

Identity Patterns among Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel: Assimilation vs. Ethnic Formation

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with identity patterns among the 1990s immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel. It presents the complex set of identity types among immigrants in the context of their cultural and socio-demographic characteristics and their dynamic relationships with the Israeli host society.

The findings show that immigrants from the FSU in Israel form a distinct ethnic group within the Israeli social and cultural fabric. This is reflected in their closed social networks, ethnic information sources, strong desire to maintain ethnic-cultural continuity, and the fact that the ethnic component (Jew from the FSU or immigrant from the FSU) is central for self-identification. However, ethnic formation among these immigrants is not a reactive-oriented identity, which is mainly generated by alienation from the host society, it is rather an instrumentalized ethnicity, which is the outcome of ethnic-cultural pride and pragmatic considerations.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between immigration and ethnic formation has been one of the main issues of the sociology of immigration (Castels and Miller, 1998; Alba and Nee, 1997; Waters, 1995; Goldscheider, 1992; Nahirny and Fishman, 1965). Immigration flows have been found to be a major source for the development of ethnicity. These flows may be the result of ethnic conflict in the home country, but they also may generate a new conflict with other groups in the host society. This is especially true when immigrants use their group boundaries as a means

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for collective action or as an instrument for social and political mobilization (Kalbach and Kalbach, 1997). After new immigrants are settled, their collective action may be aimed at creating a cultural community in the receiving society and bargaining for a change in their status and conditions (Banton, 1998: 222).

Students of ethnicity highlight the factors that facilitate ethnic formation and the maintenance of ethnic cohesiveness (Reitz, 1980). Large numbers, demographic concentration in specific areas, and physical distinctiveness are often mentioned as factors that strengthen a distinct ethnic identity. The social structural location of ethnic groups affects their ethnic cohesion. Maximum ethnic cohesion is found when all members of an ethnic group are concentrated in the same socio-demographic or socio-economic location; minimum cohesion, when they are distributed randomly. The higher the level of ethnic concentration in social structures, the higher the level of ethnic cohesion. In addition, structural concentration enhances the maintenance of cultural activities (Kotler-Berkowitz, 1997: 799).

However, ethnic formation and organizing across group boundaries is only one possibility among many others generally experienced by immigrants. Assimilation within the new society is another viable possibility. Two major types of assimilation are usually emphasized: structural assimilation and cultural assimilation. *Structural assimilation* refers to large-scale admission of immigrants into the institutions, social networks, and primary groups of the host society. *Cultural assimilation* refers to changes in the immigrants' cultural patterns in the direction of those of host society – what is usually referred to as “acculturation” (Reitz, 1980: 101). Gordon (1964: 77, in Reitz, 1980: 102) argues that cultural assimilation may occur without structural assimilation; that is, without acceptance by the host society. In any case, Van den Berghe emphasizes that the ethnic assimilation of immigrants should not be taken for granted, since ethnic sentiments, as an extension of kin selection, tend to endure (1981: 216). People tend to resist assimilation, unless the benefits are overwhelming. Consequently, assimilation is largely the outcome of cost-benefit considerations by the members of the group (1981: 257).

Van den Berghe presents an assimilation model that delineates the conditions favouring ethnic assimilation. According to the model, the greater the phenotypic and cultural resemblance between groups, the more likely assimilation is to take place. Likewise, smaller groups and those that are more territorially dispersed are more likely to assimilate because they have fewer resources relative to the rest of society and because territorial dispersion reduces the benefits of nepotism. In addition, groups with lower status tend to assimilate more than high status groups do, because the potential benefits of such assimilation are greater for them (1981: 218).

Unlike Van den Berghe, Reitz argues that stronger group ties are to be found among those with lower job status. He adds, however, that middle-class ethnicity

is a well-known phenomenon. Such ethnic survival may be reinforced by the development of ethnic organizations, including ethnic media. The relationship between ethnic survival and ethnic organizations is two-way. These organizations may respond to the economic and cultural needs of the group; at the same time, however, they also have a vested interest in the survival of the group (1980: 216).

In dealing with immigrants, we must take into consideration the impact of their adjustment in the host society on their ethnic orientation. Here there are two main approaches: the *reactive ethnicity* perspective and the *competitive-instrumental* perspective. The *reactive ethnicity* perspective argues that the manifestation of ethnic identity is mainly a reaction to the alienation that immigrants feel toward the absorbing society, especially in the initial stages of their settlement and adjustment. In other words, such ethnic connectedness is, to a large extent, involuntary. It is the reaction by peripheral groups to their disadvantaged location in the stratification system as a result of their exclusion from the power centre by the core group (Ragin, 1979). The sense of insecurity in an unfamiliar environment may strengthen ethnic solidarity and allegiances (Adam and Giliomee, 1979). In addition, rejection and stigmatization by the dominant group may enhance a minority group's retention of ethnic identity (Adam, 1989).

