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The Emerging Second Generation of Immigrant Israelis

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Generation 1.5 Russians in Israel: From Vodka to Latte. Maturation and Integration Processes as Reflected in the Recreational Patterns

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Abstract
This article reflects on the process of coming of age among Russian Israelis who immigrated as older children or adolescents. It describes the culture of informal youth groups (tusovkas) of the 1990s that transplanted multiple elements of Russian subversive youth culture of the last Soviet and post-Soviet years onto Israeli soil. These groups - that flourished mainly in peripheral towns of Israel - served as both social safety net for alienated Russian teenagers and the bridge to their gradual acculturation. Entering adulthood, most tusovka members left the streets, completed their academic degrees, and moved to Central Israel in search of lucrative jobs and thriving cultural life. Although young Russian Israelis have adopted many elements of the mainstream lifestyle (particularly in the patterns of residence and entertainment), their social preferences and identity remain distinct in lieu of the lingering Russian cultural legacies.

Introduction
This article sheds light on the recent changes in the recreational patterns of "Generation 1.5" – Russian, Ukrainian and other former Soviet immigrants who immigrated in Israel along with their parents as preteens or young adolescents during the 1990s. Several factors shaped the recreational patterns of these Generation 1.5'ers during their initial years in Israel: the social characteristics of the Russian aliyah; the unique circumstances of their birth and socialization; and the policies of direct immigrant absorption first instituted in Israel during the 1990s. The study shows that the evolving recreational patterns among Generation 1.5'ers over the past two decades reflected changes in their lifestyle, worldview, and collective identity as they entered adulthood.

The article focuses on the elite segment among the Generation 1.5'ers – the children of university graduates who have maintained or exceeded their parents' level of education and are employed in white-collar jobs or in professional positions.1 This group of young Israelis originates in the ranks of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia members who came to Israel as accomplished individuals and often established

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1 We realize the selected nature of the group described here and do not claim that their trajectory in Israeli society is universally typical for all young Russian Israelis. Yet, this segment is of special interest due to its impressive social mobility and ambition for success, with the ensuing significant impact on Israel’s future.
professionals. The high share of university graduates and ambitions for social mobility among the first generation of immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) was conducive to their significant impact on all spheres of the economy and social life in Israel. Drawing on these legacies, Generation 1.5 of Russian-speakers is also destined to play a major role in shaping Israel’s future. In describing the parallel processes of maturation, acculturation and rise in living standard among Generation 1.5 Russians, this article posits the following three arguments:

* Members of the educated and productive stratum of Generation 1.5 are abandoning the peripheral areas of the country and flocking to Israel's more densely populated Center in search of improved employment opportunities and a more vibrant cultural life. It appears quite certain, then, that this group will not fulfill the "national objective" of bolstering Israel’s peripheral areas and development towns of the South and North.

* Along with their move to the Center and their finding more lucrative employment, outstanding Generation 1.5’ers are experiencing rapid bourgeoisification and integration into the consumer society. Among other things, this process reflects changes in patterns of leisure time activities and the "Russian takeover" of the cafés in the Greater Tel Aviv area.

* Becoming part of Israel's consumer society is not synonymous with genuine cultural and social integration. Adopting the consumer culture and the yuppie lifestyle camouflages deep cultural and social gaps between the younger members of the 1990s aliyah and the Israeli Hebrew mainstream.

**Empirical basis**

A short memoir written by Ant Weiss, a prominent member of the young Russian elite, was published by an intellectual Russian-Jewish website Booknik.ru, that focuses on Jewish culture's interaction with wider cultural phenomena. Ant (Anton) was brought to Israel from St. Petersburg in 1990 by his parents, a physician and a linguist, when he was 15. He lived in Jerusalem with his parents until the year 2000, when he moved to Tel-Aviv. He has a BA degree in sociology and German literature, makes a living in a high-tech company and is widely known as a musician and a performer among the young Tel-Aviv audience. He’s married and has two children. The essay tells the story of one of the first informal youth groups to emerge from the large wave of Russian immigration and summarizes the Israeli life tracks of the members of this group. Weiss's concise but articulate memoir served both as an inspiration and an information source for this article.

