time I score from the Time II score. SPSS program was used for three-level data analysis: a) differential analysis for the total sample - frequencies, means and standard deviations of the change in scores; b) differential analysis for the associations between the score change and independent variables by means of T-tests, X^2 and Pearson correlation; c) multi-differential analysis by linear regression for identifying variables that can predict the changed score, while controlling statistically for the initial score at Time I. Content analysis was performed on the qualitative data by two independent researchers. Consensual categories of risk and resilience factors were derived from this data.

Results

Table number 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The sample consists of relatively old-time immigrant adolescents (about 6 years in the country) who still experience adjustment problems. Noteworthy is the relatively high rate of male respondents, those who define themselves as 'non-Jewish' and who live in single-parent families.

Quantitative findings

Adjustment trajectories after one year

Table 2 compares behavioral and psychological characteristics of the respondents at the two measurement points.

The results generally indicate two opposite trends: one of improvement and the other of deterioration. Improvement, in some cases even statistically significant can be seen in learning achievements and the school satisfaction of the respondents. Similarly, there is a significant improvement in the respondents' relationships with peers, their psychological wellbeing and in school behaviors, such as truancy and involvement in fights. At the same time, deterioration can be observed in other problem behaviors such a substance abuse and trouble with police.

The prediction of adjustment trajectories

Set of regression analysis was carried out in order to identify variables that can predict the adjustment trajectories of the respondents over time. In order to find the best predictive model, stepwise linear regressions were performed.

The dependent variable in the regression was the change score between Time I and Time II in following spheres: Hebrew language proficiency, behavioral problems (YSR) and risk behaviors (involvement in fights). The independent variables entered

in the regression were sense of coherence and peer relations (Block 2), perceived family functioning and perceived relations with parents (Block 3) as measured at Time II. The socio-demographic variables were controlled for (Block 1).

The predicting variables were introduced into the regression stepwise: first demographic and background variables were introduced along with the dependent variable at time 1 as a control (Block 1), then two explaining variables were additionally introduced (Block 2) and finally family variables were added to the regression (Block 3). In Table 3, in regards to Hebrew comprehension: Block 1 variables combined contribute 30.1% of the explained variance; Block 2 variables contribute only additional 0.7% and Block 3 variables, only additional 0.9% of the explained variance. In regards to Hebrew speech: Block 1 variables contribute 23.3% of the explained variance; Block 2 variables add only 0.7% and Block 3 variables - only 0.1% of the explained variance.

In table 4, in regards to YSR internalization: Block 1 variables combined contribute 34.4% of the explained variance; Block 2 variables add 3.7% and Block 3 variables only 1% of the explained variance. In regards to YSR externalization: Block 1 variables contribute 33.1% of the explained variance. Block 2 variables add 2% and Block 3 variables only 0.9% of the explained variance. In regards to YSR general score: Block 1 variables combined contribute 24.2% of the explained variance; Block 2 variables add 3.7% and Block 3 - only 0.2% of the explained variance.

In table 5, in regards to involvement in fights: Block 1 variables combined contribute 46.6% of the explained variance; Block 2 variables contribute additional 1.6% and Block 3 additional 1.2% of the explained variance. In regards to alcohol consumption: Block 1 variables contribute 21.9% of the explained variance; Block 2 variables contribute only additional 0.1% and Block 3 variables – additional 2.7% of the explained variance.

All regression analyses indicate that the best predictor of Time II adjustment level is the baseline level of the respective variable at Time I. Thus, the baseline level of Hebrew language proficiency is the best predictor of Hebrew proficiency at Time II. The higher that baseline proficiency, the higher the rate of improvement was (table 3). In a similar vein, the level of behavioral problems (YSR) at Time I is the best predictor of behavioral problems at Time II. That is, respondents who reported more problems deteriorated the most after one year, and those who reported lower level of problems improved. Sense of coherence, mother's education and number of years in Israel had a secondary contribution to the explanation of variance in behavioral problems (see table 4). A similar pattern was found in regards to involvement in fights and alcohol consumption. Respondents who at Time I were involved in fights more than others deteriorated at Time II, and those who consumed alcohol at Time I tended to consume even more alcohol at Time II (Table 5). Identical pattern was found in the prediction of most other dependent variable, their best predictors being the baseline level of that variable at Time I. The hypothesized variables: perceived family functioning, peer relations and social functioning – did not significantly contribute to the prediction of any of the measures of Time II.