Unlike the reactive approach, the *competitive-instrumental* perspective holds that ethnicity and ethnic boundaries are used as an instrument for mobilization, with the aim of increasing a group's access to economic, social, and political resources, regardless of its location in the stratification system (Olzak, 1982; Goldenberg, 1989).

One of the central arguments of the instrumental perspective is the socially constructed nature of ethnic identity (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 9). Trueba and Zou emphasize the strong relationship between ethnic identity and power. This is especially important for immigrant groups' adjustment in the host society. As they emphasize:

As ethnic groups abandon their home countries and towns of origin, they carry with them a worldview, a lifestyle, a language and a family structure that they try to maintain in the host country. For as long as they maintain their cultural markers and other symbolic components of their identity, they seem to muster the energy and courage needed to adapt and survive. In fact as immigrants and ethnic groups reaffirm and redefine their identities in contrast with other groups as well as mainstream peoples, they seem to hold the power, to control their destiny, and to succeed in their risky ventures as immigrants (1998: 1).

The flexibility of ethnic borders, as seen in the instrumental approach, allows people to adopt multidimensional and situational identities. This type of identity is better suited to the post-modern era, which is characterized by rapid changes

and multiple social contexts (Cohen, 1994). Furthermore, by adopting a “situational identity” individuals construct and present one of a number of different identities as a function of the behaviour context for manipulative use (Cohen, 1994: 205).

BACKGROUND

Israel may be an ideal setting for studying the dynamic relationship between ethnicity and immigration because it is a country heavily based on immigration and constantly preoccupied with the absorption of immigrants. At the same time, Israel is a deeply divided society where ethnicity constitutes a basic social and cultural feature and a central element in the stratification system. The ethnic dimension within the Jewish population in Israel is prominent (Smootha, 1978; Weingrod, 1985; Schmelz et al., 1991; Ben-Rafael and Sharot, 1991; Goldscheider, 1992, 1995) and is reflected in cultural, socio-economic, and political differences between two main groups – Sephardim or Mizrahim (of African-Asian origin) and Ashkenazim (of European-American origin).

Prior to the establishment of Israel, the vast majority of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine came from Eastern Europe. This picture changed immediately after independence. The mass Jewish immigration from Arabic-speaking countries that began had almost emptied them of Jews by the end of the early 1950s (Schmelz et al., 1991: 10). By the end of the 1980s, Sephardim outnumbered Ashkenazim in Israel, their proportion of the Jewish population having risen from 44 per cent in 1961 to 50 per cent in 1972 and 52 per cent in 1988 (Schmelz et al., 1991: 15).

There is a clear class division between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. The former are a majority in the middle class; the latter, in the working class (Smootha, 1978). Sephardi Jews are disadvantaged with regard to their occupational opportunities, education, income, and other economic resources (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986). The differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews extend to their socio-cultural background. The Sephardim, who came from Islamic countries, were less exposed to Western culture than the Ashkenazim who came from Christian countries with modern nationalist and socialist ideologies (Eisenstadt, 1984; Ben-Rafael and Sharot, 1991).

The influx of immigrants from the FSU since 1989 has added to this complex structure. Today, there are more than 1 million immigrants from the FSU (200,000 who came in the 1970s and 835,000 who come in the 1990s). These immigrants constitute about 15 per cent of the Israeli population and constitute the largest single country-of-origin group among the Jewish population (Al-Haj and Leshem, 2000).

The identity orientation of immigrants from the FSU in Israel is a controversial issue. Most scholars emphasize the confusion between integration within the Israeli culture and segregation as a distinct cultural group (Lissak, 1995; Ben-Rafael et al., 1998; Horowitz, 1994; Damian and Rosenbaum-Tamari, 1996; Shuval, 1998; Lissak and Leshem, 1995; Kimmerling, 1998). By and large though the conclusion is that immigrants from the FSU will be eventually integrated/absorbed into Israeli society while preserving their "cultural uniqueness" by forming a "cultural enclave" (Lissak, 1995), "sub-culture" (Smootha, 1994) or "Russian bubble" (Kimmerling, 1998).

Ben-Rafael et al. (1998) maintain that immigrants from the FSU seek neither segregation nor integration in Israeli society. What they want is legitimacy for their cultural uniqueness, coupled with integration as a secular group. Lissak (1995) termed this cultural uniqueness a "cultural enclave", one that includes "Russian" cultural organizations, Russian-language media, and community organizations. These have become the main channels of information and entertainment for immigrants from the FSU in Israel.

Horowitz concludes that the cultural absorption of immigrants from the FSU is problematic because immigrants range between integration and cultural separation (1994: 90). Damian and Rosenbaum-Tamari, who studied FSU immigrants' assessment of their absorption in Israel after five years, reported a similar trend (1996). They concluded that the immigrants live in "two worlds", their will to preserve their own original culture and their desire to be open, to some extent, to Israeli society.