The article is also based on in-depth interviews conducted with twenty informants who met the criteria for the young Russian-speaking elite. All are in their thirties and hold at least a Bachelors degree. The vast majority of them were born to the parents who hold at least a Masters degree (5 years of academic studies in the FSU). Most informants live in the Greater Tel Aviv area (including Ramat Gan and Givatayim).

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Around half of them work in high-tech, and the rest are working on their doctorates or earn a living in professions such as music, translation and journalism. Most of the interviewees came to Israel with their parents between 1990 and 1995 and first lived far from the business and cultural center of the country, in places like Beer Sheba, Ashkelon, Carmiel, Netivot, Haifa or its suburbs, Jerusalem or Maaleh Adumin. During or immediately after their undergraduate studies, they all left their parents' homes and moved to the Greater Tel Aviv area. The interviewees were asked open questions about growing up in Israel, making their first friends, their informal social environment from the day they arrived in the country until the present, and about recent changes in their leisure activities. The interviews took place in the informants’ homes (usually rented apartments) and were shaped like friendly conversations. Their transcripts were subsequently scanned in search of common topics and narrative elements. Below we present some highlights from this qualitative analysis. All the informants appear under aliases.

The birth of the tusovka: The emergence of a Russian youth subculture in Israel

In the early 1990s, when hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the FSU flooded into Israel, two communities formed among them – the community of the parents and the community of the children. The adults published dozens of newspapers, opened “Russian” stores, set up libraries and cultural centers and developed a political infrastructure that, among other things, laid the groundwork for establishing an immigrants’ party. The children, for their part, congregated into tusovkas – informal groups based upon belonging to various youth subcultures (hippies, punksters), living in proximity (neighborhood gangs), and/or studying together (at a Hebrew class, school or university) or participating in extracurricular activities (a type of group that usually owed its existence to parental initiative). The average family unit among the 1990s immigrants was quite small compared to native Israeli families. A typical Russian family consisted of a few children (usually no more than two siblings) and several adults (typically the parents and grandparents, often living under one roof or close by). The maturation of the members of Generation 1.5 in Israel was marked by an almost inevitable sense of isolation within the family. The parents (if they were still together) were preoccupied by the problems of resettlement; they were busy working or searching for a way to earn a living. The grandparents, often serving as housekeepers and child-minders in these families, were losing touch with the youngsters due to their poor acculturation in Israel. The age difference between siblings was often too large to facilitate close relations based on equality and common interests. Reflecting both small family size and emigration, the institution of an extended family, including cousins, aunts and uncles that could provide an alternative safety net for these adolescents did not exist either. The Generation 1.5 kids desperately needed to belong to an extra-familial social group that would assume some of the functions of the family, and the tusovkas filled this need. For example, Natasha was born in 1979 and immigrated to Israel from Donetsk in 1992. The only child of divorced parents, Natasha spent her teenage years in Ashkelon and moved to Ramat Gan in 2004. In her interview, Natasha stated that life in her tusovka resembled life in a commune. Ida

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was born in 1980 and immigrated to Israel from Moscow in 1990. She, too, was the only child of divorced parents and grew up in Jerusalem, moving to Ramat Gan in 2001. She admitted that "I never had a family in the usual sense of the word. My friends are my family. My friends were always closer to me than my parents."

The immigrants from the FSU came primarily from the capital cities or major metropolitan areas in their native lands, and when they came to Israel most were "farmed out" to the periphery, settling in small and medium-sized towns far from the cultural and business centers of their new land (see Tables 1 and 2). The governments that absorbed this wave of immigration intended, among other things, to take advantage of this mass of immigrants to demographically fortify sensitive frontier areas in Israel’s North and South, especially those with a small Jewish population and a large Arab population. This objective was not achieved, since at the same time that the immigrants arrived the veteran population in these outlying areas declined significantly. Those who remained were mainly the weaker elements of the longtime population and the new immigrants attracted to these towns by the lower housing and living costs. Cities such as Beer Sheba, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Haifa, and Carmiel became the breeding grounds for isolated groups of immigrant youth – tusovkas. Despite its status as the nation’s capital, Jerusalem too can be considered an outlying area, given its limited job opportunities (outside governmental jobs unavailable to immigrants), high poverty rates and predominance of Haredi and Arab population. On the other hand, Jerusalem was a strong magnet for religiously-minded, artistic and creative elements in the last wave of FSU immigrants; its special ambience of history, holy places and human diversity became a fertile ground for alternative youth groups of Russian-speakers.