Qualitative findings

In contrast, the qualitative inquiry revealed that family and peer relationships play an important role in determining the dynamics of respondents' adjustment, as do their personal psychological resources. In what follows we will describe the main

categories that emerged from the content analysis of the interviews and illustrate them with some representative quotes.

Family relationships

Problematic family relationships appear to emerge as a risk factor for maladjustment among the respondents. Various family related problems were reported much more often among the respondents who deteriorated and much less frequently, among those who succeeded. And, while respondents in the "success" group spoke in general terms about their supportive families, those who deteriorated were more specific and elaborated on the nature of their relationships with parents. The most often reported problem was that of miscommunication or conflicts with one of the parents or both.

Olga's is a typical testimony:

> *Every morning I am having a fight with my mom over school. With my dad, I don't get along at all. Once in a blue moon we talk…When he needs something from me, he asks and I do what he asks. But I don't talk to him much. Don't deal with him.*

Life crises complicate things even more for the respondents:

> *Alex:*
>
> *My parents are getting divorced. So my mom keeps saying: tell your father this and that… I tell her: leave me in peace, do whatever you both want.*

Maya's mother remarried:

> *The God's honest truth is that I can't stand him. But because of my mom I'm being respectful. I don't show that I don't like him. Treat him OK. I told her before she got married that I will not like him and that I will leave home. But in the end I did not run away…*

Sergey comes from a single parent family and his mother's condition affects his functioning:

> *Mom is ill, so I don't ask her to come to school… Sometimes I'm cheeky, when I am tense, or have a headache, or am worried that my mom is in a hospital. And I don't talk to my friends; don't feel like doing anything….*

Relationships with peers

The respondents devoted the most time and reported with the highest elaboration their relationships with their peers, which clearly appears as a crucial factor in their experience. Among potentially risk provoking, the most often mentioned one was social rejection:

Vladimir:

> *It was very difficult to find a friend to hang out with. When there was one, others would say to him: "What are you doing with a Russian?" I was very hurt. Would come home and cry. One guy used to beat me up till one day I hit him back. He bled. This is when everybody, the teachers came and intervened. Till then nothing happened. I tried everything. Things would get to me too much: one curse and that's it; I would come home and tell my mom: mom, I don't want to go to school any more, don't have the strength, I can't , I don't want to go.*

Alex:

> *My social situation is not so…good. There were school trips but I did not want to go. Kids would not pay attention to me. When I went out and wanted to play football, they said: "Hey, you! Go away, we don't want to play with you."*

Negative social pressure was also mentioned by a number of respondents, as in the case of Olga:

> *They used to tell me before History class, for example: "Oh, what for History, let's skip class, it is boring." I don't like History, or Bible, or Literature. I only like Math and English. But now [that they've left] I'm good at everything.*

This pressure was even stronger in the case of Yan, who associated with a gang:

> *I have many friends that I love, respect them as friends. We have a group. Can do lots of things together… When I had problems in school with other people, they would come and help. Yes, would beat up the person. First they would talk and if the person does not understand, he'd get a beating.*

Being so important in the lives of the respondents, positive relationships with peers can become a source of strength and resilience. Vladimir, quoted above describes how social acceptance transformed his experience:

> *I got accepted at the school trip in grade 8. Before that I would not join the trips, I was shy, don't know why. That year I went. I started talking to someone, although I was still shy and they started talking to me, asking me questions. Then they told me: "Vladimir, you are one of us". Once they told me that, I became more and more active. I think that now I am popular enough in my class, in school. Starting from this trip there was a leap forward. I remember the exact second when they told me that I am accepted, and then - leap up!*

In a similar vein, social pressure may have positive effects. Stas, who succeeded in overcoming his difficulties, tells what helped him to succeed:

> *I have a good friend and he told me: "Listen now, you are passing to grade 9. In grades 7 and 8 it is not so important to study. But, in grade 9, this is the most important thing. The way you study this year will affect your future." I was influenced by this friend, him and other friends who also said the same things. When I transferred to another school they said: "Listen, you are in a new school, so open an new page, start studying and you will see that you can."*

Positive aspirations and hope

It clearly emerges from the content analysis that respondents, who failed to overcome the risk and deteriorated, had no perspective about the future, no plans, and no hopes. In contrast, respondents who succeeded to overcome the risk had aspirations and hopes for the future. Sometimes they seem to have "scared" themselves into success.

