Democracy in the Sheets, Ethnonationalism in the Streets: Acquiescent Integration Strategy of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel

An Honors Thesis for the Department of Sociology
Sasha Kerez
2017

Abstract

Immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel believe in the tenets of the classic assimilation theory, which posits that immigrant integration is a one-directional process during which the incoming population changes to become indistinguishable from the domestic population. This belief stems from their socialization in the FSU and their resulting understanding of democratic governance as having a strict separation between public and private spheres. FSU immigrants believe that a democratic government must safeguard the rights of citizens to hold onto non-dominant identities in the private sphere, but that it is also entitled to demand loyalty to the state's dominant ethos in the public sphere. These attitudes result in their non-mobilization and acquiescence even in the face of discrimination. In addition to placing demands for acquiescence onto themselves, FSU immigrants place these demands onto Israel's Arab minority and espouse nativist attitudes toward them, when they fail to subscribe to the acquiescent integration strategy. Thus, this research identifies mechanisms underlying not just their integration, but also their racial distancing from Arab Israelis. It also contributes to immigrant integration theory by highlighting the importance of basing integration theory not only on cases in the US, but also in countries in which citizenship is allocated on a jus sanguinis basis. The study also deepens the understanding of political attitudes of the Russian-speaking community in Israel so that people and organizations wishing to work with this community, especially regarding its experiences with maltreatment, can devise more tailor-made programs.

Acknowledgments

Table of contents

Introduction

Our neighbor beneath, we lived on the second floor and she lived on the first. When we just moved in, she immediately came to us, on the second or the third day. [...] She asked us not to walk around in the apartment. Well, we were very surprised. Well, first of all, it took some time to even understand what she wants. Then, she came and asked that we put down carpets on the floors, so she wouldn't hear us walking around in the evening. Well, we would come home from work, we would eat, mind our own business, and then go to bed. We wouldn't have any celebrations or anything. And because of that, basically, we ignored her requests. Well we never fulfilled them, well, it was silly, really. And in some moment, she apparently decided to take revenge, and she found some spot in the house that…she began to knock on her ceiling. Then, she found some, I guess some pillar that if you hit it, the whole house shakes, and she would hit it. It would go somewhat like this: we would come home, she would hear us walking, we would go to bed, and in 20-30 minutes she would begin hitting [the pillar] so hard that we would wake up. The children would wake up, start crying, and this was practically every evening. [...] Then, someone advised that, all in all, we should turn to the police. We had no experience with the police. We did not know how it works, maybe it would end up turning against us. That's how, in our Ukraine, in the Soviet Union, often it happens that you turn to the police and it ends up turning against you, and because of this we didn't know that the police could protect you. We turned to the police and he [the husband] submitted a complaint, and that also took some time— to find someone who would write it in Hebrew. It wasn't just as simple as going [to the police] or calling. But, nevertheless, he went, found a way, wrote the complaint in Hebrew, and that's it. The police said that as soon as she does it, he needs to call the police. And of course, usually, this was after 11pm because we would already be asleep at that point. So, she began doing it, he called the police, the police came in literally 5-10 minutes, and when the police was going up the stairs, she was hitting [the pillar], and the whole house, not just our apartment, was shaking. I mean, it was very strong, I don't even know, how she did it. And then she started yelling, started yelling in Hebrew that "These Russians came here," that "They break our traditions," that "On Yom Kippur[1], they don't let me celebrate Yom Kippur." Even though that wasn't true. We were warned about what is Yom Kippur, and we sat [quietly] like mice. We didn't do anything. And then, she was like "Go back to your Russia" and "Why did you come here?" [...] They fined her. I don't know how much, to be honest, but from that moment on, I didn't see or hear her. Well, I was just in shock. I couldn't believe that we could fix it so easily, and we suffered for so long.
— Alyona, Christian, immigrated in 2001

Alyona recalls an incident that occurred shortly after she immigrated to Israel from Ukraine with her Jewish husband and their two, young daughters. After suffering mistreatment because of her immigrant identity, Alyona chose to celebrate the efficiency of Israeli law enforcement rather than lament the prejudice she was subject to. Both the neighbor's slurs and

---

[1] Jewish day of atonement and the most holy day of the year

Alyona's response to them are typical experiences for immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel, who constitute roughly 15% of Israel's population (Reeves 2013). In the face of discrimination, they often choose to minimize its significance, and most often, focus on the superiority of life in Israel as compared to their countries of origin. This paper seeks to conceptualize this paradoxical response to prejudice by critically examining the integration strategies of FSU immigrants, with a special emphasis on their political integration. Understanding integration paths that FSU immigrants have undertaken, consciously and subconsciously, helps explain the community's status within Israel and also the ways in which their political attitudes and behaviors affect Israel's political establishment, other minority groups, and social structures as a whole.

The founding ideology of Israel is the Zionist notion of "ingathering of the exiles," the belief that Jews in the diaspora are exiles, regardless of how acculturated they are, and can only be safe if they exercise self-determination in an independent Jewish state. Israel's Declaration of Independence states, "[it] is the natural right of the Jewish people, to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State" (Ministry 2013). The declaration also proclaims that "[the state] will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions" (ibid). Thus, Israel aspires to be both: a Jewish nation-state and a democratic state — one that fulfills national aspirations of the Jewish people and one that safeguards the interests and freedoms of all of its citizens, regardless of their Jewish ethnicity or religion.

The underlying principle of a democratic government — literally meaning "the rule of the people" — is that the interests of each citizen are equally important and should be given equal weight when the government makes decisions by which the whole population will be bound (Dahl 1989:101). A critical question for any democratic government is how to define "the people," who are entitled to representation and whose interests should be considered. The question becomes especially tricky when the aspired to order is that of the nation-state, as is the case in Israel. I will use Mann's definition of the nation as an ethnic group that "also has political consciousness, claiming collective political rights in a given territory," and his definition of ethnicity as "a group that defines itself or is defined by others as sharing common descent and culture" (2005:11). A nation-state seeks to represent the interests of "the nation," but national groups rarely fall neatly into political borders, and therefore, an inherent tension exists between democratizing state-policies, characterized by inclusive citizenship in which all people are awarded equal rights, and nationalizing state-policies, where the interests of the dominant national group are prioritized (Linz and Stepan 1996:25). One way in which states seek to maintain a democratic and a national character is by enacting policies that ensure a demographic majority of the dominant national group, so that the interests of that nation are represented through democratic means. Ensuring that Israel remains a Jewish-majority state has been a nonpartisan concern of its political establishment since the founding of the state, and was one of the catalysts for the passing of the Law of Return (1950), which guaranteed any Jew, anywhere in the world, the right to citizenship in Israel (Cohen and Susser 2009:57).

In the 1970s and the 1990s, approximately one million Jews and their immediate, non-Jewish relatives from Soviet and post-Soviet countries immigrated to Israel under the Law of

Return. Despite Israel's official endorsement of Jewish immigration, FSU immigrants confronted a slew of negative stereotypes in Israeli media upon arrival. The media painted a picture of them as sex workers, alcoholics, members of the mafia, and opportunists who falsified papers to prove their "Jewishness." Headlines from Israeli newspapers in 1990-1997 — during the peak of the FSU immigration wave — included, "Coming to Israel: they forge and immigrate," "Vodka, Caviar and Striptease," "Russian Prostitutes on the Streets of Tel Aviv," and "For us it is not a crime to rob a bank, it is a *mitzvah[2]*" (Elias and Bernstein 2007:24). A representative survey of 502 Israelis in 1997 found that 65% associated FSU immigrants with some of the above mentioned stereotypes (Lemish 2000:346).

This paper seeks to conceptualize the ways in which FSU immigrants reconcile being simultaneously encouraged to immigrate under the Law of Return and being marginalized upon arrival. How will this group, that was socialized in an authoritarian regime, where they had no experience with democratic governance and maintained only a thin identification with their Jewish ethnicity, integrate into a state that aspires to be both? What effect will their immigration have on Israel's Jewish and democratic character? I examine these questions by analyzing political integration strategies of FSU immigrants in Israel.

Previous works (Al-Haj 2004, Epstein and Kheimets 2000, Remennick 1998) document the attachment FSU immigrants exhibit toward cultures from their countries of origin, and the vibrant institutional framework they have established in Israel to ensure their maintenance. Some scholars (Al-Haj 2014, Horowitz 2003, Khanin 2012) believe that, building on their cultural networks, the immigrants have also established ethnic political institutions. They make this claim

---

[2] A religiously ordained good deed

almost exclusively based on the ongoing success of Israel Beitenu — a political party predominately made up of Russian-speakers, whose support base also comes from the Russian-speakers. Others (Phillipov and Bystrov 2011) warn of placing too much emphasis on the existence of a single "Russian[3]" party, and argue that Russian-speaking immigrants demonstrate remarkably low levels of political mobilization. They attribute this to their political socialization in the FSU and their subsequent perceptions of having low personal efficacy in Israel. This notion is further corroborated by a 2009 Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) report on FSU immigration, which shows that the immigrants have the lowest perception of political efficacy out of all the sectors of the Israeli population, including its Arab minority.

I argue that FSU immigrants have opted for the acquiescent political integration strategy in which they passively accept most laws and social norms of the Israeli state, even if they are disadvantaged by them. They believe acquiescence to be the only legitimate code of conduct for non-Israeli and non-Jewish minorities, and that passive acceptance of the state will eventually grant them all, even the non-Jews among them, full acceptance within the Israeli mainstream. They do not regard ethnic mobilization as a legitimate integration strategy, and hold highly negative attitudes toward groups and individuals, namely Arab Israelis, who embark on non-acquiescent integration paths. Even the non-Jews among the immigrants believe that non-Jewish interests should be of secondary importance in Israel.

In chapter 1, I provide background information on FSU immigration to Israel, and offer theories of ethnic mobilization that could help explain political attitudes and behaviors of the

_____

[3] I will use quotation marks each time I refer to FSU immigrants as "Russian" because they are neither all ethnically Russian, nor all from the Russian Federation.

immigrants. I summarize demographic characteristics and motivations of the two large Soviet/ post-Soviet immigration waves, and provide a statistical overview of immigrant integration in Israel. I demonstrate that FSU immigrants are economically disadvantaged despite their high academic credentials, that they are residentially segregated, and experience social distancing from veteran Israelis. I argue that Russian-speakers are particularly attached to their FSU cultures because Soviet Jews were prominent in the ranks of Soviet intelligentsia, and thus, heavily contributed to Soviet's high-brow culture, which they take great pride in and do not want to forsake. I discuss two ethnic parties of the Russian-speakers — one of which failed, one of which succeeded— to showcase their virtually nonexistent, ethnically-based political mobilization, and demonstrate their low levels of participation in civil society as further evidence of this trend.

In chapter 2, I outline political attitudes of my respondents that result in their subscription to the acquiescent integration strategy. They believe integration to be a one-directional process during which the immigrants have to assimilate into the mainstream by uncritically accepting the host society's dominant narrative and ways of life. This attitude stems, in part, from their socialization in an authoritarian regime, which led to their understanding of democracy as having a strict separation between people's public and private spheres. My respondents believe that a democratic government is responsible for protecting people's private lives from governmental encroachments, but that it is also entitled to demand that all citizens demonstrate at least public conformity to the dominant narrative and symbols of the state. This attitude is conducive to their maintaining an attachment to FSU cultures in private, but their rejecting identity-based political mobilization. These attitudes are so widespread in the community that even those individuals

who do not subscribe to them are reluctant to engage in non-acquiescent behaviors for fear of receiving pushback from other immigrants. Additionally, I argue that my respondents are genuinely grateful to Israel for providing them with social and economic opportunities that they did not have in their countries of origin, which further leads to their perception of the status quo as being desirable and limits their motivation for activism.

In chapter 3, I explore these attitudes further by examining how they shape immigrant behaviors in response to disadvantage and discrimination. They continue believing that acquiescence will grant them full acceptance within Israel by attributing any instances of prejudice to anomalous behaviors of unsavory individuals. These attitudes can be explained by the minimization bias (Kaiser and Major 2006) because of which people fail to see objective discrimination. By refusing to acknowledge the ongoing presence of prejudice, the immigrants do not have to forsake the comfort of feeling welcome in Israel, and of being certain of their imminent assimilation into the Israeli mainstream. Another integration tactic of the immigrants is to distance themselves from the Russian-speaking community in order to demonstrate that, unlike the rest of the Russian-speakers, they do not fit the negative stereotypes and are worthy of Israel's acceptance of them. Even the non-Jews among the immigrants, who experience the most structural barriers to their full integration, do not view political mobilization as an appropriate way to dismantle those structural barriers. Instead, they seek to prove their subscription to the Zionist narrative and Jewish symbols of the state to gain belonging in Israel. The immigrants occasionally acknowledge society-wide biases against the Russian-speakers, but they usually do so to contrast past discrimination with its present absence as further proof of the success of the acquiescent integration strategy.

In chapter 4, I explore how such stringent adherence to one-directional assimilation is at least partially responsible for the immigrants' views about, and roles in, political repression of Arab Israelis and Palestinians. The immigrants believe that everyone, regardless of individual ethnic or religious characteristics, can be Israeli if they demonstrate loyalty to Israel's Jewish character and Zionist narrative. In their eyes, Arab Israelis and non-Jewish immigrants can lead fulfilling lives in Israel if they choose to accept the state uncritically, and that any feelings of dissatisfaction reflect personal, rather than systemic critiques. They believe that individual Palestinians and their political leaders need to accept Israel's narrative and territorial claims in a one-directional manner in order to achieve lasting peace between the two peoples. They do not see equating FSU immigrants and Arab Israelis —a domestic minority —as false equivalencies, and so are angry and confused at the failure of Arab Israelis and Palestinians to adopt the acquiescent integration strategy that they, themselves have adopted. The immigrants associate Palestinians with violence and rejection of the Israeli state, which leads to their espousing nativist attitudes toward them. Furthermore, the immigrants espouse hawkish attitudes toward Israel's "enemy" in order to, once again, demonstrate their loyalty to the Israeli state and their being worthy of acceptance within it.