The word tusovka entered the slang of Russian youngsters in the 1960s, and since then its use has broadened and it has entered the adult lexicon. The origin of the word is not clear, though some assume it is related to the verb "tasovat," meaning "to shuffle cards." The concept has diverse meanings in Russian slang, among them hanging-out (usually with the purpose of having fun) and band or group of people who stick together due to a common interest. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the concept was particularly popular among (ex)Soviet youth. Hundreds of tusovkas were set up in the large cities of the Soviet Union, their members drawn together mainly by styles of dress and musical taste. The word, together with its diverse meanings, was "imported" to Israel by the immigrant youth, along with other characteristics of the Perestroika movement and of adolescence. Notably, for the Russian immigrant youth, their sense of belonging within the tusovka subculture in Israel was much less clearly defined than was the case with different tusovkas in their countries of origin. Due to their limited numbers, the young Russians in Israel could not afford to split into too many small groups distinguishing between hippies and punksters or between rockers and metalists. Thus, the emerging Russian groups were usually quite colorful and varied in their composition.

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8 Ibid., pp. 236-240.
Ant Weiss, today a successful Tel Aviv musician, who came to Israel with his parents from St. Petersburg in 1990, describes how the Russian-Israeli tusovkas first came into being:

"... beginner tusovshchiks,\(^9\) half-hippies and half-punksters, fans of Grebenshchikov and Kinchev,\(^10\) found themselves in the West\(^11\) ... without being particularly enthusiastic, and yearning for the familiar alleyways, the cheap wine and the scent of Perestroika ... The young neformaly\(^12\) came here one by one and at first felt cut off from the mainstream (and the concerns) of the sistema.\(^13\) They immediately began seeking out soul mates, identifying one another by bracelets and pins."\(^14\)

Later on, Ant Weiss describes a typical meeting of his tusovka, one of the first in Israel and particularly in Jerusalem:

*When a tusovshchik would venture to the city center, his place of choice would be the perfect meeting spot, HaKohen Square,\(^15\) where s/he could always find a kin soul to share a bottle or a joint. Longtime residents or tourists, who happened to cross this small square surrounded by three walls, would look at the strange drunken adolescents with suspicion and embarrassment. These teens would be sitting against the wall or lying on the ground or screaming loudly and chasing each other around. They did not even notice the passerby. They lived in their own Jerusalem, their own separate reality, without yet connecting in any way with the Israeli reality."\(^16\)

**Characteristics of the Israeli tusovkas**

Ant's tusovka, like dozens of other Russian tusovkas in Israel in the 1990s, revolved around music. The young immigrants listened to Russian and Western rock music, singing their favorite songs accompanied by a guitar at the tusovka meetings. Some wrote their own songs, and the most talented and ambitious among them set up bands and became stars in the tusovkas of their city. The small local groups grew, became stronger and joined the all-Israel Russian tusovka, with its own myths, rock stars and culture heroes. Its members found each other in the crowd, organized festivals and hitchhiked from one end of this small and exotic country to the other. The "musical accompaniment" served to bring the members of the tusovka together into a tightly knit group. At the same time, it provided the content around which the meetings

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\(^9\) The word *tusovshchik* comes from *tusovka* and refers to a member of a *tusovka* or a person who spends time in *tusovkas*.

\(^10\) Boris Grebenshchikov, b. 1953 in Leningrad, a popular musician and the soloist of the *Aquarium* band, is a cult figure for several generations of Russian hippies. Konstantin Kinchev, b. 1958 in Moscow, soloist for the popular band *Alissa*, is admired by punksters and metalists.

\(^11\) During the years of the Soviet Union’s decay, the notion of the West (i.e. abroad) took on the meaning of a land flowing with milk and honey where all wishes would come true. In this generalized sense, Israel was part of the imaginary West.

\(^12\) From here on, the emphases are those of the author.