Here are three typical examples:

Stas:

I decided that if now I will be a problem kid, what will happen in the future? If I am like that now, I will deteriorate into the criminal world, land up in prison. What do I need this for? So I decided to study, to succeed in life.

Misha:

Thought, what will I have in the future? Every time I wanted to shout, to act crazy or something I would say: "Just a moment, just a moment, in the future I will be cleaning the streets!"

Victor:

I began to realize: what will become of me if I go on with this revolting behavior? No one will hire me and I will go on living with my mother. What do I need this for? I want a home of my own, want to marry, start a family. What, I will stay all my life at my mother's? Need to get an education, need to study, need everything.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to identify factors that contribute to the successful adjustment of immigrant adolescents at risk over time. In the quantitative study, the hypothesis that family and peer relationships have a significant impact on these adolescents' adjustment was not confirmed. The lack of change in the level of family functioning between the two assessments may account for this result. The qualitative findings, however, reveal the important role of the family and peers in the adjustment of adolescent immigrants. This discrepancy, often encountered in a mixed method research, reflects the complex nature of social relationships in adolescence (Slonim-Nevo & Nevo, 2009). Given the generally normative character of this study population, it is likely that gross quantitative measures are not sensitive enough to identify those likely to be more negatively affected by immigration.

The best predictor of the adjustment of immigrant adolescents at risk over time was their baseline adjustment level in different spheres: psychological, behavioral, social and academic. In other words, adolescents whose level of psychological wellbeing was good improved after one year, while those whose baseline wellbeing was poor, deteriorated further. Similarly, adolescent immigrants at risk who enjoyed good relationships with their peers improved these relationships even further one year later, while those who initially had problems in their relationships with peers, after one year these problems only intensified. A similar pattern was found in regards to learning achievements and school satisfaction, as well as risk behaviors and substance abuse.

Based on this pattern it is possible to differentiate between two types of immigrant adolescents at risk. One appears to be a group of mild risk: adolescents who at a given time may experience mild adjustment problems in different areas, but who succeed in coping and overcoming their difficulties. The other group is one of severe and long-term risk: youths who at a given time are at the bottom of a risk continuum. These youth are at risk not only at that given point of assessment, but they are also likely to deteriorate even more over time.

In contrast to the generalized view of adolescent as a risk group in migration, the results of the present study reveal a complicated picture of risk. As the study specifically selected immigrant adolescents who exhibited risk behaviors, a finer analysis of their background may be illuminating.

Noticeable is the overrepresentation of boys (64 %) among adolescent immigrant who begin to exhibit risk behaviors at school. Indeed, adolescent boys are known to exhibit more externalized behaviors while girls tend more to internalized behaviors (Rescorla et. al, 2007; Sandoval et. al, 2006, Tang et. al, 2005). There is some evidence that in migration too boys are more at risk than girls (Turjeman et. al, 2008)

Secondly, the relatively long time that passed since the adolescents' immigration (from about 3 to about 9 years) suggests that the risk is not limited to the first years after immigration but is rather a long-term phenomenon. Taking into account the age of the respondents (the mean of 14.5), it appears that children who immigrated between the ages of 6 and 8 may be at risk when they reach adolescence. This notion that negative impacts of migration may become visible not at the outset but in later stages of adjustment has been illustrated in numerous studies (Mirsky et al., 2007; Tartakovsky, 2007; Walsh & Shulman, 2007).

Perhaps the most noteworthy component of the risk profile found in this study is the rate of single parent families (usually mothers) among immigrant youth at risk (37 %). It is extremely high in comparison with the rate of single-parent families in Israeli general population. According to the statistical data, 7.7 % of all Israeli children live with one parent, as opposite to 18 % of children who immigrated from the FSU (Statistical Abstracts, 2007). Single parents naturally experience more economic difficulties in migration, they are likely to be less available to their children, compared to parents in full families, and less capable to provide support (Soskolne, 2001).