In the conclusion, I summarize my findings and urge organizations wishing to work with the Russian-speaking community to take into account both their experience with discrimination in Israel and their propensity to hold denigrating attitudes toward Arab Israelis. I also offer suggestions for future studies and theory implications based on questions that my research has raised. The non-mobilization of the Russian-speakers can be mistaken for their complete and successful integration in Israel — a notion that overlooks ongoing prejudices against the

community, their inferior socioeconomic statuses, and the structural barriers to complete integration of non-Jews. FSU immigrants believe in the impropriety of political mobilization for any national minority, and any organization wishing to work with this community must devise programs that will directly address these concerns.

Methods

I chose to conduct a qualitative study in order to investigate the political integration of FSU immigrants in Israel. I was most interested in conceptualizing their attitudes toward the Jewish and democratic characters of Israel, and wanted to delve deeper into understanding the processes through which these attitudes and behaviors develop. A somewhat dated, but nevertheless comprehensive, quantitative study of political incorporation of FSU immigrants was conducted by The Israel Democracy Institute in 2009, but it did not offer an understanding of the mechanisms driving, or the meanings of, those incorporation measures. My qualitative study helps fill this gap.

I conducted twenty-three (N=23) semi structured interviews in Israel — eight over the phone and fifteen in person — between January 3 and January 19, 2017. I combined purposive and snowball sampling, finding four of my respondents through my family's acquaintances in the country, and the rest through posts in two Israeli, Russian-language Facebook groups. The only qualifying demographic criteria I placed on my respondents is having come from a Soviet or a post-Soviet country and having lived in Israel for at least five years by the time of the interview. I did this because I wanted to explore the notion of FSU Israelis mobilizing around their distinct ethnicity — a possibility, which theoretically is open to all of them, regardless of the differing characteristics within the FSU community. At the same time, I placed the five year restriction to

ensure that the respondents have had time to gain a sense of Israel and their futures within it, so their answers would not be influenced by the initial shock of immigration. I interviewed everybody who contacted me during the above mentioned time period, and did not attempt to balance my respondents by gender, age, religion, or place of residence because that was beyond the scope of my capabilities within the short time period I had to collect the data.

I identified myself as a Tufts University student and referred to prospective respondents as "immigrants" in my Facebook post. I received close to a hundred negative comments in one of the groups. Some of the members took issue with my use of "immigrants" instead of "repatriates," which I learned was the preferred Russian-language term for Jewish immigrants in Israel. I also had left-leaning, Israel-related posts on my Facebook page. Some of the group members claimed that those posts were indicative of my being anti-Israel, and accused me of being a terrorist sympathizer. A couple of people shared *Tufts Daily* articles written by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) — a Palestinian solidarity student organization — that believes Israel to be an apartheid state and advocates for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel. Those sharing the articles erroneously believed that SJP's views reflect those of Tufts University as a whole[4], and claimed to have further "proof" of my being anti-Israel. As a result, two people who wanted to be interviewed canceled. It is likely that because of the comments, the most militant Zionists, and those with the most hawkish beliefs regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict did not want to associate with me, and their views may not be represented in my paper.

My sample has some internal diversity by gender, time of immigration, place of residence, country of origin, and religious identity. I interviewed six men and seventeen women.

---

[4] This was before the passing of the BDS resolution by the Tufts Community Union

One respondent immigrated in the seventies, nine in the nineties, eight in the two thousands, four came between 2011 and 2012, and one came in 2015, but I included her because it was close to the end of the allocated data collection period and I was still looking for respondents. Most of my respondents lived in Israel's central cities of Netanya (7), Tel Aviv (3), Holon (2), Rishon Letsiyon (2), Petakh Tikva (1), Hadera (1), Bnei Brak (1), and Yavne (1). One lives in the southern city of Be'er Sheva, and one in the northern city of Yokneam. Three live in settlements around Jerusalem. Six came before turning eighteen, either with their parents or through special immigration-encouragement programs, and the rest came as adults. Most came from Ukraine (9), followed by Russia (6), Belarus (3), Georgia (1), Latvia (1), Kazakhstan (1), Moldavia (1), and Tashkent (1). Fifteen are Jews according to *the Halacha*,[5] seven have Jewish heritage, but are not considered Jewish by the state, and two are Christian spouses of Jews. All are Israeli citizens.

I conducted all interviews in Russian. They lasted between forty minutes and one hour and forty minutes. At first, I recorded them on my laptop or phone, but following an interview that accidentally did not record, I used the two recording devices simultaneously. I took quick notes of what I remembered immediately after my respondent left following the interview that did not record, and used that small amount of data in my analysis. During the interviews, I asked open-ended questions about people's relationship to Judaism before and after immigration, their reasons for immigrating, their attitudes toward Israel as a Jewish state, political attitudes and involvement in Israel, satisfaction with life in Israel, and experiences with discrimination. For the full interview guide please refer to the appendix.

---

[5] Jewish religious law

I transcribed the interviews verbatim, gave all of the respondents pseudonyms and used the qualitative analysis software program *Dedoose* to code the data inductively, based on the data themselves. My most frequently used codes were "personal responsibility for good and bad," "loving Israel," "negative attitudes toward the "Russian" community," and "critical of the "Russian" community." For a full list of codes and their descriptions, please refer to the appendix.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993) is a useful tool by which to examine whether "Russians" are mobilizing around their ethnicity, or even becoming a distinct ethnicity within Israel's social landscape, as some scholars have argued (Al-Haj 2004, Lissak and Leshem 2007, Horowitz 2003, Khanin 2012). Even though the segmented assimilation theory predominately focuses on social and economic incorporation of second generation immigrants, those outcomes depend on the integration experiences and paths of their parents. Thus, applying segmented assimilation concepts to first generation FSU immigrants provides a glimpse into the community's present and possible future socioeconomic standing vis-à-vis the Jewish Israeli mainstream.

The theory outlines three integration paths that immigrants and their descendants can follow upon arrival: (i) classic assimilation into the mainstream after which the immigrants are indistinguishable from the country's dominant population, (ii) selective acculturation in which the immigrants maintain a distinct ethnic identity and create their own ethnic institutions that provide social/emotional support for the immigrants, as well as help them advance economically without having to compete in the open market, (iii) downward assimilation into the country's disadvantaged underclass (Portes and Zhou 1993:82). Downward assimilation in the US is into the poor, black, inner-city neighborhoods, whereas in Israel it would be into the country's northern and southern peripheral regions, alongside the Arab minority. Members of the permanent underclass often develop reactive ethnicities, where embittered by constant hardships,

they reject the dominant ethos of their society, and no longer even try to participate in its mainstream cultural, economic or political institutions (Portes and Zhou 1993: 89-90).

While these are only hypothetical outcomes that only address immigration in the context of the United States, they are nonetheless useful as plausible "ideal types." The integration paths that the immigrants will undertake depend on personal characteristics of the immigrants, the context of exit from their countries of origin, and the context of reception in their countries of destination. The context of exit refers to circumstances in the home country that resulted in migration, whereas the context of reception refers to the social, political, and economic institutions in the destination country that affect the ways in which the newcomers incorporate into the country.

In the US, immigrants are more likely to experience classic or selective assimilation if they possess high human capital in the form of speaking English, as well as having academic degrees and skilled employment experience (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:46). Nevertheless, high human capital does not guarantee successful integration. Refugees, who have experienced a traumatic context of exit, are more likely to develop mental health issues that will create barriers to upward mobility regardless of their academic degrees or employment qualifications (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:180). Furthermore, the context of reception eventually supersedes both, the context of exit and personal characteristics of the immigrants, in its ability to predict their integration paths, and thus, it is the primary focus of the segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:184). The context of reception can be broken up into four categories: (i) the state's official policies toward the immigrant group, (ii) the structure of the labor market, (iii)

17

general attitudes of the native population toward the immigrants, and (iv) the existence of a co-ethnic community in the destination-country (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 46-48, 56).

The state can prohibit immigration, and by doing so, will force it to become clandestine. Such undocumented immigrants will not be considered a part of the state's citizen body and will experience structural barriers to upward mobility. The state can passively accept the newcomers by granting them legal protection under the law, but at the same time, not enacting additional programs or policies to ease proactively the inevitable hardships that come with immigration. Finally, the state can actively promote immigration by creating programs to encourage certain immigrant-flows and ease their resettlement by providing them with special services and benefits that facilitate integration.

If the labor market is structured in a way that is conducive to gradual upward mobility, the immigrants are more likely to experience intergenerational economic advancement. Such was the case for 20th century European immigrants in the United States, who due to the industrial economy of the US, had an opportunity to steadily move up the ranks of blue collar professions without having to acquire advanced academic degrees (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:56). Today, the service sector, rather than the industrial sector, employs a majority of Americans. Service jobs are either those of low-wage, low-prestige manual laborers or those that require advanced education. Thus, arguably, today's second and third generation immigrants in the US have to receive secondary education to become better off economically than their parents, which these authors suggest is a hard leap to make in one or two generations (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:58).

The dominant population of the host society will have more positive attitudes toward the incoming group if they perceive the immigrants to be similar to themselves. These similarities

18

include physical appearance, class background, language, and religion, although some characteristics are of greater importance than others. In the United States, race is the most influential measure of perceived similarity, whereas in Israel, it would be the group's Jewish ethnicity and religion. Immigrants tend to settle in areas that already have a co-ethnic population, if such a population exists in their destination country. The co-ethnic community can help the newcomers navigate the host country's culture and labor market by providing employment connections and general support.

The chances of the immigrants experiencing classic or selective assimilation increase if the state into which they settle has proactive immigration and resettlement policies, the native population has positive attitudes toward the incoming group, the destination country has a co-ethnic community, and its labor market is conducive to gradual upward mobility.

While the segmented assimilation theory predominately discusses economic and social integration, Gerstle (2013) applies similar concepts to immigrant political incorporation, which he defines as "the process through which immigrants and their descendants come to think of themselves as members of a polity with political rights and with a voice in politics, should they choose to exercise it" (306). The two paths that he foresees are acquiescent and transformational. The former is a rough equivalent to Portes and Rumbaut's classic path, and the latter to their downward path, which can lead to the development of reactive ethnicities. Acquiescent immigrants and their descendants accept the existing social, political, and economic structures of their host society, and to the best of their abilities, wrestle with any discrimination on a personal level, without disturbing the existing structures of the state (Gerstle 2013:307). Transformational

immigrants protest marginality and wish to change the discriminatory institutions of their host country (ibid).

In the US, research found that immigrants who opt for the acquiescent path and who are phenotypically similar to the country's social mainstream often choose to minimize their differences by avoiding conspicuous manifestations of their ethnic or cultural identities, so that with time, they can become indistinguishable from the dominant population. Acquiescent groups who are of non-dominant races, and therefore, cannot relegate their ethnicities to the private sphere exclusively, engage in outward manifestations of patriotism toward the state. Such was the case of Japanese American volunteers in the all Japanese regiment in the US army during WWII (Gerstle 2013: 310). When using either of these tactics, the immigrants seek to "prove" to the host society that they are worthy of being accepted into the mainstream.

The transformational incorporation path may become more attractive in the face of ongoing and intergenerational discrimination when immigrants and native minorities recognize that acquiescence may lead only to a permanent second class status. European immigrants and their descendants, who saw an intersection between their intergenerational, disadvantaged class position and their non-dominant ethnicities, mobilized in labor unions to transform the industrial labor structure of 1930s America (Gerstle 2013:312). The 1960s civil rights movement, which forced Americans to confront and begin reforming the country's racist institutional structures, is the most prominent example of transformational incorporation in the US. In addition to making a crucial step toward equality for racial minorities, the movement elevated multiculturalism to an aspirational American ideal. Thus, immigrants coming into post-civil rights America confront a society that, at least on the rhetorical level, celebrates multiculturalism and does not expect their

immediate acculturation into the white, middle-class mainstream (Gerstle 2013:313). A dynamic that, of course, suffered a nativist backlash during the 2016 campaign and election of Donald Trump.

The following sections examine the context of exit, context of reception, and individual characteristics of FSU immigrants in Israel as a way to discern what integration paths these first generation immigrants are undertaking, and the potential socioeconomic status that their descendants will hold.

Overview of Immigration to Israel from the Former Soviet Union

The chief piece of legislation governing immigration in Israel is the Law of Return, which the Israeli parliament (*the Knesset*) passed in 1950. At first, the law simply stated that Jews everywhere were entitled to immigration and immediate citizenship in Israel, but did not define what it means to be a Jew. Following high profile court cases of Brother Daniel and Benjamin Shalit, which involved the Jewish status of children of mixed marriages and ethnic Jews converted to Christianity, the law was amended in 1970 to define "Jew" in strictly religious terms (Cohen and Susser 2009:53, 55). According to Jewish religious law (*the Halacha*), a Jew is a person born to a Jewish mother who did not willingly convert to another religion, or somebody who converted to Judaism in a recognized rabbinical court. In order to maintain the unity of mixed families, the 1970 amendment also added a provision extending the right of return to non-Jewish relatives of Jews. This right extends to non-Jewish spouses, children, and grandchildren of Jews, as well as to non-Jewish spouses and children of their non-Jewish children and grandchildren.

Two large waves characterize immigration from the former Soviet Union to Israel — that of the 1970s and that of the 1990s. As compared to the second wave, the immigrants who arrived in the 1970s were more ideologically Zionist and traditionally Jewish. They faced higher risks associated with emigration and had more destination-options once they decided to take the risk. Only those who genuinely wanted to live in Israel, usually because of their connection to Zionism and Judaism, came to Israel, whereas those looking to escape the Soviet Union more than to fulfill the Zionist dream went to Germany or the US — options that were not available for the later wave.