\(^13\) The word *neformaly* is derived from “informal people,” i.e. those not following the ‘formal’ norms dictated by the System. This label embraced all representatives of the youth sub-cultures in the Soviet and post-Soviet space of the 1980s and 1990s, in contrast to the official youth associations backed by the regime. *Sistema* refers to these informal sub-cultures in their entirety.

\(^14\) Weiss – New Youth.

\(^15\) A small and hidden square in the Nahalat Shiv'a neighborhood in central Jerusalem.

\(^16\) Weiss – New Youth.
revolved, lent a flavor of romanticism to the social lives of these young Russians and gave them an outlet for self-realization. Weiss elaborates: "They weren't just getting drunk and getting laid. They were doing it to the sounds of Pink Floyd and the blues of Mike Naumenko, making all these experiences unforgettable and giving them the sense of belonging to the global tusovka rather than the embarrassing Russian-Israeli ghetto."

Belonging to a tusovka gave these adolescent immigrants the possibility of joining an exclusive club of their sub-culture rather than trying to fit in and adapt to the socio-cultural standards of the dominant society. For them the microcosm of the tusovka replaced the broader social milieu and enabled them to live according to their own rules without being required to obey the unwritten rules of Israeli society. There was, of course, the inner scale of marginality between different tusovkas. Some of them crossed the line between mere strangeness and what the larger society was not ready to tolerate – members of certain tusovkas used heavy drugs, some of the tusovshchiks got involved in minor crimes or violent incidents. It’s important to emphasize though, that belonging to the intelligentsia, an elite group with established traditions, served as a good antidote against dangerous temptations for most youngsters. Almost every tusovshchik personally knew someone who “crossed the line” – became a junkie, went downhill socially, even died. But for most of them “sex, drugs and rock-n-roll” remained just an enticing game. The tusovka served as an arena for performance, for familiarity in relations and in speech and for masquerade, which was both a means of searching for the self and of enabling self-realization and separation from the "normal" and "formal" world. In this sense, the lives of these marginalized youth clans were in many ways carnivalized.

The tusovka can be defined in terms of embodied communication, which can be broken down into its components – music and dance, style and play. This provides an accurate description not only of the non-formal youth groups in Moscow during the breakup of the Soviet Union but also of the tusovkas of immigrant youth in Israel in the 1990s. Hilary Pilkington concluded that the type of communication within the late-Soviet and post-Soviet tusovkas was "playfully subversive" toward the hegemonic culture, but not cut off from it and not necessarily opposed to it. By contrast, the sub-culture of Russian youth in Israel was completely foreign to the dominant youth culture in Israel. While the neformaly in the Soviet Union could proudly claim (with a grain of truth to it) that "rock brought us the Perestroika," the immigrant youth had no impact upon the political or cultural climate of Israel in the 1990s. The very existence of the neformaly was totally marginal from the social and geographical perspective.

The places where the Russian youth gangs met are no less important in understanding the tusovka phenomenon in Israel than are the music the young immigrants listened to, their characteristic style of dress or their typical forms of seeking pleasure and entertainment. Each tusovka usually had a number of meeting places, all of them

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17 Mike Naumenko (1955-1991) was the soloist of the Zoopark band - a favorite of the neformaly group.
18 Here the emphasis is in the original.
19 The term "carnival" is used here in the sense given to it by Mikhail Bakhtin. See, for example, Mikhail Bakhtin, Problemy Poetiki Dostoyevskogo, Moskva, Sovetskaya Rossia, 1979, pp. 140-142.
20 Hilary Pilkington, Russia’s Youth and its Culture, pp. 236-268.
21 Ibid., p. 268.
22 Weiss – New Youth.
23 Hilary Pilkington, Russia’s Youth and its Culture, p. 263.
outdoors, in some open area or public park that turned into a no-man's land at night – perhaps a small and isolated square like the one described by Weiss. It could also be a park bench, a public garden, a playground, near a neighborhood bomb shelter, an empty swimming pool, a deserted building or an amphitheater no longer in use.