From the socio-demographic perspective therefore, FSU immigrant adolescents in Israel who are males, non-Jewish and from single parent families are at risk for behavioral, social and academic problems. However, these risk factors notwithstanding, a spontaneous recovery appears to take place after one year. On the general level, improvement almost in all measures of adjustment can be observed in the present study sample (Tables 2 and 3): Hebrew language proficiency and the grades in the sample have improved; the social circle of the respondents has expanded beyond their ethnic community, the measures of psychological wellbeing were up and those of problem behaviors down at Time II. This spontaneous betterment on the sample level supports the salutogenic approach (Sagy and Antonovsky, 1998). It appears that even when immigration produces risk, the crisis may be temporary and individuals may possess sufficient personal resources to cope with the crisis. The general direction of changes in the sample suggests that for most respondents this was indeed a temporary risk.

At the same time, we observed the emergence of a minority risk group of adolescent immigrants who do not cope successfully with the crisis and are in danger of deteriorating into prolonged maladjustment. How can these two groups be differentiated?

The results of this study suggest that they cannot be easily established by measurable socio-demographic or familial factors, but, rather, by the baseline level of their problems and difficulties. Adolescents, who react to the challenges of immigration with mild psychological distress and mild disruption of normative behavior, are likely to be experiencing a temporary crisis and can overcome their problems without external interventions. In contrast, adolescents who react to the challenges of immigration in more severe and deviant ways are at risk for the long-term maladjustment.

The results of the qualitative study provide further insight into risk and resilience factors for immigrant adolescents' adjustment. Although not statistically visible, on the subjective level family relationships appear to play an important role in the adjustment of adolescents. Family problems, miscommunication with parent, dramatic changes in the family unit; all these need to alert practitioners to a possible risk for immigrant adolescents. Similarly, rejection by peers as well as negative social influence and norms, need to be taken seriously as a risk factor for adolescents' adjustment in migration.

The analysis of the findings illustrates the complexities of the issue of risk among immigrant adolescents and undermines a sweeping definition of adolescents as a risk group in migration. Not only demographic and individual factors may affect the adjustment of these immigrants, some factors may render a group of adolescents at risk, but completely different factors may sustain this risk. To complicate things further, cultural considerations need to be introduced into the discussion.

It is possible that the main finding of this study, that the initial level of adjustment predicts long term risk, may be specific to immigrant adolescents from the FSU. It needs to be taken into account that immigrants from the FSU generally belonged in their homeland to the highest socio-economic layers. As can be seen in the study sample, the educational level of the families is high and so is their employability (Table 1) in Israel. The baseline level of psychological and family functioning reported by the children is also relatively high (Table 2). Therefore, it is possible to claim that this is a strong group of immigrants who possess coping assets and can make a spontaneous recovery without assistance. At the same time, precisely because of their cultural background, problem and deviant behavior of adolescents, even on levels that may be normative in other societies, should in the case of immigrants from the FSU be taken seriously. In their country of origin and in the socio-economic layers they belonged to, alcohol and drug abuse, involvement in fights, running away from home and getting in trouble with the police – would be highly non-normative. Therefore, these behaviors should be interpreted as indicators of severe maladjustment in the case of immigrant adolescents from the FSU, and in accordance with the results of this study – as indicators of potential long term risk that calls for intervention.

As for the practical implications of this study, our findings point to the importance of the early identification of the group of immigrant adolescents that is at risk for severe and prolonged maladjustment. In the case of immigrant adolescents, initial maladjusted reactions, family problems and conflicts with peers should be taken as possible indicators of risk, and not as passing setbacks normative in adolescence. Teachers, counselors, and other professionals working with immigrant adolescents need to be alert to these early indicators, identify the individuals at risk, and offer them assistance to cope with their difficulties. One of the challenges in intervening with these higher-risk youths would be finding ways to cultivate their aspirations and hopes for a better future, and through that harness their strengths to the recovery process.

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Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

	N=167
Gender	64%
Girls	36%
Boys	
Age (years)	14.5(1.00)
Years since immigration (at Point I)	6.2 (3.08)
Nationality	
Jewish	63%
Non-Jewish	37%
Family structure	
Two-parent family	63%
Single-parent family	37%
Number of children in the family	2.3 (1.12)
Fathers education	
Elementary education	2.8%
High school education	46%
Higher (academic) education	51.2%
Mothers education	
Elementary education	3%
High school education	40.3%
Higher (academic) education	56.7%
Father's employment status	
Employed	80%
Unemployed	20%
Mother's employment status	
Employed	73%
Unemployed	27%