Between 1970-1988, 165,000 Soviet Jews arrived in Israel (Tolts 2016:23). They came as a result of improved relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, made possible by Brezhnev's policy of detente that brought the two countries into closer economic ties and temporarily curtailed the arms race. Under US pressure, the Soviet Union eased its restriction on emigration. This was hailed as a humanitarian gesture, only for the purposes of family reunification and only in relation to immigration to the ethnic group's national homeland (Remmenick 2007: 37-38). The policy most affected Soviet Jews, although some Germans and Armenians also emigrated under these conditions (Gitelman 2016:21). In order to receive exit visas, prospective émigrés had to first receive an invitation from their relatives already living abroad, which was a risky process because those refused exit visas — referred to as "refuseniks" (*otkazniki*) — were considered enemies of the state for their desire to leave the Union, usually losing their jobs and apartments as a result (Remennick 2007: 38-39). Some of the Jewish refuseniks were also imprisoned for Zionist activity.

In the 1970s, Germany and the United States had generous Jewish refugee programs that were significantly cut by the time of the second wave in the 1990s. Those emigrating in the 1970s were housed in transition centers in Europe before continuing their journeys to Israel, which gave them ample opportunity to apply for refugee visas to the United States or Germany, after already leaving the Soviet Union supposedly for Israel. Between 1970-1988, 126,000 émigrés "dropped out" and went to countries other than Israel, mostly to the United States (Tolts 2016:23). About 40% of first-wave immigrants to Israel came from Soviet Central Asian Republics, where Jews maintained a stronger traditional identity than their highly acculturated counterparts in the European Republics (Al-Haj 2004: 78). 25% of the 1970s immigrants came from Georgia, even though only 2.5% of the Soviet Jewish population lived there (Gitelman 2016:11).

The second immigrant wave is more representative of Soviet Jewry as a whole, and more so than immigrants of the 1970s, came to Israel because it was their only option. Between 1989 and 2000, approximately 920,000 immigrants from the (former) Soviet Union arrived in Israel, 63% of whom came from Ukraine or Russia, 69% of whom were either atheist or not religious and approximately 30% were not considered Jews by the state of Israel (Al-Haj 2004:84, Bartram 2011:339, Gitelman and Goldstein 2002:145-146). Gorbachev's two-fold policy of Glassnost and Perestroika, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, allowed for market liberalization and the revival of overt ethnic and religious life. The wild west capitalism that ensued benefitted a few business-savvy entrepreneurs, but sunk many more people into poverty, which in turn opened doors for ethnic strife. Bottom-up antisemitism, sometimes disguised as slavic cultural revival, exemplified in the organization Pamyat, spread antisemitic propaganda

and threatened Jews with pogroms. At the same time, Jewish institutional life was making a comeback. Jewish Congress and the Federation of Jewish Organizations (Va'ad) were providing humanitarian aid to impoverished, especially elderly, Jews and bringing the highly acculturated younger generation back to their religion and culture (Al-Haj 2004:75). Representatives from the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI/*sochnut*) were also able to openly recruit immigrants, and their many immigration-encouragement programs such as Kibbutz Ulpan and Na'ale made the prospect of immigration seem especially attractive and painless. Thus, unlike immigrants of the 1970s, those of the 1990s had significantly fewer immigration-destination options or livelihood prospects if they were to stay put. Today, former Soviet republics continue sending the highest number of immigrants to Israel, but the number of Jews among them is steadily declining, constituting 96% in 1990 and only 41% in 2009 (Tolts 2015:33).

Some of the only legal areas in which the non-Jewishness of these immigrants comes to the fore are issues of personal status, meaning marriage and divorce. Israel maintained a version of the Millet system, in place during the Ottoman Empire, which gives officially recognized religious communities autonomy in personal status matters. The state of Israel recognizes fourteen religious communities including Druze, Bahai, Sunni Muslim, Jewish and nine Christian denominations (Sezgin 2013:77-78). For fear of undermining Jewish national and religious unity, Israel does not consider the various Jewish movements — Orthodox, Conservative and Reform being the largest three — as separate religious communities, so issues of personal status for Jews are under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbinate, which enforces the Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law (England 1987:195). This system becomes contentious when an individual does not have a religion, or when somebody identifies as Jewish, but is not

considered one by *the Halacha*, as is the case among many of the FSU immigrants. Most

recognized religious communities in Israel, including that of the Orthodox Jewish establishment,

do not believe in intermarriage and no civil alternative exists in Israel.

Statistical Overview of Immigrant Integration

Economic

The most recent data available on the occupational integration of Russian-speakers in

Israel is from 2009, twenty years after the beginning of the mass wave. The data show that

immigrants were upwardly mobile during their first decade in the country, but stagnant in their

second, which suggests that they may continue to occupy the economic stratum that they found

themselves in during 2009 (Cohen-Goldner et al. 2012:247). The employment rates of the

immigrants are higher than that of the veteran Israelis, but they concentrate in lower paying,

lower status jobs (Arian et al. 2009:103). 26% of the immigrants as compared to 20% of the

general population work in the sales and service industries. 26% of the immigrants, but only 15%

of the general population perform skilled manual labor. Even though the immigrants are highly

educated — 60% of whom hold university degrees — only 20% of the immigrants vs 39% of the

general population hold academic, technical or managerial positions (Arian et al. 2009:101, Bick

1998:121). 54% of the immigrants believe that the demands of their jobs do not meet their

educational qualifications, whereas only 24% of the veteran Israelis shared this sentiment (Arian

et al. 2009:103). This is partially due to the difficulty of transferring academic degrees from

Soviet and post-Soviet countries into an Israeli occupational context, which I discuss later. Yet,

even those immigrants who succeeded in attaining white-collar professions in Israel are, on

average, paid less than their veteran Israeli counterparts. For example, 25-40 year-old men who

immigrated between 1989-1991 and are employed in white-collar professions earn 29% less than their Israeli counterparts (Cohen-Golder et al. 2012:245). As a result, Russian-speakers are overrepresented in the lower socioeconomic stratum of Israeli society. 57% of the immigrants have family expenses that are below the Israeli average, and 21% live under the national poverty line (Arian et al. 2009:99, Borschel-Dan 2016).

Russian-speaking immigrants established countless ethnic stores, most of which sell groceries or books, but they display low rates of self-employment in traditionally immigrant niches of wholesale and retail trade, accommodation/restaurant services, and construction (Razin and Scheinberg 2001:266). In Israel, these niches are largely filled by Mizrahi Jews[6] and Arabs. The self-employed Russian-speaking immigrants concentrate either in low status, service sector jobs of domestic personnel, or in education-based niches of dentistry, music lessons, insurance or real-estate (Razin and Scheinberg 2001:267).

Residential

FSU immigrants live in Israel's northern and southern peripheral regions, alongside the Arab and Mizrahi minorities, where they are subject to a more precarious security situation and have fewer job prospects. 25% of the immigrants vs 15% of the general population live in the South, and 30% of the immigrants vs 20% of the general population live in the North (Arian et al. 2009:76). Some peripheral cities — Ashkelon and Ashdod in the South, Nazareth in the North — have populations that are 30-40% immigrants from the FSU (Cohen-Golder et al. 2012:260).

In 2009, 75.2% of the FSU immigrants, as compared to 81.7% of the veteran Israelis, were homeowners (Cohen-Golder et al. 2012:262). These relatively high rates are partially due to

---

[6] Jews of Middle Eastern or North African descent

the immigrants' concentration in the periphery — where houses are significantly cheaper — and

the generous mortgages offered to FSU immigrants in the 1990s (Cohen-Golder et al. 2012:262,

Arian et al. 2009:92). However, only 30% of the older immigrants (50 and older at the time of

the survey) owned their own homes (Arian et al. 2009:92).

Social

Some mutual social distancing continues to exist between Russian-speaking immigrants

and veteran Israelis. Even though a vast majority (68%) of the veteran Israelis do not believe that

Israel would have been better off had the FSU wave never occurred, the same percentage think

that crime rates have risen with their arrival (Arian et al. 2009:95). 61% of the immigrants

believe that they have contributed more to Israel than they received from it, while 45% of the

veteran Israelis think that the immigrants are not patriotic enough (Arian et al. 2009:94-95) 68%

of the veteran Israelis question the authenticity of immigrant Jewishness, and 69% oppose

marrying a non-Jew from the FSU (Arian et al. 2009:97). Only about 6% of the FSU immigrants

had a veteran Israeli spouse in 2008 (Cohen Goldner et al. 2012:267).

Cultural Institutions of Russian-speaking Immigrants

The Russian-speaking cultural life is dense and vibrant. Jews in the Soviet Union were

conspicuously active in the ranks of Soviet intelligentsia, despite being subject to state-sponsored

and lay antisemitism that ranged from name-calling to being denied employment or university

admittance to being scapegoated at times of state-wide unrest, such as in the case of the 1950s

anti-corruption campaign (Gitelman 2001:152). They possessed high cultural capital in the form

of academic degrees, white-collar professions, and general familiarity with high-brow literature

and art. What appears to be a paradoxical commitment to the development of, and participation

in, a society that systematically looked-down on Jews was actually a strategic group-level response to prejudice.

The Soviet Jewish population was highly acculturated into the ethnically diverse, but culturally Russian mainstream. This occurred because of the shutting down of most Jewish institutions and the active prosecution of their leaders to various degrees from the 1930s onwards, coupled with the general migration of Jews away from Jewish-majority villages in the periphery to urban centers, where the Soviet regime awarded them academic and professional opportunities that were absent under Tsarist rule (Gitelman 2001:64, 82). Jews, however, never fully assimilated into the Soviet mainstream in part because of the regime's policy of listing people's nationalities in their internal passports, which allowed for easy identification and discrimination of Jews in the above mentioned ways. In the absence of active Jewish life and in the presence of active discrimination, the Soviet Union presented Jews with little opportunity to identify Jewishness with positive attributes.

Thus, being part of the intelligentsia began to highly correlate with being Jewish and served as a way for Jews to identify their ethnicity with something positive (Lerner 2012). In some instances, belonging to the intelligentsia served as proof of one's true Jewishness. Parents educated their children about which prominent Soviet figures were of Jewish descent as a way of instilling ethnic pride. As a result of these practices, Jews were the most highly educated ethnic group in the Soviet Union, 80% of whom held white collar professions, mostly as scientists, physicians, engineers, writers, artists, and musicians (Remennick 1998:244). More "ideologically sensitive" jobs in politics and diplomacy were largely denied to them because their non-dominant

ethnicity and potential connections to Jews abroad cast doubt on their loyalty to the Soviet Union (ibid).

In this regard, Soviet Jews were not only active participants, but also active contributors to high-brow culture of the Soviet Union and its successor states. This dynamic coupled with the largely economic, rather than ideological, motivations for immigration created a situation in which the new immigrants did not want to shed their diasporic identities to become part of the Israeli cultural mainstream, but rather took pride in and wanted to maintain the culture of the countries from which they came. Remennick's (2002) representative survey of 800 (F)SU immigrants found that three quarters agreed with statements that suggested the superiority of their more European culture, as compared to the more Eastern culture of the Israelis (522). Additionally, Soviet immigrants who had high academic and occupational profiles failed to integrate into the small and saturated Israeli labor market. Only 17% of teachers, 25% of engineers, and 50% of physicians had jobs that matched their qualifications in 2001 (Remennick 2002:520). This further embittered the immigrants and made them retreat into their own circles, which in turn, embittered the Israelis who felt betrayed by the immigrants' apparent disregard for Zionism. During the peak of FSU immigration, the Israeli press frequently ran stories about "Russian" communities as centers of mafia, alcoholism, prostitution, and domestic abuse (Bick 1998:130).

As a result of the self and outside imposed isolationism, FSU immigrants appear to show some cultural separatism. In 2010, there were approximately 250 recognized cultural organizations of the Russian-speakers that ranged in form and content, but all resulted in the maintenance of post-Soviet cultural identities in Israel (Khanin 2012:57). The network of 20

Mofet after-school programs for middle school-aged children most clearly reflect the feelings of cultural superiority among many of the immigrants. The programs are geared toward children gifted in math and science, are modeled on the Soviet style of teaching of the unlocking and nurturing talents from a young age, and seek to supplement what many immigrants perceive as Israel's inferior educational system (Epstein and Kheimets 2002:471). Most of the program's teachers are immigrants form the FSU. Today, Hebrew is the language of instruction even though classes were originally conducted in Russian (ibid).

Perhaps the most measurable way of analyzing the strength of the Russian-speaking cultural enclave is by looking at Russian-language media. Ethnic media is an effective tool for communal boundary maintenance, since it creates a common reference point for those within the community — in this case the Russian-speakers— and excludes those outside of the community.

The popularity of Russian-language media waned slightly since its peak during the height of the FSU immigration wave in the mid-1990s, but continues to have a strong presence. Israel has one national Russian-language daily newspaper, a dozen local newspapers, seven weekly magazines, one commercial Russian-language TV channel, and two radio stations (Elias 2012:73-74). Al-Haj's (2004) survey of 707 immigrants revealed that 72.2% of the respondents regularly watch cable channels from the FSU, 25% watch Israeli, Russian-language channels, and 24.6% watch Israeli channels in Hebrew (99). 69.7% regularly read Russian-language, Israeli press, whereas only 8.9% read Israeli publications in Hebrew (ibid).

A correlation exists between improved Hebrew proficiency and a higher tendency to consume Hebrew media, suggesting that the continued popularity of Russian-language media could be due to mere practical considerations. Yet, 37.7% of those who are fluent in Hebrew

30

regularly read Israeli Russian-language newspapers, while only 24.3% regularly read Hebrew-language newspapers (Al-Haj 2004:100). Even more impressive is that 60.5% of the fluent Hebrew speakers watch cable TV from FSU countries, and only 49% watch Hebrew channels (ibid). Thus, at least for the first generation, holding onto FSU culture is at least as important a motivation for ethnic media consumption as having no other choice because of insufficient Hebrew skills.