Paulina was born in 1980 and moved with her parents from Moscow to Beer Sheba in 1991. She has been living in Jerusalem since 2004. She recalls:

At around age 14, I would spend many hours every night at the bench. At first with kids from the neighborhood and from school … but at a certain point I lost interest in them … Two friends and I distanced ourselves from the neighborhood bunch and met some older and cooler kids … They played guitar, listened to Pink Floyd and Jethro Tull and the like … When I was around 16-17 I started going to the bigger tusovkas – at the pit, the pool, the park where the “maniacs” hung out.24

It can be argued that the musical taste and typical style of dress of the Russian neformaly is in many ways reminiscent of the freak sub-culture that was certainly firmly established in Israel. Yet in addition to the overt layer of communication within the tusovka, which was indeed based primarily on playing, singing and listening to music, there were also many hidden layers: the common literary references shared by many of the children of the intelligentsia, the Soviet films they all watched, knew and loved, the folklore they had absorbed during their childhood or early adolescence in their countries of origin, the codes of behavior and communication that differed starkly from those they encountered in Israel.

The sub-culture of the Russian youth in Israel developed, grew and became stronger under conditions of triple marginality. This sub-culture was concentrated mainly in the country’s geographic and social periphery, where most of the Russian immigrants lived. The groups met at nameless, separate and often isolated venues, and the cultural, aesthetic and social reality of these adolescents was completely foreign to that of the mainstream society.

The transformation: Maturation, integration, bourgeoisification

The tusovkas of the 1990s were instrumental as internal safety nets that helped many of the Generation 1.5 immigrants to cope with the loss of their old lives, mature and adapt to Israel with relative social and psychological ease. Yet when these immigrants left their teens and early twenties behind, these informal Russian youth groups began to fall apart and lose their unique markers as a sub-culture. Ant Weiss ends his memoir like this:

These youngsters struggled to discover their identity, as they slowly and inevitably turned into new Israelis. When they were finished acting out, these long-haired young men turned into fathers and the young women into mothers. Their children now speak Hebrew better than they speak Russian. All is as it should be – the hippies turned into yuppies, the punksters grew up. Many of them moved from Jerusalem to the Center of the country, closer to Tel Aviv where they found more employment opportunities and a thriving cultural and social life.

24 The pit, the pool and the park where the “maniacs” hung out are all names of popular meeting places for the Beer Sheba tusovka.
Boris was born in 1979 and moved from Moscow to Jerusalem in 1992. He has been living in Givatayim since 2002. Here's how he describes the 2010 wedding of a fellow member of his tusovka from his student days: "It had all the markers of an ordinary wedding – DJ, dress, photographer. But the bride and groom asked all their close friends to wear their telnyashka shirts\textsuperscript{25} ... it was as if they were trying to remember they were once neormaly."

Yuri, who immigrated to Beer Sheba from Moscow in 1990 and moved to Tel Aviv in 2010, chose to use a quote from Umka, the hippie singer from Moscow, to describe the change his friends have undergone in the past decade: "My classmates have turned into aunts and uncles."

As noted, the vast majority of the interviewees earned at least a Bachelors degree, and more than half went on to graduate studies. Around half work in high-tech, while the others are engaged in a variety of professions or are pursuing academic careers. After finishing their undergraduate studies, all of them, without exception, left their initial place of residence in Israel, and most migrated to Tel Aviv and its suburbs – Ramat Gan, Givatayim, Kiryat Ono, Holon, Bat-Yam, etc. – in search of well-paying jobs and a lively social and cultural scene. Around a third of those interviewed earn more than 12,000 shekels per month, considerably more than the average salary in Israel.\textsuperscript{26}

Toward the end of their student days, when their salaries began to make it possible, the social lives of tusovka members drifted away from urban no-man's lands, dorms, parents' homes or rented apartments to the entertainment milieu most popular among the Israeli middle class – night clubs and bars, restaurants and fashionable coffee houses. Indeed, during the past decade the lifestyle of Generation 1.5'ers has changed beyond recognition. Neighborhood coffee houses have replaced local park benches, i-phones have taken the place of guitars, and cheap liquor and joints have disappeared altogether. As for the dress style, the telnyashka shirts, hippie bracelets (fenichki) and torn jeans have given way to the outfits of an average Israeli white-collar or high-tech employee – not too sloppy and not too fancy, including some designer brand labels but devoid of any particular identifying marks.