Table 2. Differences in behavioral and psychological characteristics between Times I and II (N=167)

*p≤0.05; ** p≤0.01; *** p≤0.005

	Time I M (SD)\%	Time II M(SD)\ %	T\X²
Hebrew language proficiency (1-not at all, 4-exellent)			
Comprehension	3.1(0.72)	3.2(0.6)	-2.61**
Speech	3.1(0.7)	3.3(0.71)	-2.53**
Reading	2.9(0.8)	3.0(0.8)	-1.85
Writing	2.8(0.87)	2.9(0.8)	-1.04
Relationships with peers			
Number of native-born friends	6.0(3.9)	6.4(3.8)	-2.42**
Number of immigrant friends	7.4(3.7)	6.8(3.8)	2.13*
Peer relationships score [1]	19.4(13.6)	16.8(14)	2.31*
School related behaviors			
Regularly attends school	89.0%	73.0%	15.1*
Average grades (1-poor, 4-very good)			
Good\Very good	27.6%	34.1%	0.75
Medium	58.7%	48.5%	
Poor	13.7%	%17.4	
Satisfaction with learning achievements: (1-very, 5- not at all)			
Very Satisfied\Satisfied	41.1%	51.2%	
More or less satisfied	25.0%	29.2%	3.13**
Not satisfied\ Not at all satisfied	33.9%	19.6%	
Satisfaction with school (1-very, 5- not at all)			
Very satisfied\ Satisfied	58.9%	66.1%	
More or less satisfied	25.0%	22.0%	1.92
Not satisfied\ Not at all satisfied	16.1%	11.9%	
Certainty about the realization of scholastic aspirations (1-very certain, 5-not at all certain)			
Very certain\ Certain	48.8%	53.0%	
Almost certain	38.6%	41.6%	2.27*
Not certain\ Not at all certain	13.6%	5.4%	
Risk behaviors			
Missed school without permission (times in 2 last months)	3.8(3.59)	2.9(3.6)	1.35
Suspended from school (times in 2 last months)	0.7(1.8)	0.5(1.1)	-0.5
Involved in a fight (times in 2 last months)	1.7(2.7)	0.8(2.1)	3.54**
Consumed alcohol (times in 2 last months)	1.7(2.5)	2.2(2.9)	-2.66**
Smoked (ever)	22%	30%	5.6*
Used of drugs (ever)	3%	6%	2.7
Run away from home (ever)	8%	8%	0.4
Arrested by the police (ever)	17%	24%	0.9
Psychological functioning			
Sense of Coherence[2]	4.95(1)	4.91(1)	0.22
Perceived family functioning[3]	1.87(0.4)	1.86(0.4)	0.309
Parent-Adolescent communication with father [4]	3.53(0.66)	3.57(0.65)	0.4
Parent-Adolescent communication with mother [4]	3.68(0.57)	3.72(0.58)	0.57
YSR internalization score[5]	13.70(7.4)	13.27(7.2)	0.972
YSR externalization score [6]	14.54(5.9)	12.80(5.5)	3.847***
YSR general score [7]	42.81(19.8)	38.86(20)	1.8

1. 0-100, lower score represents better relationships

2. 1-7, higher score indicates higher sense of coherence
3. 1-4, lower score represents better family functioning
4. 1-5, higher score represents better communication with the parent
5. YSR = Youth Self Report (Achenback, 1991). Internalization: 0-62, lower score indicates less behavioral problems, 20-cut off point
6. Externalization: 0-60, lower score indicates less behavioral problems, 22-cut off point
7. General: 0-202, lower score indicates less behavioral problems, 68 cut off point

Note for Tables 3-5: The predicting variables were introduced into the regression stepwise: first demographic and background variables, and the dependent variable at time 1 as a control (Block 1), then two explaining variables (Block 2), and finally family variables (Block 3). In all regressions, Block 1 variables combined contributed mostly to the explained variance, while the additional contribution of Block 2 and Block 3 variables to the explained variance was marginal.
* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.005$

Table 3. Linear regression (stepwise). Dependent variable: Change in the Hebrew language proficiency