Sectarian Political Parties of Russian-speaking Immigrants

Al-Haj (2004), Khanin (2012), Horowitz (2003) assert that Russian-speaking immigrants are capitalizing on their large numbers and Israel's parliamentary system to integrate into Israel's political establishment as an equal, but distinct group capable of making their own demands and participating in governmental agenda setting[7]. In other words, they believe that FSU immigrants are not only preserving their culture, but are also using it as a tool for ethnically-based, political mobilization. On the other hand, the work of Phillipov and Bystrov (2011) demonstrates that the immigrants rarely use the political arena for self-advancement, and furthermore, limit their

————————————

[7] Israel is a parliamentary democracy whose citizens select a party, not a candidate, during national elections. Representatives of the elected parties receive seats in Israel's 120 member parliament proportional to the number of votes they gained in the election. Since 2013, the party has to receive at least 3.25% of the total vote — corresponding to roughly four Knesset seats — in order to join the parliament. Given such low election thresholds and high number of political parties, no single party can ever receive a majority (at least 61 Knesset seats) needed to form a government. Therefore, a coalition of parties who collectively hold at least 61 Knesset seats governs Israel. The parties negotiate deals and favors when forming the coalition, after which the prime minister— who is of the party that won a plurality of votes — selects cabinet ministers from among them. Such a governing system lends a disproportional amount of power to small parties that hold few seats, but can be decisive in the formation or the disassembly of a coalition (Lieberman 2015) .

political participation to elections. The success of the Israel Beitenu party and the failure of Israel B'aliyah suggest that ethnic parties of the Russian-speakers can only survive if they adopt a national, rather than sectarian, political orientation, which in turn, suggests that the immigrants are not using politics to advance parochial interests of the Russian-speakers.

When forced to choose between x and y, the Russian-speakers prioritize nationwide concerns as is clear in their failure to vote for sectarian parties under the single-ballot system prior to 1996 and after 2003. Only in 1996, following Israel's switch to a two-ballot election method was a sectarian party catering specifically to the interests of FSU immigrants able to reach the election threshold necessary to join the Knesset. In an attempt to strengthen the role of the prime minister and diminish the bargaining strength of the small parties, Israel switched to a dual election system in 1996, in which the citizens cast two ballots — one directly for prime minister and one for a political party to join the Knesset. In the end, this dual system strengthened, rather than weakened, the small political players because voters no longer needed to choose between having a say in who will be the prime minister by voting for one of the major parties and expressing their sectarian interests by voting for one of the smaller, more narrowly-focused parties, but instead could pursue both goals simultaneously (Bick 1998:126). Israel went back to single-ballot voting in 2003.

Israel B'aliyah (IBA) established by former refusenik and prisoner of Zion, Natan Sharansky, garnered a plurality of immigrant votes (38%) in 1996, which gave the party seven Knesset seats and two ministerial positions (Bick 1998:121). The party's platform focused exclusively on Russian-speaking immigrant concerns, and avoided taking stances on controversial issues such as the future of the occupied territories and the relationship between

religion and state. It did not endorse either of the prime minister candidates, allowing itself to be

a potential member of a left-leaning or a right-leaning coalition, and appealing to all immigrants

regardless of their political ideologies (Bick 1998:136, Khanin 2012:57). The campaign

mobilized around widespread dissatisfaction with the integration process among FSU

immigrants, and focused on establishing group consciousness and communal pride among the

Russian-speaking community by stressing their contribution to Israel and the importance of

continued immigration to achieving the Zionist vision of the state (Bick 1998:131). Among the

party's campaign promises were to increase the availability of housing and suitable employment

opportunities for the immigrants, civil marriage alternatives, as well as the establishment of more

religious courts to expedite conversions to Judaism (Bick 1998: 136-137).

IBA's appeal began to erode with the establishment of a second sectarian party, Israel

Beitenu (IB) in 1998, and disappeared entirely when Israel went back to single-ballot voting in

2003 — an election in which IBA received only two Knesset seats, which resulted in its merging

with the right-wing Likud (Bagno 2011:23). Avigdor Lieberman, a 1970s immigrant from

Moldova, established IB, but before establishing his own party, Lieberman was Benjamin

Netanyahu's advisor in Likud. He left the party along with a number of other Russian-speakers

because of what they saw as (i) Likud's too-lenient attitudes regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict

and (ii) the party's using its Russian-speaking members as a tool to bring in more votes, but not

allowing them to be serious partners in the party's agenda setting process (Khanin 2010:106,

Khanin 2012:60). A particularly pivotal moment was Netanyahu's signing of the Wye agreement

with the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat in 1998, which called

for Israel's withdrawal from parts of the occupied West Bank (ibid). Ideologically right-wing

members of IBA, who disagreed with Sharansky's neutrality on key issues, and some leaders of

independent Russian-speaking parties who ran in local, municipal elections in 1998 also joined

the newly-formed IB (Khanin 2010:106, 2012:59).

IB's orientation is primarily national rather than sectarian. Himself a settler, Lieberman

and IB advocate for a version of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which

Israel keeps the settlement blocs, but in exchange gives the future state of Palestine territory

within Israel's 1967 borders that are largely populated by Arabs, and offers Arab Israelis

economic incentives to move out of Israel into Palestine (Ahren 2016, Ravid 2014). Particularly

controversial is Lieberman's suggested policy of "no loyalty, no citizenship," targeting Arab

Israelis, according to which, in order to retain their citizenship, all Israelis must demonstrate

loyalty to Israel by serving in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) or the equivalent national service,

and showing outward respect for all of the state's holidays and symbols (Our Home Platform). IB

also wants to increase the cap on bank loans available for the purchase of apartments to young

couples who served in the IDF, calls for separating the cabinet of ministers and the Knesset in

order to achieve more efficient governance, and increasing the availability of state-funded after

school programs for school-aged children (ibid).

In a separate "achievements" section on the party's website, IB credits itself with

accomplishing positive changes in areas that are predominately interesting to FSU immigrants.

These include the cancellation of visa requirements for tourists traveling to Israel from Ukraine,

Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and Russia, introducing civil marriage options for those who do not

belong to a recognized religious community,[8] increasing rental subsidies to those eligible for

public housing, and increasing pensions for elderly immigrants (Our Home Achievements).

Finally, the party claims to have broken the "glass-ceiling" for the Russian-speaking community,

by having IB's Russian-speaking Knesset members successfully represent it (ibid).

IB reached the peak of its influence in 2009 when it received fifteen Knesset seats and

54% of the FSU immigrant vote (Bagno 2011:29). Most of IB's representatives were from the

FSU and they campaigned heavily in Russian-language media, but security, rather than their FSU

origin or immigrant-specific needs, was the focus of their campaign, and the main reason for

which the party was popular among the immigrants. It was in 2009 that Lieberman introduced

his policy against "disloyal" citizens. Unsurprisingly, IB was most popular among those Russian-

speaking immigrants and veteran Israelis who indicated in surveys that they feared Arabs as a

group, and who concentrated in Israel's northern and southern regions, where they were most

vulnerable to rocket fire from Lebanon and Gaza, which Israel was at war with in 2006 and 2009

(Bagno 2011:31). 73% of the Russian-speaking electorate and 64% of veteran Israelis believed

IB to be a nationally, rather than an ethnically, oriented party (Bagno 2011:24-25). 22% of IB's

voters, as compared to 13% of voters of other parties, said to have chosen the party because of its

platform rather than its name or its members (ibid).

Even though IB does demonstrate some concern for immigrant-specific needs (i.e. the

breaking of the glass ceiling, pensions), and undoubtedly, some select it for those reasons, this is

not the main motivation for most voters. The mere fact that IB reached the height of its

---

[8] A couple in which both members do not belong to a recognized religious community and at least one is a citizen of another country, can have a legally-recognized civil marriage at a consulate in Israel (Sofer 2007).

popularity during an election following two wars in which security took precedence, demonstrates that the Israeli electorate regards IB as a legitimate player in national, rather than immigrant-specific, politics. Thus, the Russian-speakers prefer to participate in elections in order to have a say in Israel's national concerns, rather than to advance politically as a group and address immigrant-specific needs. Despite having a vibrant institutional network of cultural organizations, FSU immigrants are not translating it into political mobilization, so as to change Israel's institutions to better suit their needs, and by doing so, appear to be opting for Gerstle's acquiescent political incorporation path.

Civil Society of Russian-speaking Immigrants

Even more so than with elections, FSU immigrants do not use civil society as a space for reactive or oppositional advocacy. The Russian-speakers demonstrate low participation rates in mainstream civil society organizations in Israel. Furthermore, they neither have their own civil society organizations, nor do any well-known mainstream organizations center the specific needs of the Russian-speakers (Corella and Ben-Noon 2013:23). The most important organization advocating for Soviet immigrants in Israel was the Zionist Forum for Soviet Jewry that Natan Sharansky established in 1988. The Zionist Forum started as a voluntary association, which interacted with individual immigrants, but grew to become a lobbying group that brought their absorption needs to national attention (Bick 1998:138). The organization ceased to exist when its leaders entered the political stage by establishing IBA (Khanin 2012:58).

Today, members of the 1.5 generation are attempting to partially fill this institutional void, which may suggest that despite political non-mobilization of their parents, the younger generation may look to politicize their ethnicity more. Morashtenu — an organization established

by the younger generation — engages in work that most closely resembles that of the Zionist Forum. The organization is made up of mostly Russian-speakers, whose goal is to end xenophobic attitudes against their community. As opposed to the Zionist Forum, however, the organization does not attempt to keep up a semblance of political neutrality, but is instead located in the left-wing and frames its work as part of a broader fight against all manifestations of xenophobia and racism (Morashtenu). Some of its work is geared toward educating Russian-speakers about the Arab-Israeli conflict from a more center-left perspective than is usually presented in Russian-language media, which in turn, alienates some of the very people the organization wants to represent (ibid). Other organizations, such as the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), which calls for a more robust separation between religion and state, deal with issues that disproportionately affect the FSU community, but again, no well-known organization defines the well-being of the Russian-speakers as a whole to be its chief concern.

Previous works (Corella and Ben-Noon 2013, Philippov and Bystrov 2011) attribute such low rates of organizational self-advocacy, in some or large part, to political socialization of the immigrants back in the Soviet Union. Former Soviet citizens developed a mistrust for all institutions, governmental and non-governmental alike. They tended to think that neither institutional variety was truly invested in the well-being of the people they claimed to represent, and would rather rely on personal informal networks for self-help (Philippov and Bystrov 2011:270).

Out of all the sectors in Israeli society, Russian-speakers have the lowest perceptions of political efficacy. 61% of the immigrants agreed with the statement "I and citizens like me have no influence over governmental policy," as opposed to 50% of the general population (Arian et

al. 2009:56). Interestingly, the immigrants have lower perceptions of political efficacy than even

the Arab Israelis who are objectively the most discriminated-against minority in Israel, 56% of

whom agreed with the statement (ibid). 47% of the FSU immigrants agreed with the statement

that "to reach the top in politics you have to be corrupt," as opposed to 39% of the veteran

Jewish Israelis, and 22% of the Arab Israelis (Arian et al. 2009:61). In general, the immigrants do

not trust democratic processes, and 61% believe that a couple strong leaders are more capable of

guaranteeing successful governance than the various, interweaving democratic institutions (Arian

et al. 2009:59-60). 72% believe that a government of appointed experts, rather than elected

representatives, will be better at bringing about desirable changes (ibid).

The Study

Previous research on Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel show that they are

maintaining a distinct cultural identity, but are not translating it into politics, of which they

remain distrustful. Despite being economically worse off than the Israeli mainstream,

experiencing social distancing from veteran Israelis, being somewhat residentially segregated

and disproportionally affected by a lack of earnest separation between state and religion, and

perhaps most importantly, having a vibrant cultural institutional framework, the immigrants are

not engaging in reactive political mobilization on the group's behalf. Philippov and Bystrov trace

these low-levels of political action to the immigrants' misunderstanding of democratic

governance and the kinds of behaviors that lead to social and economic advancement in a

democracy. Phillippov and Bystrov, however, come to many of these conclusions by examining

political attitudes and behaviors of people currently residing in post-Soviet countries, whereas

Portes and Rumbaut say that both, the context of exit and context of reception, interact to shape

incorporation paths of the immigrants. Furthermore, Phillipov and Bystrov's work, and that of

the IDI as well, is strictly quantitative, which is useful in its ability to present findings on a large

number of respondents, but limiting in leaving the researcher to guess the meanings behind, or

the processes and mechanisms leading to, the responses.

My qualitative study will help fill this gap by critically examining the political attitudes

and behaviors of the Russian-speakers in Israel. Learning about the motivations behind what

appears to be an acquiescent political integration strategy is important in order to come to a

better understanding of why they are not mobilizing even in the face of discrimination.

Furthermore, Russian-speaking immigrants are of large enough numbers — making up 20% of

Israel's non-Arab population — that their incorporation strategy and political attitudes can have

repercussions on Israeli politics as a whole (Al-Haj 2004:2).

Chapter 2: The Acquiescent Strategy

The political attitudes of my respondents are best explained by Gerstle's (2013) notion of acquiescent integration in which immigrants seek admittance into the societal mainstream by demonstrating their "worthiness." In the Israeli case, the mainstream is Jewish Israelis[9] and the gatekeepers are representatives of Israel's social, political and economic institutions, as well as lay Jewish Israelis. FSU immigrants espouse the academically debunked classic assimilation theory, which posits that immigrant incorporation is a one-directional process during which the incoming population acculturates into the host society's mainstream to become upwardly mobile economically, and eventually, indistinguishable from the dominant population (Alba and Nee 2007:125-126). Alba and Nee's (2007) more recent, revised assimilation theory argues that, oftentimes, immigrant incorporation in the USA is not a one-directional process of the immigrants acculturating into the mainstream, but is instead characterized by the blurring of boundaries between the incoming and the domestic populations. According to the theory, both the host population and the incoming population experience cultural changes as a result of immigration, which in turn, allows the immigrants to be members of the mainstream without completely forsaking their own ethnic practices and identities (Alba and Nee 2007:131).

Nevertheless, my respondents believe that it is their responsibility as newcomers to accept Israeli political and cultural norms passively, and to place no demands onto the state to accommodate their special needs as Israelis of FSU descent. By doing so, they expect to be fully accepted within Israel, if not in this generation, then the next. Their socialization in the FSU, the

_____

[9] I recognize that Jewish Israelis are not a homogenous population, but discussing every sector of Israel's Jewish population is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I want to draw attention to the potential differences in social statuses among those who are officially recognized as Jewish by the state and those who are not.

real or perceived pushback they will receive if they opt for a different integration strategy, and their status as partially desired immigrants — who were encouraged to immigrate and actively aided during the resettlement process — are largely responsible for these attitudes.