Smootha thinks that the new immigrants from the FSU will eventually be integrated into the Ashkenazi middle class in Israel, despite the absorption difficulties during the transitional period (1994). He adds that Russian immigrants are expected to develop and sustain a unique sub-culture. This will be accepted by Israeli society and increase the pluralistic character of the country (1994: 7).

Kimmerling presents a similar conclusion. He holds that, in their human capital and other characteristics, the immigrants from the FSU are very similar to the Ashkenazi middle class. Economically speaking this immigration is being rapidly absorbed into this class, which is searching for partners for a coalition against the other competing groups within the Israeli society. Both "Russians" and the Ashkenazi middle class feel threatened by the same groups (the Arabs, national-religious, and Ultra-Orthodox), as they compete for their location in the symbolic and stratification systems. There is no guarantee, however, that the "Russian bubble" will disappear in the next generation (1998: 291).

Al-Haj presents a different approach, according to which immigrants from the FSU are in the process of forming a distinct ethnic group in Israel. This approach proposes that ethnic formation among Russian immigrants is not only socially and

culturally motivated. It is, to a large extent, an instrumental ethnicity that is used as part of their adjustment strategy and reflects their desire to integrate in Israeli society from a position of strength rather than to assimilate from a position of weakness (1996: 147).

Several questions arise against this background. What are the central patterns of identity among immigrants from the FSU? Do these patterns reflect a trend toward assimilation or ethnic formation? What is the profile of the different types of identity? Do these patterns reflect a reactive form of identity determined by the reception by the Israeli host society or an instrumental type of identity?

METHODOLOGY

The data are derived from a nationwide survey conducted in August and September 1999 on a representative sample of 707 adult immigrants (18 years and older) who came to Israel between January 1990 and July 1999. The field study was conducted in the format of face-to-face interviews in the immigrants' homes by Russian speaking interviewers. The statistical error in such a sample is ± 3.7 per cent, at a significance level of 0.95. In order to make sure that the sample was highly representative, respondents were selected while controlling for the following variables: year of immigration, republic of origin in the FSU, gender, age, and area of residence in Israel. That is, the sample was designed to provide a distribution of the population by the above variables corresponding to the figures published by Central Bureau of Statistics for 1990-1997 and by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and the Department for the CIS of the Jewish Agency for 1998-1999. The fieldwork, carried out by the Geocartography Research Institute and reported here, indicates a close approximation to the sampling guidelines, which correspond to the distribution of the population.

This research is among the most detailed studies conducted on the 1990s immigrants from the FSU in terms of sample and contents of the questionnaire. The questionnaire included a large number of items, which covered different subjects including: motives for immigration; adjustment patterns in different key areas – housing, employment, acquisition of Hebrew, leisure-time patterns, exposure to mass media, and cultural consumption; the political behaviour of immigrants at the nationwide and local levels; the immigrants' social networks and sense of social distance from the other main sectors of the population – Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, immigrants from Ethiopia, secular Jews, religious Jews, Arabs; the patterns of self-identity, on the individual and group levels, involving the immigrants' Jewish, Israeli, and Russian components; and attitudes of immigrants toward several issues connected with cultural-ethnic orientation and the extent of their desire to maintain institutionalized cultural continuity. In addition, a series of questions on demographic and individual background was also asked (Al-Haj and Leshem, 2000: 5-9).

It should be indicated that throughout our analysis we have used the chi-square test and for ordinal and ranked variables we have also used Kendall's tau-b, a nonparametric measure, which takes ties into consideration.

FINDINGS

According to our findings, the 1990s immigrants from the FSU form a distinct group with strong social and cultural borders with regard to their demographic structure, social networks, social relations, and sources of information and entertainment. The immigrants have a high demographic concentration – the vast majority of the respondents (84%) said that they live in neighbourhoods where FSU immigrants account for at least one-third of the residents; 55.1 per cent said that immigrants constitute half or more of the population in their neighbourhood. Demographic concentration is accompanied by relatively closed social networks among immigrants: 66.3 per cent of the respondents said that all five of their closest friends are new immigrants from the FSU, while 70.6 per cent said that none of their five closest friends in Israel is a veteran Israeli. The encounter with veteran Israelis is mainly formal, whereas primary groups are mostly composed of immigrants: 81.7 per cent of the respondents said they meet other immigrants often or very often in social meetings with friends (as compared to 17.6% who meet veteran Israelis); 81.5 per cent in family gatherings (10.6% veteran Israelis); and 55.7 per cent in the workplace (60.4% veteran Israelis).