The high-tech elite of Gen 1.5 members enjoys all the advantages available to the consumer-oriented Israeli middle class – frequent trips abroad, extreme sports (skiing, diving, etc.), hiking and biking throughout Israel, spa treatments and bowling clubs, restaurants, bars and coffee houses. This new lifestyle, replete with pleasures, certainly seems to indicate they have become established financially and have adopted the consumer habits typical of Israeli society, but it does not necessarily point to their cultural and social integration in Israel. As indicated by the our interviewees, these young educated Russians, who usually have no language barrier in communicating

\textsuperscript{25} In the 1980s and 1990s the telnyashkas - striped sweat shirts that once were part of the Russian/Soviet navy uniform - became a popular clothing item among the neormaly youth. It was associated with the primitive art movement in Leningrad known as Mir'ki. This movement's ideology was formulated in a book/manifest written in 1984 (Владимир Шинкарев, Максим и Федор; Папуас из Гондураса : Домашний еж : Мятки, Санкт-Петербург, Новый Геликон, 1996). The main features of this ideology, which had many fans among the younger generation, included strong opposition to cheap popular culture (popsa), simplification to the point of total neglect of outward appearances, anti-violence, unique humor, and a great deal of drinking. The guitar and the telnyashka were the usual tokens of every informal tusovka. They express the ties to art, music and bohemianism, to freedom of spirit, and to "the mysterious Russian soul."

\textsuperscript{26} According to figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics, in October 2010 the average monthly salary of a salaried employee in Israel was 8,189 shekels.
with Hebrew speakers, still prefer speaking Russian, their own private language, in their leisure time. At nights, they can be seen singing at Russian karaoke parties or hoofing it out to the sounds of Russian pop-music in “ethnic” pubs, as well as sitting next to groups of native Israelis in “regular” bars. Some Russian Israelis in their late 20s and early 30s are into “Chto? Gde? Kogda?” and “KVN” – intellectual team games rooted in the Soviet period and highly popular among their parents.

Only one of the interviewees is currently romantically involved with a Sabra, and this is a homosexual relationship. All the rest date and marry other Russians, often the people they met in or through the tusovka. For example, Vera immigrated to Jerusalem from Moscow in 1990. Now 30 years old, married with one child and living in Ramat Gan, she explained her take on this situation:

*I think if we had stayed in Russia, my choice of potential spouses would have been much greater. Here the choices are limited. I did not even consider the "Israelis" – it is impossible to have a relationship with someone with whom you are not completely in sync with respect to behavioral codes, humor and the like... And when it comes to the “Russians,” most of those I met here would have been rejected right away if I had seen them there. I was lucky: I married a guy I had known for ten years in the tusovka, someone from my own milieu. Excuse my snobbism, but some people have to make compromises and resort to Internet dating sites, due to the lack of other options.*

Marina, a 30-year-old single woman working on her doctorate in linguistics, admitted in the interview that all her attempts at romantic relationships with Sabras fell through. Here’s how she described this: "I've dated quite a few Israeli guys. Everything went well, but at some point I began to realize there would never be the same type of understanding, the same click, as with Russians. It's hard to put this into words, but ... there are just so many things that a Russian guy would understand without my having to say anything..."

**Discussion and conclusion**

Most of the Generation 1.5 social groups have long abandoned the confines of the tusovkas and realigned into small nuclear families – just like their counterparts from the Israeli middle class. They live in the Center of the country, work in respectable white-collar professions, pursue the same leisure activities as their Sabra peers, and stay up-to-date on the news, fashions, and Israeli popular culture.

Nevertheless, in many ways the former tusovka members continue to live in their own isolated social and cultural space. They maintain close ties with the friends from their teens and student years, the great majority of whom are also Russians. Most of them do not try to develop informal relationships with their Sabra colleagues at work. It is also notable that young Russian Israelis in this study have hardly ever mentioned any friendships from the army service, allegedly the ultimate melting pot of Israeli society.