Understanding Democracy

My respondents were socialized in an authoritarian regime, where both their private and public spheres were subject to state-control and repression. Largely as a result of this political upbringing, my respondents developed a unique perception of democratic governance. They believe that the role of a democratic government is to protect the people's private spheres from governmental encroachments, so that each citizen can hold any kind of religious, national or ideological identity in the privacy of his or her own home. Yet, they also believe that a democratic state should uphold and protect the dominant ethos of the state — Jewishness and Zionism in the case of Israel — even if it is disagreeable to some sectors of the population. Ostensibly, a vast majority of my respondents argue that Israel's public sphere should be Jewish and its private sphere should be democratic. In other words, they believe that the state has a right to promote the interests and the ideology of the dominant group, and national minorities have the right to disagree with that ideology, but only in private. This separation into acceptable private and public behaviors can help explain why the immigrants maintain vibrant cultural institutions — to fulfill their private cultural needs — without using those networks for reactive political mobilization.

This idea is best summarized by Zhanna, a Christian woman who immigrated as a wife of a Jew in 2004, whom she since divorced. She is now married to a non-observant, non Halachically Jewish immigrant, with whom she has two children. She explains her relationship

to the Jewish character of the state, "[With] my child, every [Jewish] holiday we discuss what is done during this holiday, why the candles are lit, because she needs to know all this. A New Year's tree is good, but if at school she says that a New Year's tree is put up at her house, she will have problems and I know that." Zhanna could not elaborate on the kinds of problems her daughter would have, but when I asked about her feelings regarding the child having issues because of the family's Russian identity, she responded

> I feel fine regarding this for one simple reason that when they say that Israel is a democratic state, I say "very well." I don't go around with a New Year's Tree-*Kokoshnik*[10]. There are moments when I want to, but I don't do this. Everything that happens on the street, in the government, that's ok, but what goes on in my house…*pause* My understanding of a democracy is that everything that goes on in my house […]I'm talking about the holidays that I have and the culture. They don't have the right to tell me to forget it. It is not the basis [of the state], but it is my culture. I brought it. I can maintain it. I can not maintain it — that is also my right. Democracy, as I understand it, it gives you the right to choose.

Zhanna could feel discriminated against because Israel excludes her non-Jewish cultural practices from the public sphere, but instead her understanding of democracy allows her to reconcile her non-Jewish identity and Israel's Jewish character by relegating her non-Jewish practices to the privacy of her home. This is a typical strategy for acquiescent immigrants, who believe that they can expedite their assimilation into the mainstream by forsaking overt manifestations of their cultural differences (Gerstle 2013:309-310).

David, an ethnic Jew who immigrated in 2002, and has since become highly observant, expresses a similar private-public divide in relation to Israel's Jewish and democratic character. Those aspects of a person's life that, in his mind, are antithetical to Judaism should be confined

---

[10] A traditional Russian headdress. The respondent is using the *Kokoshnik* imagery to mean that she does not go about the streets of Israel being conspicuously Russian.

to the privacy of the person's home, and likewise, the person's home should be protected from

governmental encroachments,

> If he takes and, for example, eats at home on *Yom Kippur*[11], that's ok. You can't make demands of him. At home he can do it. Of course it is bad, and for me as an observant Jew, I would like for as many people as possible to start keeping traditions. But if a person does it at home, not defiantly, then I don't have a problem with it. […] Those pride parades, if a person is doing it, please date if you have same-sex love. Do it at home. You don't need to show it off so much and start advertising it. In this regard, I have a problem.

Here again, David is highly critical of public expressions of non-dominant values and identities,

and refers to such manifestations derisively as "defiant" and "those pride parades." Nina, a

Halachic Jew, who immigrated in 2015 expresses a virtually identical sentiment. When I asked

about her attitudes toward ethnic Jews who do not uphold Israel's dominant ethos, she

responded,

> They have the right to live here, but I find their passivity toward the state annoying because the leftists, usually, don't serve in the army and usually protect those things that I feel are not entirely acceptable for Israel. Let's say that they want to finally have same-sex marriages here, that it is very important. But I don't think that it is important for Israel, if we want to keep our quirk, to stay Israel, namely a Jewish state…

Like David, Nina is displeased by public celebrations of non-dominant identities, and believes

that granting equal rights to LGB individuals places Israel at risk of losing its Jewish identity,

and thus, should not occur. Interestingly, Nina refers to leftist activists as "passive," by which she

means their non-subscription to Israel's dominant narrative.

My respondents believe in the existence of a stable social order of the state, and that

showing public allegiance toward it is one of the agreements citizens make in a democracy. They

---

[11] It is traditional to fast on Yom Kippur.

likewise believe that showing such an allegiance, whatever else one does in private, fulfills the agreements all citizens make with the Israeli nation-state.

Respect for Holidays and Symbols of the State

FSU immigrants seek socioeconomic incorporation in Israel without any kind of political protest or mobilization — a view espoused by the classic assimilation theory. They demand one-directional assimilation from the newcomers, believing that all non-Israelis and non-Jews should, at least in public, conform to Israel's dominant culture and general ways of being, which includes demonstrating loyalty to Israel's dominant narratives and symbols.

Jewish

My respondents believe to have come to a society with an existing, Jewish culture, and that it is their responsibility to accept it unquestionably rather than the culture's responsibility to accept them. This is especially salient for non-Jews, who believe that their special duty is to act humbly and understand that Israel exists to represent Jewish interests and identity. In their opinions, non-Jews can either align their interests with those of the Jews or quietly accept that there is a dissonance between themselves and the state.

Nina welcomes non-Jews in Israel if they respect Israel's Jewish character and symbols, and make no demands to change them,

> I believe that, all in all, this is a state for the Jews. Well, I would like it to be so, you know. Because if a person wants to go to a different country, there are many European countries, to which you can go and live there peacefully as a non-Jew. And here you come under the repatriation law, and you have some grandfather who was a Jew. You come here, and then you start saying, "and why should I sing the *Hatikvah*[12], sing the anthem with the words "Jewish soul", and what if I am not a Jew? I am a baptized Christian." Well for me, that is not ok. […] There are

---

[12] The Israeli national anthem

> people and I really like them, they just say, "We're not Jews, we came here because my husband is Jewish or my grandfather was Jewish […] I don't try to change this government, to mold it to my needs," please, I am happy if they live here.

Here again, Nina draws a separation between people's public and private identities. She does not believe that Israel is a state for Jewish people exclusively, but at the same time believes that all those residing within it must show public allegiance toward Israel's Jewish identity. Elizaveta immigrated in 2012, has only one Jewish grandfather, and never considered herself Jewish in Russia. Nevertheless, her attitude regarding the appropriate role for Christians in Israel is almost identical to Nina's,

> If for example, he continues to consider himself Christian, but accepts the society that is here, those foundations that the government offers, then once again, because I am very tolerant, well ok you have a right to do this. If we're talking about those people who come and say, "Well, I am a Christian and you did not build me a church here" right? So in this regard, I am categorically against [Christians], because you knew that you were coming to Israel, knew that this is a Jewish country with very strong traditions, right? Either you accept this country or you turn around and leave. You can't yell, "No, build me five churches here because that is comfortable for me." So, in this regard, of course no. If a person just lives in his world, in the sense that, I don't know, he wears a little cross, that doesn't bother me. Please, this is a democratic country, you have the right [to wear the cross].

Like Zhanna, Elizaveta uses Israel's democratic character to justify her subscription to acquiescent assimilation. She is tolerant of people's non-Jewish identities in private, and is intolerant of their non-Jewish identities in public. In this regard, not only do my respondents believe that immigrants should not engage in reactive political mobilization, but they also denigrate the people who do.

Alyona, a practicing Christian who immigrated in 2001, echoes Nina's and Elizaveta's beliefs. In her mind, the interests of the Jews should be a priority in Israel. She voices the following opinion regarding putting up New Year's/Christmas trees in public spaces, "We can't,

well, it is not allowed, if it is a Jewish state, to make it a state of all religions. It is not allowed, not allowed to force the Jews, just like that, to look at a Christmas tree and have it not bring up any feelings for them. And what if it brings up some feelings? Well, it is not allowed to do this. This is violence, I believe." Again, Alyona is an individual who could be reasonably frustrated by the state's disregard for her traditions, but her subscription to acquiescent integration makes her believe that, as an outsider, it is her responsibility to acculturate, outwardly at the very least, and that any other code of conduct constitutes violence against Jewish Israelis.

Zhanna, Elizaveta and Alyona believe in the importance of maintaining a Jewish public sphere in Israel, which demonstrates that this sentiment is common to many FSU immigrants, not only to the Jews among them, who are obviously favored by the notion. Thus, the acquiescent strategy of the Russian-speakers, at least in part, reflects their socialization in the FSU and their resulting understanding of democratic governance, rather than a mere desire of Jewish immigrants to maintain a philosophy that privileges them.

Post-Soviet

My respondents do not believe that demonstrating public allegiance toward the ideology of the state is limited to non-Jews having to prioritize Judaism, but applies to any expression of non-dominant cultural identities. Their opinions regarding the contentious celebrations of Gregorian New Year showcase these perceptions especially saliently.

Gregorian New Year was the biggest holiday in the Soviet Union, and continues to be the case in its successor states. The holiday includes traditional elements of Christmas — a decorated pine tree and a Santa Clause-like figure called Grandfather Frost (*Ded Moroz)*, who delivers gifts. After prohibiting all manifestations of ethnic and religious identities, Stalin brought back

Christmas in form, but not in content, for the sake of Soviet children in 1935 (Tamkin 2016). New Year's celebrations look like Christmas, but are entirely secular in nature, and are celebrated by all ethnicities and religions. The festivities have become contentious in Israel because some Israelis are offended by what appears to be disrespectful to Judaism since the holiday looks like Christmas and because the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, is celebrated in the fall.

Some FSU immigrants — including MK Razvozov of the centrist Yesh Atid party — believe that the secular holiday should become a public holiday in Israel, since it is of importance to a large enough proportion of Israeli citizens (Channel 9, 2016). Razvozov challenges the dominant perception of FSU immigrants that integration is a one-directional process during which the immigrants come to resemble the host society's social mainstream, and argues that the Israeli state should make some concessions toward cultural practices of its Russian-speaking minority. Nevertheless, he espouses an unpopular belief in the FSU community, which virtually none of my respondents shared.

Most of my respondents celebrate New Year in the traditional Soviet style, but similar to their attitudes toward non-Jewish religious identities, believe that it is their personal choice to engage in non-Israeli festivities, and that Israel should not be responsible for accommodating their celebrations by having official days off. Elizaveta explains her reasoning, "The government is not required to do anything since the government is not required to bend over backwards for us just because we came here. We understood where we were going, we must accept the state the way it is." Leonid, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 1990, expresses similar reservations to making cultural demands of the government,

Well, for me the New Year is from the 31st to the 1st. For them, especially for the ones from the East [Mizrahim,] for many, it is just another change of a calendar date. […] But I doubt it will ever become a public holiday, at least not in the near future. But you shouldn't have such strong feelings toward it. So what, you don't have this New Year. If you want to get drunk — drink. Do I necessarily need to listen to Putin on the TV[13]? Over there [in Russia] are Putin's New Year's wishes, but as the years go by, I absolutely don't care about them. I just want to sit with my family, raise a glass of champagne for the New Year. Well, I couldn't do it this year[14], so we got together with friends the next weekend. I have a New Year's tree. Ok, it wasn't on the 1st, it was on the 5th. I don't see anything terrible in that.

Leonid reconciles the importance he attaches to celebrating the New Year and Israel's non-acceptance of the holiday by relegating his non-Israeli identity to the private sphere exclusively.

My respondents regard assimilation in a one-directional, classic assimilationist manner, in which the immigrants, rather than the receiving society, make all the concessions. The Russian-speakers subject themselves to assimilationist demands by making efforts to confine their conspicuously foreign or non-dominant identities to the privacy of their homes. Furthermore, they hold negative attitudes toward those who do not ascribe to this notion, which I discuss at length in the next chapter.

Respect for General Israeliness

In addition to respecting official symbols of the state, my respondents believe that they must accept rather than question the general way of life in Israel, and are contemptuous of those who do not share the sentiment. Thus, even the immigrants who may want to be critical of Israel, learn to accept it for fear of receiving pushback from Russian-speakers and Israelis in general.

---

[13] It is customary to listen to the president's New Year's remarks around midnight.

[14] December 31, 2016 was a Saturday. Sunday is a work day in Israel, so Leonid was unable to celebrate New Year's on the actual day.

Zhanna expresses frustration toward immigrants who believe in the superiority of educational institutions in their home countries, "A lot of people say, "ay, they don't teach correctly here, they don't teach correctly. And we were taught [better]. We had first grade, second grade, third…" This is a different country, a different system. Everything is different here. It is like coming to Africa and explaining to them what is electricity. They run around with hip coverings. Do they need [electricity]? Like a cat needs a watch." Despite the blatantly racist stereotype of African cultures, Zhanna is espousing a progressive ideal of cultural relativism — that no one culture is inherently better than another, and that it is the responsibility of the outsiders to accept the culture of the locals. Not only is she making a personal choice to accept Israel's educational system and societal norms uncritically, she also holds negative attitudes toward those who do not.

In a somewhat different vein, Zoya, a non-Halachic Jew who immigrated in 2012, expresses her frustration with, and acceptance of, the healthcare system in Israel,

> I get really irritated by the bureaucracy. Those one million papers, letters. I don't know. The healthcare system is great, nobody is denying that, but you have to make appointments with doctors three to four weeks in advance. We still don't go to the dentist here, with their permission slips and overprotectiveness. My youngest son has a heart defect and he had a tooth ache, but nobody wanted to treat him because of his heart. They sent me all across the country to gather various permissions from cardiologists, and in the end, two dentists refused to treat us because there was no ICU in their clinics, in case something went wrong with his heart. By that time it was almost break, and we went to Ukraine. [In Ukraine], they fixed his tooth, no problem. Maybe if I spoke better Hebrew, I would've had an easier time, but I couldn't take it. Now, we only go to the dentist in Ukraine over breaks. But you don't come into someone else's monastery with your own rules[15]. You try to accept them, and to the best of your ability, find a way to ease your path.