The sources of information among immigrants are also relatively closed and mainly produced in the group borders or derived from the home Russian culture: 77.2 per cent of respondents regularly watch television broadcasts from Russia on cable, compared to 25 per cent who say they watch Hebrew language programmes on Israeli television; 40.2 per cent listen regularly to the Russian-language immigrant radio station Reqa, compared to 20.9 per cent who listen regularly to Hebrew-language Israeli radio; 59.7 per cent of respondents read the local Russian language press regularly, but only 8.9 per cent regularly read the Hebrew press.

A number of questions in the survey explored the components of identity among respondents. One of the key questions was: "When you define your own identity, to what extent do you feel or do not feel: Israeli, Jewish, Zionist, an immigrant from the FSU, a Jew from the FSU?" The most frequently cited identity component was "Jewish" (77.7 per cent of the respondents said they feel Jewish to a great or very great extent), followed by "an immigrant from the FSU" (68.7%) and "a Jew from the FSU" (66%). "Zionist" was last (20.5%), with "Israeli" in the middle (43.6%).

The Jewish component in the identity of FSU immigrants is not a matter of religion. It is rather a secular form of identity, largely detached from *halakhah* (Jewish religious law). This is manifested in other findings about the extent of

religiosity among immigrants. The vast majority (74%) are secular to judge by their self-identification, attitudes, and actual behaviour; 24.6 per cent are traditional; and only 1.4 per cent are religious.

The extent of their commitment to Jewish identity was also reflected in the answers to the question: "If you had the chance, would you want or not want to be reborn a Jew?" The replies indicate that they have no strong commitment to their Jewish identity. Only some 31 per cent are certain they would want to reborn as a Jew; 20 per cent are not sure or respond negatively. The largest group (45.4%) lies in between (answering "most likely yes").

When analysing the issue of immigrants' Jewish identity, we must take into account that a considerable fraction are not Jewish according to *halakhah*. According to the survey responses, 26.1 per cent of the respondents are not Jews according to *halakhah* (or cannot prove that they are) or are married to a non-Jew. It should be noted that the percentage of non-Jews among immigrants from the FSU has increased over time – while 20 per cent among the 1990-1994 immigrants represented in the sample reported that they are non-Jews or intermarried, the percentage of non-Jews among the 1995-1999 immigrants in the sample was 41.3 per cent.

Various studies have indicated that the "non-Jewish" sector among Russian immigrants is more alienated from Israeli society than the Jewish immigrants because of the restrictions imposed on them by state and religious authorities in Israel (including restrictions on family reunification and burial in a Jewish cemetery). As a result, this sector displays a greater propensity toward segregation (Lissak, 1995: 18). In addition, they place greater emphasis on their "Russian" ethnic identity, because it is this, and not Jewishness, that they have in common with other immigrants.

The distinction between "Jews" and "non-Jews" can help enhance our understanding of the different types of identity among immigrants (Table 1).

TABLE 1
TYPES OF IDENTITY AMONG JEWS AND NON-JEWS (per cent)

"The following identities describe me to a large or very large extent."	Jews	Non-Jews
Israeli	45.9	38.0*
Jewish	78.4	57.0**
Zionist	22.8	15.1**
Immigrant from the FSU	67.4	74.4*
Jew from the FSU	72.9	49.4**

Note: Significant difference at the level * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

As can be seen from Table 1, there are significant differences between Jews and non-Jews (including Jews married to non-Jews) in the components of self-identity. Among the former group, the Jewish component is a central axis even in their ethnic identification, which extends to feeling more Israeli and more Zionist than the other group does. For non-Jews, the leading component is ethnic-Russian (mentioned by 74.4%), and it appears independently rather than in combination with the Israeli and Zionist components.

To further delineate the types of identity among immigrants we used cross-tab and correlation analysis among the different forms of identification. The picture revealed by this analysis is rather complex. There was a strong positive correlation between Jewish identification and all other forms except for "immigrant from the FSU". At the same time, there was a strong positive relationship between identification as a Jew from the FSU and as an immigrant from the FSU. That is, there is a close complementary relationship between Jewish identity and ethnic-Russian identity. The latter is negatively correlated with the Israeli and Zionist identifications, which demonstrate a strong positive correlation with each other (Table 2).

TABLE 2
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN TYPES OF IDENTITY

	Israeli	Jewish	Zionist	Immigrant from FSU	Jew from FSU
Israeli	—				
Jewish	.162**	—			
Zionist	.316**	.285**	—		
Immigrant from FSU	-.232**	.035	-.122**	—	
Jew from FSU	.009	.403**	.184**	.365**	—

Notes: *Significant relationship at 0.05 level; **significant relationship at 0.01 level.

The correlation matrix (Table 2), together with a cross-tab analysis, indicates that there are three competing types of identities among the immigrants. According to their importance and dominance (from high to low), these are the multi-faceted, the ethnically centred, and the ideologically centred.