	Hebrew comprehension			**Hebrew speech**		
	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
Gender	-0.068	-0.054	-0.068	0.049	0.041	0.038
Age	-0.057	-0.053	-0.056	-0.04	-0.044	-0.044
Years since immigration	-0.203*	-0.188	-0.191	-0.165	-0.178	-0.181
Father's education	-0.116	-0.118	-0.123	0.051	0.053	0.049
Mother's education	0.119	0.115	0.108	-0.059	-0.059	-0.061
Nationality	0.075	0.086	0.087	0.039	0.031	0.032
Family structure	0.111	0.109	0.12	0.036	0.037	0.042
Dependent on Time I	0.573***	0.578	0.584	0.525***	0.509	0.511
Sense of Coherence		0.042	0.046		-0.006	0.004
Peer relationships		0.086	0.069		-0.087	-0.096
Family functioning			0.11			0.027
Adolescent-Parent communication – father			-0.021			-0.016
Adolescent-Parent communication –mother			0.065			-0.007
R^2	0.301***	0.307	0.317	0.233***	0.24	0.241
ΔR^2		0.007	0.009		0.007	0.001
R^2 Best model			0.262			0.197
Variables included in best model	Hebrew comprehension Time I, Years since migration			Hebrew speech Time I		

Table 4. Linear regression (stepwise).
Dependent variable: Change in YSR scores.

	YSR internalization			YSR externalization			YSR general score		
Block	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Gender	-0.169*	-0.171*	-0.18	-0.039	-0.02	-0.054	-0.082	-0.081	-0.081
Age	-0.006	-0.01	-0.013	0.064	0.058	0.06	0.05	0.041	0.039
Years since immigration	0.106	0.085	0.089	0.087	0.073	0.059	0.19*	0.155	0.158
Father's education	-0.048	-0.043	-0.032	0	-0.008	-0.01	-0.01	-0.013	-0.009
Mother's education	0.196*	0.18*	0.182	0.013	-0.002	-0.003	0.066	0.053	0.054
Nationality	-0.005	0.013	0.016	0.007	0.027	0.032	0.029	0.041	0.041
Family structure	0.016	0.026	0.018	-0.098	-0.091	-0.088	-0.028	-0.02	-0.024
Dependent in Point I	0.57***	0.659	0.679	0.538***	0.601	0.582	0.442***	0.538	0.552
Sense of Coherence		0.162	0.141		0.164	0.173		0.158	0.149
Peer relations		-0.104	-0.086		-0.006	-0.021		-0.113	-0.103
Family functioning			-0.047			0.029			-0.018
Parent-adolescent communication –father			0.014			-0.114			0.02
Parent-adolescent communication –mother			0.071			0.063			0.027
R^2	0.344***	0.381	0.391	0.331***	0.353	0.361	0.242***	0.279	0.281
ΔR^2		0.037*	0.01		0.02	0.009		0.037	0.002
R^2 best model			0.359			0.339			0.257
Variables included in best model	YSR internalization Time I, Sense of coherence, Gender, Mothers education			YSR externalization Time I, sense of coherence			YSR general Time I, Sense of Coherence, Time since immigration		

* p≤0.05; ** p≤0.01; *** p≤0.005

Table 5. Linear regression (stepwise).
Dependent variable: Change in risk behaviors

	Involvement in fights			**Alcohol consumption**		
	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
Gender	0.057	0.069	0.103	0.152	0.159	0.135
Age	0.046	0.046	0.051	-0.007	-0.006	-0.007
Years since immigration	0.043	0.028	0.037	0.051	0.058	0.057
Father's education	0.027	0.028	0.031	0.091	0.091	0.107
Mother's education	-0.089	-0.1	-0.094	-0.124	-0.126	-0.122
Nationality	-0.002	0.007	0.004	-0.05	-0.045	-0.04
Family structure	-0.086	-0.083	-0.094	-0.071	-0.072	-0.088
Dependent on Time I	0.689***	0.692	0.7	0.428***	0.431	0.42
Sense of Coherence		0.106	0.102		0.024	-0.018
Peer relationships		-0.053	-0.034		0.033	0.065
Family functioning			-0.102			-0.082
Adolescent-Parent communication – father			0.076			-0.027
Adolescent-Parent communication –mother			-0.109			0.137
R^2	0.466***	0.483	0.495	0.219	0.22	0.247
ΔR^2		0.016	0.012		0.001	0.027
R^2 Best model			0.448			0.175
Variables included in best model	Involvement in fights Time I			Alcohol consumption Time I		

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.005$