---

[15] A Ukrainian saying similar to "When in Rome do as the Romans do."

Zoya's inability to navigate Israel's bureaucratic and medical institutions created barriers to her full integration, and in turn, pushed her toward transnational behaviors. Despite being obviously upset by her experience, she internalized her community's expectation of complacency. She does not contest the system, but instead regards her inability to easily treat her son as yet another element of Israel that she must learn to accept as a foreigner.

While it is inappropriate to argue against the need for tolerance and acceptance of Israel and Israelis on the part of the immigrants, especially for the non-Jews among them given Soviet Union's antisemitic history, there is a fine line between acceptance of Israel and utter passivity. Svetalana, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 1993, recalls her journey from making an active effort to lessen littering to accepting it as part of the norm in Israel,

> People who continue to live with that [Soviet] mentality, they have a very difficult time here. Here they [the Israelis] throw papers on the ground, everything is messy here, very dirty neighborhoods, like, people walk and throw wrappers on the ground. […] You have two options : either you accept what is here or you simply leave. Because it is just impossible to live with this. There are people, who are really bothered by it, but it doesn't bother me. I think that's an aspect of this society. I didn't come here to change anybody. Well they litter, I don't like it. At one point, I tried to tell people not to litter and they answered me "who are you to tell me what to do?" […] I thought "to hell with you." Now I don't even tell anyone because there is a song in Hebrew "you and I — we will not change this world." I don't want to change anybody. Let everyone do as they wish.

Svetlana's seeming celebration of passivity came about as a result of being treated poorly for not demonstrating complacency, which suggests that such attitudes may not be entirely voluntary, but also a result of becoming adapted to being marginalized in Israeli society.

My respondents demonstrate an awareness of being newcomers and an intuitive sense of cultural relativism, which is a laudable quality in and of itself, but what is troubling is that, as Israeli citizens, they feel no ownership over their country or feel that they can enact change

within it. In addition to their socialization in the FSU, the immigrants' stringent separation

between private and public spheres — the latter being a space for utter assimilation — may also

be a coping mechanism in response to exclusionary behaviors of the Israelis. I will speak more

on this in the following chapter.

Relative comparison: Active Gratitude

The vast majority of my respondents came to Israel for practical reasons — looking to fix

specific problems that they encountered, but could not solve in their home countries. They

engage in a process of relative comparison in which they evaluate their ongoing hardships

against the backdrop of the more severe hardships in their countries of origin. They feel gratitude

to Israel for providing resources that their home countries did not, and downplay the significance

of any ongoing difficulties, which in turn, further contributes to being satisfied with the status

quo and diminishes their desire for reactive, political mobilization.

Zoya immigrated to Israel to secure a better future for her autistic son. She is grateful to

Israel and Israelis for accepting her child in a way Ukrainians did not,

> They [the Israelis] can yell at you, can say something [unpleasant], they are so
> loud, they can cut you in line very rudely, but usually they will never… They are
> much more tolerant toward different people, including people with special needs.
> If you compare this to Ukrainian society… You take one Ukrainian person, she
> has more patience. She will wait in line more patiently, will wait for the green
> light more patiently, she will not be so loud when dealing with things in line, but
> there is very little tolerance in Ukrainian society. In Israel, it's the opposite, they
> have no patience, but they have tolerance, and that's important.

Any frustration that Zoya feels toward Israel's overly bureaucratic healthcare system, which she

described in the previous section, is overshadowed by the internal peace she feels knowing that

Israelis will embrace her son, especially when she compares their attitudes to those of

Ukrainians.

Andrey draws a similar parallel between Israeli acceptance and Ukrainian rejection of people with special needs. He is a non-Halachic Jew, who came to Israel in 2000, looking for upward mobility. He suffered a mental breakdown after two of his acquaintances died in the Dophinarium Club terrorist attack, and also being stationed in the occupied territories for some of his army service. He was demobilized early and ended up in a mental hospital, where his mother met him to bring him back to Ukraine. Nevertheless, the two of them returned to Israel in 2011 because there were no mental health resources in Ukraine. Despite attributing his health problems to the conflict in Israel, Andrey remains grateful to the country for taking care of him after the incident, which is the kind of support he could not receive in Ukraine,

> I receive help here. In Ukraine I received no help. I receive help here, discounts for medical treatment, for medication. I pay almost nothing for medication here. In Ukraine, the cost was unattainable, even for my parents who make good money. Even for her [his mom] because the medication is really expensive. Here, the government pays for practically all of it. […] Kids [in Ukraine], who beforehand, used to respect me, little kids would run after me, "Andrey, Andrey," now they looked at me and growled at me like I was cursed. I couldn't handle it, and I wanted to come back to Israel because in Israel, all in all, how to say this, if you move this bureaucratic machine and make it work, the person gets help here, gets discounts for medication and everything. Also, guys who serve here, I know more than one person, who also left the army and had [mental health] problems, and the society understands that these aren't jokes, that there are reasons for this. It's not just that I wanted to mess around, made something up.

Andrey's deep gratitude to Israel is especially impressive given his suffering numerous losses in the country. Nevertheless, like Zoya, he sees Israel as taking care of its citizens — an experience he did not have in Ukraine, which in turn, leads to his uncompromising appreciation and acceptance of the state.

In addition to being grateful to Israel themselves, my respondents express distaste for those who complain about the state despite accepting its benefits. They believe that, regardless of

integration outcomes, the immigrants must always appreciate Israel because it actively sought to

better their lives and ease their resettlement. Not only does this belief encourage passivity and

discourages mobilization, but it is also a manifestation of Portes and Rumbaut's prediction that

immigrants who receive active resettlement aid from the government will be more likely to

identify with the host society's mainstream (2001:47).

The benefits that those who immigrate under the Law of Return receive include monthly

payments, free Hebrew lessons, and free vocational training during the first six months (Ben

Shetreet and Woolf 2016: 37-39). After the cessation of the initial monthly payments, the

immigrants also receive free health insurance, income maintenance, and a personal integration

counselor for an additional year (Ben Shetreet and Woolf 2016:4, 37-39, 41). Zhanna expresses

her opinion regarding the integration process,

> The people who come here, and then even if they work at some simple factory,
> but have the repatriate status, they are required to say "thank you." You move
> here, they give you *ulpan*[16], they give you the [absorption] basket, some kind of
> discount for buying an apartment. […] Tell me, do they give you citizenship at the
> airport when you come to America? Do they give you money so you don't starve
> to death during your first year?

Zhanna is critical of any immigrant behavior that is short of passive acceptance, believing that

those who express dissatisfaction are placing unfair demands onto the state. Mark, a 72-year old

Halachic Jew who immigrated in 2011, shares Zhanna's disdain for those he perceives to be

ungrateful,

> It is excellent, excellent in Israel. We like it. Actually, I have contempt for people
> who receive all the benefits here, without working, having done nothing for Israel,
> and begin to say "Oh [Israel] is so and so, not good." Get your stuff and go to Ben
> Gurion[17] and Russia, or wherever you want. I don't understand people like that.

---

[16] Special Hebrew classes for new immigrants

[17] The name of the airport in Israel (named after Israel's first prime minister)

> Of course, I met very many people like that over the years. They begin to speak badly of Israel. I tell them, "What are you talking about? You get benefits here. What isn't enough?" [They respond] "Well, those over there they get more." I tell them "listen, they built this country brick by brick. And who are you? They brought you here for free, gave you benefits at the airport." They gave us everything, I was surprised, and passports and everything.

Mark expresses frustration at immigrants who compare their socioeconomic standing to that of Israelis, for he believes that to be a false comparison group. Instead, he urges immigrants to compare their superior well-being to those residing in their countries of origin, and regards the lower status of the immigrants to be fair and inevitable.

The passivity of my respondents is, in part, a manifestation of their status as partially desired immigrants, who were actively sought out and, as I detailed, also materially aided by the state. Thus, they identify with the mainstream, and do not wish to draw attention to their not being part of the dominant population by mobilizing and exemplifying their differences. Instead, the immigrants choose to minimize their differences and downplay their hardships to appear similar to Israel's general population.

In short, my respondents are opting for the acquiescent integration path for the following reasons: (i) their perception of what they are entitled to in a democratic government, (ii) their worries of being subject to exclusionary attitudes from other Russian-speakers and Israel's general population if they do not espouse acquiescence, (iii) their engagement in relative comparison, which leads to a deep sense of gratitude to Israel, (iv) their statuses as immigrants of privilege that make them feel an ideological attachment to Israel and that total classical assimilation is a possibility. In the following chapter, I explore the ways in which the immigrants rationalize their continued subscription to the acquiescent integration strategy, despite their ongoing marginalization in Israel.

Chapter 3: Coping Mechanisms on the Ground

In chapter 2, I outlined the ways in which the political attitudes of my respondents match Gerstle's conceptualization of acquiescent immigrants, and which of their past and present experiences render their propensity to hold such beliefs. In this chapter, I focus more deeply on the political non-mobilization of my respondents even in the face of blatant degradation and discrimination on the part of the Israelis. This is peculiar because Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and Gerstle (2013) argue that immigrants are especially likely to engage in reactive mobilization if they experience ongoing prejudice from the host society. I conceptualize how FSU immigrants continue believing in the ability of acquiescent integration strategies to lead to their classic assimilation, even when their experiences point to the contrary. They do so by (i) ignoring or re-interpreting discriminatory incidents as rare and irrelevant to their lives in Israel, and (ii) distancing themselves from members of their own community, and therefore, demonstrating that the negative stereotypes apply to other Russian-speakers, but not themselves.

Individuals are to Blame

When confronted with identity-based derisions, the vast majority of my respondents attribute them to anomalous occurrences that do not reflect their typical experiences in Israel. Their reluctance to identify the systemic stigmatization of their community can be explained by the minimization bias — a psychological coping mechanism that pushes people not to recognize objective discrimination (Kaiser and Major 2006:804). The reason for the bias that most closely applies to my respondents is that acknowledging outside prejudice against oneself forces people to forsake the comfort of personal agency and a perception of the social world as meritocratic and predictable (ibid). It is easier for my respondents to ignore discrimination than it is to

acknowledge that their acquiescent integration strategy, at least in the first generation, does not

appear to be resulting in their full incorporation in Israel. My respondents portray anti-"Russian"

sentiments as individualistic — resulting from inappropriate behaviors of either the perpetrators

or the targeted individuals — that warrant individual, rather than collective responses.

The perpetrators

When I asked my respondents if they ever felt discriminated against, most claimed to

have never had such an experience, but upon a little further probing, many had a story to share.

Marina, a Halachic Jew, who immigrated with her family at eleven years old in 1975 showcases

this tendency,

> Sasha: Have you ever felt discriminated against because you came from the
> former Soviet Union?
> Marina: No, no, no.
> Sasha: Never?
> Marina: No.
> Sasha: Have you ever seen someone being discriminated against for another
> reason?
> Marina: Well, you know, it depends on how you look at it, they can often say
> "*Roosia*[18]*,* Russian, Russian, go back to your Russia". In Russia, I also heard
> "Jew, go to Israel."
> Sasha: Is there a specific story that you maybe remember?
> Marina: Specific… One time I stood in line, when someone cuts you, and you say
> "Why did you cut me?" and he started, "and why don't you just go back to
> Russia!" I just don't accept it. You know, its people who are themselves, maybe
> they feel discriminated against themselves, so they can say stuff like that.

Marina argues that when people target her, they express their individual problems, rather than

manifest accepted behaviors toward the Russian-speakers in Israel. She also deflects

discrimination by engaging in relative comparison, which I discussed at length in the previous

chapter. The prejudice she suffers in Israel for being "Russian" is similar to, or less severe than,

---

[18] Hebrew pronunciation of "Russia"

the prejudice she experienced in the Soviet Union for being Jewish. Either she does not view her

experiencing occasional degradations as unusual or outrageous enough to render mobilization, or

she is so hurt by being subject to negative attitudes in the Jewish state, when she grew up being

targeted in the Soviet Union *for* being Jewish, that she would rather pretend that Israelis hold no

negative attitudes toward her.

Nadezhda, a Halachic Jew, who immigrated in 1998, has a similar attitude to prejudice,

> Sasha: Was there ever a situation when someone treated you badly because you are a repatriate or because you are a Russian-speaker?
> Nadezhda: Look, I had one such incident, one in eighteen years of living in this country. I don't remember, I really don't remember. There was an incident, when, oh not one, maybe two. There was an incident when I was offered a job. [The prospective employer] said "I will teach you Hebrew and you will work for me [for the lessons]." You understand? But, it has nothing to do with me being Russian, a Russian-speaker. It's because that person was a jerk.

Nadezhda believes that the employer wanted to cheat her not because of their respective

identities, but because of one person's unfavorable personality. Likewise, Alyona claims that

prejudice is minimal and of little significance,

> I only ever felt that way at one job, one of the first ones. I worked at a hotel. I was cleaning the suite of the woman's son. It was her business. And, of course, I spoke minimal Hebrew and it was more through gestures, through miming, and all that. And a couple times she yelled at me because I didn't understand something that she said. She said, like, something like me being stupid, something along those lines, like why do I still not speak Hebrew, that I've been in the country for three months already. She said, "I have Filipinos working for me at home, and in two months they already understand everything." She said very emotionally, "Do you not know this is a cup? This is a cup!" And like that, very emotionally, and for me, I am a person who doesn't like emotions, for me, I was in shock. But, that's her, that's just her temperament, it's not that she is against repatriates. No, maybe she just wanted another worker, who would be ideal for her. And I didn't understand something, and she would have to repeat a couple times, and she had no patience. We went our separate ways.