The *multi-faceted* identity, which applies to a majority of the immigrants, is composed of several co-existing identities. Its core is the Jewish component, combined with the ethnic component and to a lesser extent with the Israeli component. At its margins are groups that emphasize other identities, including the Zionist. The *ethnically centred* identity, in which the connection with the country of origin is most salient, includes the "immigrant from the FSU" and "Jew from the FSU" identities. These two components are strongly correlated: 80 per cent of those who feel that "Jew from the FSU" describes them to a great or very great extent feel the same way about "immigrant from the FSU".

Finally, the *ideologically centred* identity applies to those for whom the Israeli-Zionist identity is the most important. Naturally, this type is composed of the Israeli and Zionist identities. However, only 30 per cent of those who feel strongly Israeli feel strongly Zionist. This means that a majority of the immigrants perceive the Israeli identity as having a civic rather than ideological meaning.

We also examined the different types of identity against individual and group variables. Age proved to be significant, with the major differences found between the two extreme groups: the youngest (age 18-24) and the oldest (55 and older). The former is mainly Jewish-Israeli oriented, but the Israeli identity of its members centres on citizenship rather than on ideology, as indicated by the fact that they had the weakest Zionist identity. Members of the oldest generation, by contrast, are the most Jewish-ethnically centred and the least Israeli oriented. It is worth mentioning that while ethnic identity is straightforward among the old generation, the younger generation displays more confusion between the Israeli and ethnic identities. However, the Israeli component seems to be gaining the upper hand (Table 3).

TABLE 3
IDENTITY TYPES BY AGE (per cent)

"The following identities describe me to a large or very large extent."	Age				
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Israeli	56.5	43.0	45.3	44.6	37.9*
Jewish	69.2	68.4	75.4	84.2	87.3**
Zionist	18.3	23.2	19.7	22.7	21.9
Immigrant from the FSU	50.5	69.3	69.6	65.0	80.6**
Jew from the FSU	47.7	58.4	64.5	68.3	80.7**

Notes: *Differences significant at $p < 0.05$ level; **significant at $p < 0.01$ level.

KENDALL'S TAU-B CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS
FOR IDENTITY WITH AGE

Identity	<i>r</i>
Israeli	-0.11*
Jewish	0.17**
Immigrant from FSU	0.15**
Zionist	0.01
Jew from FSU	0.17**

Notes: *Correlation significant at 0.05 level; **correlation significant at 0.01 level.

No relationship was found between types of identity and gender. In this sense, there was a convergence in the identification of men and women. Nor was there any significant relationship between education and type of identity. Education does, however, differentiate between the Israeli and ethnic orientations. Those with less education are more Israeli oriented, and those with a post-secondary education are more Russian-ethnically oriented (Table 4).

TABLE 4
IDENTITY TYPES BY EDUCATION (per cent)

"These identities describe me to a great or very great extent."	Education		
	Elementary (partial/full)	Secondary (partial/full)	Post-secondary (partial/full)
Israeli	57.1	42.5	43.9
Jewish	82.8	72.5	81.3
Zionist	21.4	18.4	22.5
Immigrant from the FSU	64.3	62.7	73.5
Jew from the FSU	55.2	61.6	70.3

Note: Relationships are insignificant, $p > 0.05$.

KENDALL'S TAU-B CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS
FOR IDENTITY WITH EDUCATION

Identity	r
Israeli	-0.038
Jewish	0.038
Immigrant from FSU	0.062
Zionist	0.034
Jew from FSU	0.034

Religiosity is an important factor distinguishing between different types of identity. The ideologically oriented type of identification is most prominent among those who consider themselves to be religious or traditional, while the ethnically oriented is more prominent among the secular. However, while the differences between religious and secular groups are significant in terms of ideological orientation, they are insignificant as far as ethnic identification is concerned. This is because a large majority among the religious also manifest ethnic orientation (Table 5).

It is widely reported that the extent of the host society's adjustment for and reception of new immigrants strongly affects their adjustment and identification

with the new setting and their identity (Goldlust and Richmond, 1974; Portes and Borocz, 1989: 618). Gans (1996: 152) argues that ethnic behaviour, orientation, and even identity are determined not only by the characteristics of the ethnics, but also by developments in the wider society, and in particular how society relates to ethnics. In this sense, “self-definition” and “other-definition” need to be taken into consideration in order to understand ethnic formation among immigrants (Castels and Miller, 1998).

TABLE 5
IDENTITY TYPES BY RELIGIOSITY (per cent)

“These identities describe me to a great or very great extent.”	Religiosity		
	Religious or traditional	Secular	Total
Israeli	47.7	42.9	(43.6)
Jewish	92.3	73.5*	(77.7)
Zionist	35.5	16.1*	(20.5)
Immigrant from the FSU	65	71.3	(68.7)
Jew from the FSU	72.7	64.9	(66.0)
Total	(25.9)	(74.1)	

Note: *Significant relationship at level $p < 0.01$.