Apparently, personal relationships formed in the tusovkas during the first ten years after immigration to Israel continue today, twenty years later, to provide the primary social and cultural framework for the Generation 1.5 elite. In this sense, our findings reinforce those of the earlier study of the 1.5 Generation by Remennick (2003). How did this come about? Is this a form of seclusion by choice or was this isolation forced
upon the young immigrants by the dominant society? The assumption is that a number of factors come into play here.

While living in the FSU and even after coming to Israel, the immigrant parents originating in the ranks of intelligentsia managed to instill in their children a potent cultural foundation, which has continued to impact upon them as adults despite the geographic and mental distance from their country of origin. Perhaps this "shot" of Russian cultural tradition they were given as children “immunized” the Generation 1.5 children of the Russian intelligentsia in Israel against "foreign" cultural and social patterns. For example, although a majority of them served a full term in the IDF, they did not adopt the common pattern that contributes to the formation of the social self in their new land – the institution of friends from the army. Instead, they maintained the pattern of their country of origin, where friendships formed in school or during the student years are maintained throughout life, an established Russian tradition dating back to the time of Pushkin.

The Generation 1.5'ers went through the crisis of immigration at the same time they were going through the crisis of adolescence. Immersed in the strange and sometimes challenging environment of the Israeli schools, they searched frantically for their peer group, often finding it in the tusovka. The allegiance of these adolescents to their co-ethnic social circle can be explained by the trauma of being rejected by their Israeli peers, as well as the profound emotional ties they developed with the friends they had worked so hard to find.

Another reason for the social and cultural seclusion of the Gen 1.5 elite is the transnational nature of the Russian community in Israel in general and of the young people in particular. These thirty-something people, who immigrated as adolescents and are equally fluent in Russian and in Hebrew, start their day by browsing Russian and Israeli news sites on the Internet. They watch leading satirical programs in both languages, are involved in the Russian and Israeli music scenes, understand contemporary Russian humor no less than Israeli humor, and some of them are as familiar with St. Petersburg as they are with Tel Aviv. Most of them visit Russia or Ukraine regularly (every few years), usually for social and cultural reasons – to meet relatives, old friends and to enjoy the vivid cultural scene, familiar sights and nostalgic views. In between these visits, they stay in touch with their significant others in the FSU by telephone, Skype and e-mail. This biculturalism may be both a blessing and a burden. Only Israeli Russians can understand Israeli Russians and share their world of associations, memories and allusions.

Finally, the main problem of the Russian immigrant intelligentsia as a whole, including Generation 1.5, is the sense of alienation from the hegemonic Israeli elite. The westernized, America-oriented Sabra intellectual establishment did not accept former Soviet intellectuals as equals. Israeli intellectual circles tended to totally ignore the existence and cultural expressions of the “Russian Street” or to "remember" them in very narrow contexts, e.g. for a discussion of the Russian vote prior to elections or right-wing politicians of Russian origin. The young immigrants often experience a

27 The lack of continuity in army friendships (if any) for ‘Russian’ youths has also been shown in a larger study by Rivka A Eisikovits (2006): Intercultural learning among Russian immigrant recruits in the Israeli army. Armed Forces and Society, 32(2): 292-306.
28 See, for example, Shmuel Shamai and Zinaida Italov (2001). Assimilation and ethnic boundaries: Israeli students' attitudes toward Soviet immigrants. Adolescence 2001; 36:681-95
29 For more details, see Remennick – Transnational community.
similar type of estrangement or negative labeling in their encounters with their Sabra peers. The educated and successful Russian, no matter how involved in Israeli culture, would often be delegated to the status of "token Russian" in any native-Israeli social group. Their natural response is to withdraw into a group that does not force them into confines of a defined national or ethnic role.

On the surface of things, the residential and entertainment patterns of Generation 1.5'ers point to their social and financial success and adoption of the cultural codes of the country they came to as children. However, the elite members of this generation prefer to bear the burden of belonging to a minority social group rather than merging with the majority. They continue to live in a linguistic, cultural and social world of their own that cannot be penetrated from the outside. In this sense, the parental generation of immigrants who arrived in Israel in the early 1990s with the slogan "for the sake of our children" has in effect produced a second generation rather alienated from the country’s Hebrew mainstream. It can be assumed that this will be the last "desert generation" among Russian immigrants, whose dependence on “the Russian-Jewish component anchored in their country of origin” is stronger than their dependence on "the Israeli component" in their identity and lifestyle.  