Alyona defends the perpetrator, claiming that her employer's anger was a result of their

incompatibility rather than a manifestation of antipathy embedded in Israeli society.

In short, my respondents spare their feelings by attributing prejudice to people's individual shortcomings that they can acknowledge and solve on a case-by-case basis, instead of having to live with the constant feeling of being unwelcome in Israel.

The targeted

Some respondents think that being treated unfairly because of their non-Israeli or non-Jewish identities is so unlikely that people who claim to be victims of discrimination are really perpetrators themselves. Darya, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 2003, summarizes this belief most eloquently,

> I am of the impression that when a person experiences such [negative] attitudes toward himself, we hear it from him that "oh, he said something to me." I'm under the impression that such things would not be said to you without cause, meaning that you made the person angry, so he said something like that to you. Maybe you behaved incorrectly, maybe you started it. You know, personally, I've never heard [negative things from the Israelis], actually the opposite.

Darya does not believe that people experience identity-based attacks without cause, and are therefore, to blame when they do occur. Similarly, Anastasia, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 1993, attributes any negative attitudes toward immigrant children from Israeli children, to the inappropriate integration strategies of immigrant parents,

> I read on various Russian forums, "We only go to Russian plays, Russian language [classes]," and then, "oh my child has absolutely no friends." Well, of course he has no friends. Your child can't say two words in Hebrew. Of course the children, especially children they are so harsh, they shun. I understand that you wanted to preserve the language, but you should also think about the children, so that … Yeah, ok, he knows Russian now, but not a single child in class is friends with him. Nobody wants to come to his house because they are Jewish, but it isn't because they are Jewish, but because he doesn't know the language. He doesn't know what the kids are talking about. They watch Israeli shows, he doesn't know any Israeli [shows]…

Here again, Anastasia espouses the classic assimilation theory that, in order to be upwardly

mobile, the immigrants must lose or at least privatize their ethnic identities. She expresses the

need for immigrants to accept Israeli culture unquestionably or suffer self-induced exclusion.

By attributing any ongoing prejudice or discrimination either to the targeted individuals

or to personal shortcomings of individual perpetrators, my respondents are able to keep the belief

in the imminence of their full assimilation alive.

Negative Cases

A couple of my respondents believe that some of the discomforts they experienced in

Israel are related to processes embedded within Israel's society as a whole, rather than as a result

of individual character flaws. Nevertheless, they do not want to identify as "discriminated

against," and believe that the best course of action is to accept those issues as another element of

life's challenges, instead of engaging with Israeli institutions.

Anton, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 2003, had an interpretive issue with my use of

"unfair,"

> Anton: I came to the conclusion that I make three times less than my Israeli boss,
> who has no higher education, no qualifications and does nothing. The only
> difference between us is that he was born in the country. At one point, I went up to
> him and said that I felt like it was time to raise my salary because I do most of the
> work. He told me that he had no money, and if I didn't like something, I could
> leave. In that moment, I turned around and quit. I have no intention of talking,
> pitying, or being afraid of somebody, or accepting what I consider unjust.
> Sasha: Have you ever had other situations when people treated you unfairly
> because you weren't born in Israel?
> Anton: You can't call it unfair treatment. […] If it is widely accepted in the
> society, then such is the societal code. Right? If it is widely accepted in the
> society, then it is the societal code. If, for example, the whole society thinks that
> red-heads don't have souls, then you can't say that's unfair. From the point of
> view of the society it is fair. Same thing, if the society thinks that a person who
> was born outside of Israel is one rung below the person who was born in Israel,

> then in principle, it is illegal. You can say that it is illegal. If you look at the declaration of human rights, it's not nice, it's not ethical, but from the point of view of the society, yeah it's ethical.

Anton takes the notion of cultural relativism to an extreme, believing that structural and societal discrimination is not unfair if an entire people believes in its appropriateness. His ostensible argument is that the more deeply embedded and widespread the discrimination, the more ethical it is, and believes that outsiders must accept, rather than contest, all elements of the dominant culture, including unpleasant attitudes toward themselves. Zoya encountered a different systemic hurdle. Her paternal grandmother was Jewish, but the officials at the Jewish Agency doubted the authenticity of her papers. Zoya found this to be highly offensive, but similar to Anton, chose not to argue about being in the right,

> It was hard for us to gather the documents. My grandmother was 100% Jewish, I didn't lie to anyone. I understand that these verifications have to happen. My grandmother's friends, my father's relatives, when we were gathering the required papers, told me awful things. They said that, at the place where Jews were executed, the ground moved for three days, because there were people who were buried alive. I have relatives in that mass grave. I shouldn't have to prove anything to anyone. That really bothers me, and I will not be proving anything to anyone ever. If they don't believe she was Jewish, fine she wasn't Jewish.

Despite being obviously upset by being treated in a degrading manner, Zoya does not want to argue with Jewish Agency's representatives, not to mention mobilizing with other FSU immigrants to contest the Israeli stereotype that they forge their papers in an effort to immigrate.

Both Zoya and Anton seem to view contestation as futile at the very least, and degrading at worst. Their attitude fits neither the minimization bias, nor the communal distancing approaches that my other respondents undertake when dealing with Israeli prejudices, but their attitude, too, stresses individual acquiescence, rather than group-wide mobilization, as the appropriate response. Most likely, this is another manifestation of their socialization in the FSU,

discussed in the previous chapters. They have normalized identity-based discrimination in the public sphere, and either do not view it as an unusually outrageous phenomenon that warrants mobilization, and/or believe that it is futile to engage with governmental and non-governmental institutions, as was largely the case in the Soviet Union.

Proof of Success

My respondents who immigrated in the 1990s, acknowledge experiencing prejudice immediately upon arrival, but claim that anti-FSU discrimination is a phenomenon of the past that no longer exists in any significant way. Not only do the present-day experiences of my respondents paint a more complicated picture, but what is even more intriguing is that those respondents attribute the waning of discrimination to their acquiescence. By doing so, they are arguing for its ongoing significance as a way to completely eradicate any remaining prejudice. Yet, the diminished discrimination could have just as easily, if not more likely, come about as a result of Israelis coming to terms with the presence of Russian-speakers and their unique cultural needs and identities, as the revised assimilation theory would suggest.

If, indeed, Israelis have become more tolerant of FSU cultural identities, my respondents could seize the opportunity to fight against the remaining societal prejudices and structural barriers — most notably the lack of civil marriage alternatives and the overly complicated conversion processes. Yet, the immigrants are missing this potential political opportunity by continuing to be acquiescent.

In retelling her immigration story, Natalia, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 1990 recalls the advice of her then soon to be fiancé,

He told me immediately, "say positive things or say nothing about Israel. I really like it here. I feel good here. In Ukraine, it was very difficult for me, and I like it here a lot, so we love Israel." […] For us it was kind of easy to integrate into the society and so we realized — those who accept Israel, those are accepted by Israel as well. Those who do not accept Israel, they have no business here, meaning that with a downtrodden mood, that everything is bad and nothing will ever be good, you have no business here.

Both her partner and she made a conscious decision to accept passively all that Israel offers, ignore the negativity, and engage in relative comparison to be satisfied with what they are given. Furthermore, they attribute their successful integration to precisely such an attitude. Later in the interview, Natalia acknowledged to have experienced discrimination in the past, and to still experience it from subsets of the Israeli population,

There are people who understand that we were born in a society where it was dangerous to show that you are drawn to your traditions, your religion, your nationality, but it was not our fault. There are people who understand this and there are people who don't understand, and think that we are *goyim*[19], don't think that we are in any way related to Israel, but that's ok. […] I support Israel, so that Israel will exist and thrive, because I believe that this is the only state that actually provides Jews with safety. […] I feel better here than I felt over there, more safe, more… Even though there were some unpleasant moments when we first got here, I put that aside, I forgot about that.

The lesser amounts of negativity that Natalia experiences today, as compared to the 1990s, is encouraging her to continue accepting and loving Israel uncritically. She acknowledges past discrimination only to contrast past prejudice to its comparative, contemporary insignificance, and by doing so, lauds acquiescent integration. Svetlana expresses the same sentiment in an even more straightforward way,

Today, they [the Israelis] talk less. Today, they can say [negative things] only when they completely run out of things to say. They can say "Ok, go, return to your Russia." Again, today I can laugh at it. […] Today, everything is much smoother because the Russians have shown themselves and proven themselves. Israelis say that "we learned a lot from you." And back then, you know, it was a

---

[19] Non-Jews

> really big *aliyah*[20] and people were receiving a lot of benefits, and it turned out that, the native population saw that these [immigrants] just arrived here, and already are riding around in new cars, buying apartments. [They thought] "and we served in the army here, and saved money our whole lives, and can't afford all that." Maybe because of this they had some, some anger. Today, everything is more even.

Even though Svetlana acknowledges that Israelis have learned from the Russian-speakers, she does so to showcase that the immigrants have "proven" themselves in Israel, which is not the same as regarding it as a natural outcome of two populations interacting. She also internalized the Israeli narrative as to why they initially espoused negative attitudes toward the Russian-speakers, which once again, demonstrates Svetlana's passive acceptance of all of Israel's ways. She believes that this strategy already granted FSU immigrants more acceptance in Israel, and will eventually result in their full acceptance. Thus, she is unlikely to regard reactive mobilization as a necessity.

Structural Barriers

The attitudes of non-Jews toward structural barriers to their full integration is another way in which my respondents manifest the minimization bias. As I outlined in chapter 1, non-Jews are unable to marry in Israel unless they convert to Orthodox Judaism, but perhaps even more relevant to their quotidian experiences is the importance with which lay Israelis regard official Jewish status. 56% of Jewish Israelis believe that non-Jewish immigrants should be encouraged to convert, and 69% oppose marrying a non-Jew from the FSU (Arian et al. 2009:97-98). These statistics demonstrate the social marginalization that non-Jews experience in Israel. Despite this evidence, and similar to their attitudes regarding other integration difficulties, my respondents believe that proving their allegiance to Israel's Jewish character and religion will

---

[20] Hebrew word for "ascent" used to refer to Jewish repatriation to Israel.

result in their full acceptance. Again, this is in contrast to Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) and Gerstle's (2013) notion that immigrants who experience structural barriers to full integration are likely to develop reactive ethnicities.

Reluctance to convert

Conversion to Orthodox Judaism — the only religious movement a Gentile can convert to in order to be considered a Jew in Israel — is an arduous process. It takes about a year during which the prospective convert commits to five hundred hours of study in a conversion class and leads the life of an Orthodox Jew (ITIM). This includes dressing modestly, regularly praying at the synagogue (daily for men, weekly for women), keeping kosher, and keeping Shabbat by, among other things, refraining from using electricity, driving, or using writing utensils each Saturday. The prospective converts are guided through the process by a "host" family, who submit recommendations regarding the authenticity of the person's willingness to lead a Jewish life to a rabbinical court at the year's end (ibid). Even after an Orthodox conversion, however, occasional stories surface of Israel's religious establishment doubting the Jewishness of the converts. One such story is that of Sarit Azoulay, who was born in Israel to a convert. When Azoulay went to the rabbinate to prove her Jewishness in order to have a religious wedding ceremony, the rabbis called her mother, who could not recall that week's Torah portion, which led them to believe that Azoulay's mother did not go through an authentic conversion and did not lead a Jewish lifestyle, which in turn, rendered her conversion null and her daughter a Gentile (Ettinger 2015).

Given such a difficult and uncertain conversion process, it is not surprising that my respondents do not want to go through it. Its sheer difficulty makes conversion a rare example in

which my respondents refuse to meet assimilationist demands of the Israeli society and state.

Nevertheless, akin to their relationship to other forms of disadvantage, they do not regard this

structural barrier as a cause for political mobilization, but instead engage in cognitive

reinterpretations to cope with their predicament and not to feel discriminated against.

Most of my respondents who are not Jews according to *the Halacha*, consider themselves

Jewish, either as a result of engaging with Jewish institutions after the collapse of the Soviet

Union or developing patriotic feelings toward Israel after immigration. They cope with Israel's

non-acceptance of their Judaism by claiming that they do not need external validations. Andrey

summarizes this sentiment,

> I used to think about going through g*iur,*[21] but I changed my mind because I
> understood that it will not influence me in any way. It will not change my
> mentality. I am what I am, and it will not change anything it any special way. I am
> a formed individual. Yes, I feel a connection to the Jewish people. I just look
> inside of me, into my head, into my soul, into my heart, and I see that those
> people, I have a lot in common with those people.

Andrey claims that conversion will not make him any more Jewish than he already feels by

virtue of identifying with the Jewish Israeli collective. Karina who immigrated in 2012 and,

among my respondents, is one of the people who grew up most consistently engaged with Jewish

institutions, developed a similar coping strategy.

She was born during Perestroika, so her Jewish father regularly took her to synagogue

and Jewish cultural centers, which resulted in her identifying as Jewish her entire life. Yet,

Karina claims not to be upset by Israel's non-acceptance of her Jewishness, and despite

acknowledging her segregation in Israel, asserts its irrelevance to her emotional and spiritual

well-being,

---

[21]conversion

> Look, you can go through Reform[22] *giur*, that one is more humane and adapted to modern realities. But anyway, marriage is in the hands of the Orthodox. I would still not be able to marry by the Jewish canon. And what's the point? I am not restrained in civil rights in any way, so at this point, I don't see a reason [to convert]. […] Maybe it doesn't bother me because I didn't grow up here. I have friends here, but still not so many, and I wouldn't want a loud, cheerful wedding with 600 people. It's just that for me, that's unacceptable. And *a chuppah[23]*, in principle, we could always stage the ceremony, there are always options.

Karina attaches strong meaning to Jewish practices, but is uncomfortable with what she considers to be archaic lifestyles of Orthodox Jews. Her reluctance to "waste" a full year to engage in an inauthentic formality is understandable, but her seemingly calm acceptance of being marginalized by a people she identifies with is peculiar, and yet another example of my respondents' subscription to acquiescent integration despite evidence of its failures to bring about their complete acceptance.