KENDALL'S TAU-B CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS
FOR IDENTITY WITH RELIGIOSITY

Identity	<i>r</i>
Israeli	-0.047
Jewish	0.209*
Immigrant from FSU	0.059
Zionist	0.172*
Jew from FSU	0.069

Note: *Correlation is significant at level 0.01.

This point is supported by various studies of identity patterns among immigrants from the FSU in Israel. It has been argued that the rejection of the Russian-speaking intellectual elite by the Israeli veteran society has contributed to the creation of a “self-contained cultural enclave” among them (Wartburg, 1994: 163, in Lissak and Leshem, 1995: 20; Ben-Ya’cov, 1998). Among the general public, Markowitz (1995) indicates that Soviet immigrants in Israel were initially disappointed that veteran Israelis related to them as “Russians”. Over the

years, however, they have accepted this term and started to capitalize on it. This trend was also mentioned in a journalistic report on immigrant students (*Ha'aretz*, 22 July 1994: 7). The article highlighted the despair among these students, who originally wanted to identify themselves as Israelis. However, four years after arrival they did not mind being called "Russian" and were even happy with that epithet.

The survey examined this issue on two main levels: first, the relationship between extent of adjustment and types of identity; second, a direct question about the way the immigrants believe veteran Israelis identify them and how they wish to be identified by Israelis. With regard to adjustment, the survey found that immigrants from the FSU are very satisfied with their absorption (79%), get along well with veteran Israelis (56.6%), and feel at home in Israel (53 %). The relationship between adjustment and types of identity is summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6
IDENTITY TYPES AND EXTENT OF ADJUSTMENT (per cent)

Feel to a great extent or very great extent	Satisfaction with absorption		Get along with Israelis			Feel at home in Israel		
	Yes	No	Yes	Some extent	No	Yes	Some extent	No
Israeli	47.1	32.4*	55.2	30.4	29.0*	60.1	28.3	18.6*
Jewish	81.5	66.9*	80.8	77.2	69.4	86.8	70.8	64.0*
Zionist	22.2	16.4*	24.0	15.9	25.0	27.7	13.6	12.9*
Immigrant from FSU	66.7	82.2*	60.5	82.6	75.8*	60.1	79.6	83.5*
Jew from FSU	67.1	65.9	63.8	72.2	64.5	67.1	70.4	57.0

Note: *Significant at level $p < 0.01$.

KENDALL'S TAU-B CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS (r) FOR IDENTITY WITH EXTENT OF ADJUSTMENT

Identity	Satisfaction with absorption	Get along with Israelis	Feel at home in Israel
Israeli	0.158*	0.245*	0.350*
Jewish	0.183*	0.67	0.201*
Immigrant from FSU	0.116*	0.192*	0.180*
Zionist	0.139*	0.061	0.175*
Jew from FSU	0.003	0.092	0.000

Note: *Correlation is significant at level 0.01.

Table 6 portrays a complex picture. There is a significant positive relationship between all factors of adjustment and Israeli identity among immigrants. In other words, immigrants who are more adjusted evince a stronger identification as Israeli. The same direction of relationship was found between the Jewish and Zionist identities on the one hand, and adjustment on the other, although there was no straightforward relationship between these identity types and social adjustment (getting along with Israelis). The relationship between adjustment and ethnic identity types was less clear-cut. There was a significant negative relationship between identification as “immigrant from the FSU” and adjustment. Even among the adjusted group, however, many said that this type of identity describes them to a great or very great extent (66.7 per cent of those satisfied with their absorption and some 60 per cent of those who get along with Israelis and feel at home in Israel identify as immigrants from the FSU). In addition, no relationship was found between the identification as “Jew from the FSU” and adjustment.

The vast majority thinks that veteran Israelis identify them mainly by the Russian component of their identity: as Russians, Russian Israelis, or Russian Jews. But immigrants want to be identified by veteran Israelis as Israelis, Jews, or Israeli Jews. Only 17 per cent of respondents want to be identified by the Russian-ethnic component, while 78 per cent think that they are identified by veterans through this component.

This analysis indicates that any consideration of the identity of immigrants from the FSU must distinguish between three main forms: how immigrants define themselves; how they think veteran Israelis define them; and how they want veteran Israelis to define them. In other words, immigrants want veteran Israelis to see them in a different light than they see themselves (Table 7).