The dividing line between the generation of immigrants who came to Israel as pre-teens or young adolescents and those who were born in Israel or came as young children is quite sharp, as evidenced by both social research and social networking data collected by commercial companies. More than 67% of young people aged 18-24 use Hebrew-language social networks, compared to less than 38% who use Russian-language networks. Among those aged 25-34, the picture is just the opposite. Over 64% use Russian for communicating on the social networks, while less than 22% use Hebrew.  

As Ant Weiss noted, the Israeli-born children of the Russian immigrants speak Hebrew better than they speak Russian and are free from their parents' legacy of Russian memories, culture and traditions. It remains to be seen whether they will stand out a distinct group or will eventually assimilate into the Israeli middle class without leaving any traces. But it is reasonable to assume that the special hybrid species of Generation 1.5 immigrants from the FSU, as an intermediate or transitory socio-cultural phenomenon, is already close to extinction.

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32 From the PowerPoint presentation "Digital in the Russian Sector" put out by the McCann Erickson advertising agency, Conference on Marketing to Sectors, November 30, 2010.

English Sources


Russian Sources


Шинкарев Владимир, Максим и Федор ; Папуас из Гондураса ; Домашний еж; Митьки, Санкт-Петербург, Новый Геликон, 1996

Presentations

Table 1: Numbers and percentages of immigrants by city, 2009

(Ministry of Absorption data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>Share of FSU Immigrants</th>
<th>NN of Citizens</th>
<th>N of FSU Immigrants</th>
<th>Total Immigrants N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>7,893,891</td>
<td>876,105</td>
<td>1,141,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdod</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>230,616</td>
<td>60,999</td>
<td>75,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haifa</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>301,967</td>
<td>62,247</td>
<td>69,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>839,598</td>
<td>31,736</td>
<td>68,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv – Yaffo</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>485,005</td>
<td>44,004</td>
<td>62,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer Sheva</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>204,377</td>
<td>50,884</td>
<td>58,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netanya</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>207,315</td>
<td>40,138</td>
<td>56,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat-Yam</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>157,224</td>
<td>45,857</td>
<td>51,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishon Letzion</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>245,964</td>
<td>39,959</td>
<td>47,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petah-Tiqva</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>217,798</td>
<td>36,707</td>
<td>45,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashkelon</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>123,900</td>
<td>33,952</td>
<td>39,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holon</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>197,227</td>
<td>31,247</td>
<td>35,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadera</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>87,444</td>
<td>20,196</td>
<td>24,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehovot</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>123,408</td>
<td>16,690</td>
<td>22,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natzrat Illit</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>50,238</td>
<td>19,531</td>
<td>20,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lod</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>76,137</td>
<td>16,142</td>
<td>18,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karmiel</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>51,076</td>
<td>16,878</td>
<td>18,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beit-Shemesh</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>82,624</td>
<td>6,535</td>
<td>17,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramat-Gan</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>153,033</td>
<td>13,328</td>
<td>16,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramla</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>71,195</td>
<td>12,148</td>
<td>15,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiryat-Yam</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>43,645</td>
<td>13,663</td>
<td>14,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiryat-Gat</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>52,473</td>
<td>13,010</td>
<td>14,797</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: From FSU capitals and large cities to Israel’s periphery towns (Ministry of Absorption data, 2010)
'Russian' youth hanging out in a public garden, Beer-Sheba, 1996
Copyright for all photos: Liza Rozovsky and Oz Almog

Beer-Sheba tusovka at night, 1996
Get-together in a Beer-Sheba flat, 1995

Beer-Sheba flat, 1999
Punk birthday party in a Beer-Sheba flat, 1996

Street music, Beer-Sheba, 1998
A group hanging out near public shelter, Beer-Sheba, 1994

Near a playground, Beer-Sheba, 1995
A Jerusalem kitchen, 1996

Beer Sheba, Park ha-maniakim, 1998
The latte phase: Café in Givataim, 2010

Café in Givataim, 2010