TABLE 7

HOW IMMIGRANTS THINK THEY ARE IDENTIFIED BY VETERAN ISRAELIS AND HOW IMMIGRANTS WANT TO BE DEFINED (per cent)

	How do veteran Israelis relate to you?	How do you want veteran Israelis to relate to you?
A Jew	8.3	22.9
An Israeli	8.9	45.1
An Israeli Jew	3.0	12.7
A Russian	32.8	7.5
A Russian Jew	10.5	3.1
A Russian Israeli	14.3	4.7
An Israeli Russian	20.5	1.6
Other	1.7	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0

The survey also examined the ethnic identity of immigrants from the FSU in Israel through their attitudes regarding cultural continuity at the institutional level. To explore this point we asked the following questions:

- How important or unimportant is it to you that your children be familiar with Russian culture?
- How important or unimportant is it to you that your children be familiar with Russian language?
- How important or unimportant is it to you that Israel continues to maintain Russian-language schools?
- How important or unimportant is it to you that Israel continues to maintain Russian cultural institutions?
- How important or unimportant is it to you that Israel have political parties composed of immigrants from the FSU?

The findings indicate that immigrants strongly support the maintenance of autonomous educational, cultural, and political institutions. Among respondents, 88 per cent said that it was important or very important for their children to be familiar with Russian culture; 90.6 per cent said it was important or very important for their children to know Russian language; 56.9 per cent said the same regarding maintaining of Russian-language schools; 79.8 per cent regarding the continued existence of Russian cultural institutions in Israel; and 73.2 per cent regarding political parties.

The most significant finding is probably the strong desire to maintain schools in which Russian is the language of instruction. This is a clear indication that immigrants do not trust existing educational institutions, which are controlled by veteran Israelis, to convey their culture to their children. They prefer a special Russian-language school system and evince a strong desire to maintain courses and activities for their children conducted in Russian.

Note that the support for the maintenance of Russian-ethnic institutions is not the outcome of the immigrants' despair with and alienation from Israeli society. This is shown by the fact that no significant relationship was found between the perceived extent of adjustment and the desire to maintain cultural continuity or ethnic organizations (Table 8).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has dealt with patterns of identity among the 1990s immigrants from the FSU in Israel. These patterns were examined at three main levels: behaviour (residential patterns, social and communication environments), self-identification, and attitudes toward ethnic-institutional continuity. Taken together, these three levels indicate that immigrants from the FSU in Israel form

a distinct ethnic group within the Israeli social and cultural fabric. This is reflected in their closed social networks, ethnic information sources, strong desire to maintain ethnic-cultural continuity, and the fact that the ethnic component (Jew from the FSU or immigrant from the FSU) is central for self-identification.

TABLE 8
SUPPORT FOR ETHNIC-CULTURAL CONTINUITY
BY EXTENT OF ADJUSTMENT (per cent)

Important or very important that:	Satisfaction with absorption		Get along well with Israelis		Feel at home in Israel	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Children are familiar with Russian culture	87.3	89.9	87.5	91.5	87.1	90.5
Children know Russian language	89.1	92.3	91.8	93.6	90.1	92.6
Israel continues to maintain Russian-language schools	55.7	62.3	54.1	61.1	52.9	61.7
Israel continues to maintain Russian-cultural institutions	79.7	80.2	78.9	81.4	80.0	80.2
Have political parties composed of Russian immigrants	73.6	72.1	70.6	79.9	76.3	76.1

Note: Differences are insignificant by chi-square test $p > 0.05$.

However, despite the strong group cohesiveness among immigrants from the FSU, they are a heterogeneous group with three main types of identity: (1) The multifaceted identity, which applies to a majority of the immigrants, is composed of the Jewish component combined with other components, mainly the ethnic component and the Israeli component; (2) the ethnically centred identity, where self-identification is derived from the affiliation with the country of origin and; (3) the ideologically centred identity type, which applies to a small minority who strongly identify with the Israeli-Zionist components. The dominance of the "multifaceted type" is compatible with "situational identity", which characterizes immigrants in other countries who must adapt to rapid changes and multiple social contexts (Cohen, 1994). This type of identity allows them a flexibility that is vital for the preservation of their ethnic identity, on the one hand, and for manifesting openness toward the host society, on the other.

The survey found a positive significant relationship between the extent of immigrants' adjustment and the Israeli component in their identity. It also found

a significant negative relationship between adjustment and the Russian-ethnic component (identification as an immigrant from the FSU). But there was no relationship between adjustment and the ethnic-Russian component when it was combined with the Jewish component. Moreover, a large proportion of the immigrants who are highly adjusted in Israel feel that the Russian-ethnic component describes their identity to a great or very great extent. No less important, the findings indicated a significant tendency among immigrants to maintain their ethnic educational, cultural, and political organizations. No relationship was found between immigrants' desire to maintain institutional cultural continuity and their assessment of their absorption and integration in Israeli society.

These findings mean that the purely ethnic identification is connected with difficulties in absorption and a lack of social and psychological adjustment to Israeli society. As a whole, though, the ethnic identification of immigrants from the FSU in Israel is not a reactive identity, which is mainly generated by alienation. It is rather based on group connectedness and pride in their Russian cultural roots. Hence the desire to perpetuate ethnic organizations is not a reactive-circumstantial attitude but the result of a strategic view of their status and interests at both the individual and collective levels.

While immigrants from the FSU in Israel are still in the process of reshaping and redefining their identity, it is safe to hypothesize that ethnic formation among them will continue and even intensify in the future. This statement is based both on the survey findings and an analysis of wider contextual factors that have to do with the characteristics of the immigrants and of the host society. These include the large number of immigrants, their demographic concentration at the locality and neighbourhoods levels, the strong ethnic orientation among the leading secular-educated elite, the fact that many immigrants are non-Jews with a mainly ethnic identity, and the intensive presence and availability of ethnic social, cultural, and political organizations for immigrants, facilitated by their continuing connection with the home country. In addition, contextual factors in Israeli society minimize the cost of ethnic formation and maximize the benefits of ethnic mobilization. The ethnic factor in Israeli society, where ethnicity is an asset and a source of power, is conspicuous. In this sense, ethnic boundaries are important for political and social mobilization and for the allocation of state resources. In addition, ethnic origin forms an important identifying factor in the eyes of the Israeli society.

Based on this analysis we may conclude that ethnic identity among immigrants is not a temporary phenomenon that can be expected to decline or disappear in the future. This conclusion challenges the conventional expectation that immigrants from the FSU will assimilate within the Ashkenazi middle class or turn into a "subculture", "cultural ghetto", or "Russian bubble". Instead, it seems likely that these immigrants will intensify their instrumentalized ethnicity

while reducing the contradiction between the ethnic component and the Israeli component of their identity. Longer residence in the country, increased adjustment to Israeli society, and recognition by Israeli society of the legitimacy of cultural uniqueness will certainly weaken the reactive element in the immigrants' ethnic identity which results from alienation, and strengthen the instrumental element which is the outcome of cultural pride coupled with pragmatic ethnic mobilization. Eventually, the "multifaceted type" of identity among immigrants from the FSU may be expected to prevail over time with two components at its core: the Israeli component and the ethnic-Russian component.

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PROFILS IDENTITAIRES DES IMMIGRES DE L'EX-UNION SOVIETIQUE EN ISRAEL: L'ASSIMILATION PAR OPPOSITION AU "MOULE" ETHNIQUE

Cette étude traite des profils identitaires des immigrés de l'ex-Union soviétique arrivés en Israël dans les années 90. Elle présente un éventail complexe de types identitaires rencontrés chez les immigrés qui sont le reflet de leurs caractéristiques culturelles et socio-démographiques et de leurs relations dynamiques avec la société d'accueil israélienne.

Il en ressort que les immigrés de l'ex-Union soviétique en Israël constituent un groupe ethnique distinct dans le tissu socio-culturel israélien. Cela se vérifie dans leurs réseaux sociaux fermés, leurs informations puisées à la même source ethnique, leur désir très affirmé de maintenir une continuité ethno-culturelle et le fait que leur appartenance ethnique (juifs originaires de l'ex-Union soviétique ou immigrés originaires de l'ex-Union soviétique) détermine leur auto-identification. Cependant, le résultat obtenu par le passage dans ce "moule" ethnique ne correspond pas à une identité construite à partir d'un sentiment commun d'aliénation par rapport à la société d'accueil, mais plutôt à une ethnicité instrumentalisée traduisant un sentiment de fierté ethno-culturelle et découlant de considérations pragmatiques.

PATRONES DE IDENTIDAD DE LOS INMIGRANTES DE LA EX UNIÓN SOVIÉTICA EN ISRAEL: ASIMILACIÓN *VERSUS* FORMACIÓN ÉTNICA

Este artículo trata de los patrones de identidad de los inmigrantes de la ex Unión Soviética que llegaron a Israel en los años noventa. Presenta las complejas series de identidades de los inmigrantes según sus características culturales y sociodemográficas y la dinámica relacional con la sociedad de acogida Israeli.

Los resultados demuestran que los inmigrantes de la ex Unión Soviética en Israel constituyen un grupo étnico que se diferencia en el tejido sociocultural Israeli. Ello se ve reflejado en sus estrechas redes sociales, fuentes étnicas de información, en el vehemente deseo de mantener la continuidad etnocultural y en que el componente étnico (judío de la ex Unión Soviética o inmigrante de la ex Unión Soviética) sea fundamental en la auto-identificación. Ello no obstante, la formación étnica de estos inmigrantes no es el fruto de una identidad reactiva que proviene en gran parte de una marginación en la sociedad de acogida. Es más bien una utilización del carácter étnico resultante del orgullo cultural y de consideraciones pragmáticas.