Non-Jewish mothers have similarly acquiescent responses to recognizing that their children will likely suffer marginalization due to their lack of official Jewish status. In response to the anticipated marginalization of their children, they demonstrate even stronger assimilationist behaviors and attempt to bring Jewish holidays into their homes. Elizaveta explains her desire to raise a child who will fit in, "I have a small child at home. I understand that he is growing up in this country. He must know all these traditions, he shouldn't be a white crow.[24] I lit those [Hannukah] candles with him." Alyona expresses a similar rationale behind

---

[22] The Reform movement of Judaism places less emphasis on strict adherence to every ritual practice and more emphasis onto Jewish ethics and values. Reform conversions are less ritualistically stringent, but they are not recognized as legitimate by Israel.

[23] A canopy under which Jewish marriages occur

[24] A Russian expression meaning to stand out, since crows are usually black.

having civil *Bat Mitzvahs*[25] for her daughters, "We had a *Bat Mitzvah* for the older and the younger daughter because we felt that they would be asked and that they would stand out from the other children. [The children would ask] "And did you have a *Bat Mitzvah*?" [My daughters would say]"Ah, it's not important to us." Well, this is not right. We live in this country and it is important."

Ludmila, who has only one Jewish grandfather, too, believes in the importance of bringing Jewishness into her home for the sake of her child, who is a baby now, "Well yeah, I think we'd have to [bring some Jewish traditions into the home], so that he would not be an outcast, not in kindergarten not in school. It's not that we would keep traditions so much, but we will tell him. If he would like to go to synagogue, we would take him there." "Outcast" is a particularly strong term to describe the anticipated fate of a non-Jewish child, which clearly demonstrates the importance of Jewish ethnicity and religion in everyday life in Israel. Nevertheless, my non-Jewish respondents react to the prejudice by attempting to ensure that their children will not be conspicuously non-Jewish, so as not to be negatively affected by these notions. They do not fight the prejudice itself or make demands of the state to be more accommodating of the non-Jews within it.

Distancing from the Stereotyped community

Jimenez's (2010) work on group dynamics within the later-generation Mexican American community in the US provides a useful tool by which to analyze intra-group relations of the Russian-speakers in Israel. Unity and division are among many reactions that Mexican Americans have in response to ongoing Mexican immigration to the US. In the former, Mexican

---

[25] A Jewish coming of age ceremony for girls

Americans identify with new immigrants and seek to ease their integration paths in organized

and lay ways, whereas in the latter, Mexican Americans distance themselves from the new

immigrants, so as not to belong to a community that suffers discrimination (Jimenez 2010:241).

Jimenez argues that those occupying the lower-middle class are especially prone to divisive

behaviors because their socioeconomic status is only marginally above that of the new arrivals,

and so they worry that associating with new immigrants would result in rapid status degradation

(Jimenez 2010:243). Those who are upper-middle class are unlikely to experience this because

they are more secure in their socioeconomic statuses (ibid).

The precarious social statuses of my respondents likely lead many to behave in ways akin

to lower-middle class Mexican Americans. The fear of social status degradation leads to their

distancing from the Russian-speaking community. This sentiment is best summarized by Lara, a

Halachic Jew, who was a problem child in Russia, and whose parents encouraged her

immigration to Israel on the Na'ale program in 2005, when she was fifteen years old. She could

not find the language to express the xenophobia she experienced in Israel, but she expressed the

sentiment,

> I don't like being Russian. I changed my name because I don't want to be
> Russian, I changed my last name because of it, because I don't want to be
> Russian. […] I had experience with, how do you call it? Not antisemitism, but
> racism? Would you call it racism? Because I'm Russian and I didn't like that, so I
> decided that, maybe, it's enough. I'll leave Russian as "ok, I know one more
> language." […] I stopped wanting to be Russian when I lived in Bat Yam and saw
> all those Russians who, even though I was one of them actually, don't want to
> learn Hebrew, who think that they are in their own little world, you know. Bat
> Yam is actually a Russian city. They live in their own little world. I took a step
> back, looked at all of that and thought "Lord, why the fuck? I am in Israel. I no
> longer live in Russia, I should do something with myself."

Lara attributes her experience with prejudice to her own inappropriate behaviors and those of the larger Russian-speaking community. Contrary to Portes and Rumbaut's predictions, Lara's experience with identity-based stigmatization pushed her in the acquiescent, rather than the reactive, direction. She seeks to fight prejudice by proving that she does not fit the Russian-speaking stereotype, rather than fighting the stereotype itself.

Anastasia, who immigrated when she was thirteen on a Chabad program in 1993, adopted a similar strategy to combat prejudice. Even though she does not identify as religious and is frustrated by the influence of the Orthodox establishment on everyday life in Israel, she chose to marry her Israeli partner through the rabbinate in order to prove to the surrounding society that she is Israeli like the others. She worried that if she were to marry abroad, as a Jew from Ukraine, Israelis would begin to question her Jewishness,

> They [fiancé's family] were sure that he ordered me from Ukraine, even though we met at work. They said that straight to my face. I found it amusing. They were completely shocked that I had a rabbi, that I had a *chuppah*. They were in complete shock because before the *chuppah* and the rabbi, they were sure that he ordered me from Ukraine. […] When you do everything the same way as the other people, you are accepted. Okay, I got married, I had a *chuppah*, I have a *ketubah*.[26] I had a wedding like everyone else's, 300 guests, and then you are accepted. That's it. It doesn't matter what kind of accent I have, that I make grammar mistakes when I write, that's it, nobody is interested in that anymore. I'm like a part of this society. […] I have a friend and I can see that people [say] "Ah, she got married in Cyprus. Does she have problems?" They start asking immediately, if its a woman, "What, is she not a Jew?"

Once again, Anastasia's behavior demonstrates a peculiar response to being negatively stereotyped. Instead of feeling anger toward the stereotype and Israelis for espousing it, she chose to appease Israeli fears of gentile "Russians" overtaking the country by engaging in Jewish Israeli rituals that she does not necessarily find meaning in. Furthermore, her quote suggests that

---

[26] Jewish prenuptial agreement

non-Jews, who do not have the option of having an Orthodox wedding, will never experience full

acceptance in Israel.

Svetlana recalls going through a similar cognitive path of ensuring that negative

stereotypes do not apply to her, instead of attempting to change the nature of the stereotypes

toward the group as a whole,

> In the 90s it was a nightmare. They gave us different labels. I don't even want to
> talk about it. It was very difficult for me. At first, I didn't know Hebrew and
> couldn't answer. Then, I started speaking [Hebrew] and I tried to answer
> somehow. Then, I knew Hebrew really well and I would answer really harshly.
> And then, I met a woman and she told me, "I don't consider myself one of those
> [prostitutes], so what if they talk. I don't consider myself one of them." […] They
> would give us labels that all "Russian" girls are prostitutes, etc, etc. She said, "I
> don't consider myself one of the prostitutes. Why should I?" And today, I can
> laugh about it.

Essentially, Svetlana made a conscious choice to ignore the name-calling by deciding that the

slurs did not apply to her, but did not fight the notion that they might apply to other Russian-

speakers.

The three quotes showcase a sentiment that is common to many of my respondents.

Paradoxically, Israeli stigmatization of their communities pushes them further in the acquiescent

direction, as they seek to assimilate into the mainstream by distancing themselves from other

Russian-speakers.

Thus, even in the face of ongoing structural and symbolic barriers to their full integration,

my respondents continue believing in acquiescence as a desirable integration strategy that will

eventually result in their full acceptance. They utilize psychological coping mechanisms and

sociological distancing from the stigmatized FSU community in order to preserve the sanctity of

their philosophy. They claim that acquiescence works, and that any ongoing prejudices and

structural barriers are either already, or soon to be, waning relics of the past. They blame

individual failures for either perpetuating or being subject to discrimination, and claim that such

instances are rare, non-systemic, and largely irrelevant to their well-being.

While it is obviously troubling that my respondents feel the need to accept stigmatization

and discrimination in an arguably democratic country in which they are citizens, what is even

more troubling is their placing those same demands onto Israel's Arab minority — the topic of

my next chapter — whose predicament is a lot more unfortunate than that of the FSU

immigrants. My respondents contrast their compliance with Israeli norms and expectations to

Arab non-compliance as another overt manifestation of immigrant subscription to Israel's

narrative, and thus, their rightful place within the Israeli mainstream.

Chapter 4: Attitudes Toward the Arab Minority

As I discussed in previous chapters, my respondents view immigrant integration as a one-directional process. They believe that it is the responsibility of national minorities to accept the narrative and general attitudes of the host society's dominant population, expect the state to make no accommodations for people's marginal identities, and even believe that making such demands constitutes violence. Not only do they place such assimilationist demands onto themselves and criticize members of their own community when they steer off the acquiescent path, but they also place those same demands onto Israel's non-immigrant, predominately Arab minority. They do not regard equating the predicament of the Russian-speakers, whose immigration Israel encouraged, and that of Arab Israelis,[27] who lived in the lands of modern-day Israel before the arrival of many of the modern Israelis, as false equivalencies. Their failure to make this distinction leads to their inability to understand why the Arab minority cannot simply assimilate, as the Russian-speakers are attempting to do, which in turn leads to their regarding Israeli Arabs as hostile and espousing extreme nativism toward them. Furthermore, the Russian-speakers utilize these hawkish attitudes toward Palestinians, both in and outside of the 1948 armistice line,[28] as yet another tactic in their overarching acquiescent integration strategy. By showing Israelis that the Russian-speakers are, uncompromisingly, on Israel's side of the conflict, the immigrants hope to become fully accepted within Israel as equals.

---

[27] I will use "Arab Israelis" and "Palestinian citizens of Israel" interchangeably to refer to Arab Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

[28] The 1948 armistice line separates Israel's de-facto borders from the occupied territories.

Loyalty to the Jewish State

My respondents assert that they differentiate between Jewish ethnic/religious and Israeli national identities, and that they regard the latter with greater importance. They do not equate Israeli nationality with Jewish ethnicity, but they do acknowledge Jewish culture as a core characteristic of the Israeli state, and expect adherence to that core in order for someone to be truly Israeli, albeit they do not demand also pursuing Jewish practices per se. They apply this distinction to both non-Jewish immigrants and Arabs, and by doing so, are placing equally assimilationist demands onto the two groups.

As I attempted to discern the subtleties of who should and should not be considered Jewish and whether internal self-identification is enough to make a Jew, as some non-Jewish immigrants asserted, many of my respondents claimed not to care about people's ethnic identities. Nadezhda interrupted my queries about official Jewish statuses,

> Nadezhda […]I think that, probably, all in all, blood makes a Jew, but feelings make an Israeli because I know people, who have very distant blood-relations to the country, but with that, are patriots no less than me.
> Sasha: But would you consider those people Jewish?
> Nadezhda: I'm not going to consider or not consider. For me it's nothing.
> Sasha: Is it more important that they are Israeli and patriotic?
> Nadezhda: More important that, yes, I think, a lot more.

For Nadezhda, loyalty to Israel trumps people's individual Jewish identities, and yet, the basis of the Israeli nation-state still rests on Zionism and its Jewish symbolism, so even non-Jews must be familiar with Jewish culture and subscribe to the Zionist narrative to be considered a part of the Israeli nation-state by my respondents. Like Nadezhda, Leonid is more concerned with people feeling a connection to the Israeli state than with their personal Jewish characteristics,

> Sasha: In your opinion, what makes a person Jewish?

> Leonid: […] Today, I understand the word "Israeli" more than the word
> "Jew." […]You need to be an Israeli, not [a Jew]. Love your country more than,
> let's say, the country from which you came. Having lived in Israel for many years,
> don't fill your head with what is going on in Russia every day. And don't be more
> concerned with Putin's or Ukrainian politics, that's not right either.

Leonid believes that a national Israeli identity is compatible with non-Jewish ethnicity or religion.

The Army

Many of my respondents agree that loyalty to Israel makes an Israeli, and claim that serving in the army is its ultimate measure. Jewish, Druze, and Circassian[29] Israelis are legally obligated to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) — three years for men and almost two years for women — whereas Israeli Arab and Bedouin minorities can volunteer, but are not required to join, since serving could pit them against members of their own families and communities in the occupied Palestinian territories (Goldman 2017).

Anton immigrated in 2003 out of purely Zionist and Jewish convictions. He chose to volunteer in the army on ideological grounds, and sent around fifty letters petitioning its representatives to allow him to become a combat soldier despite his older age. When I asked whether the rising numbers of non-Jews in Israel troubles him, he responded

> How can it bother me? Well look, I served in the army. Here in the army, three
> Arabs served with me, they were also volunteers. And the guys, who were not
> Jews, also served in the army and I must say that, in principle, during military
> action you get to know a person better. Not only are they not less than, but the
> majority are great people, who are much better than those colleagues.[30] So, to
> treat a person [badly] just because the circumstances are what they are, or because
> some groups of people don't think that they deserve to be here, is nonsense.

---

[29] Two ethnic minority groups in Israel

[30] Unclear which colleagues he is referring to

Anton does not oppose the presence of non-Jews in Israel, but immediately uses serving in the army — the overt purpose of which is to secure Israel as a Jewish state — as a performative symbol of adherence to the Israeli state that demonstrates the potential of non-Jews to be just as Israeli as Jews. Leonid follows a similar logic when expressing the minimal significance he attributes to Jewish ethnicity, "I don't divide too much [between Jews and non-Jews]. I am more concerned if he is Israeli or not Israeli. I only divide people based on if he lives in this country and loves this country and is ready to give up everything for it, send the kids to the army or go by himself, for me, that's an Israeli." Both Anton and Leonid use service in the IDF as a metric by which to measure one's Israeli national identity, and underestimate the emotional turmoil and pushback from the Arab community that are likely to accompany Arab Israelis, who choose to serve in the army of a state that systematically denies their historical narrative.[31] Andrey, too, believes that a person wishing to identify as Israeli must, first, serve in the army. He says, "You need to serve in the army here, no matter what, no matter how difficult it can be, of course. And take into account that I don't have the most severe case. There are people who are having a much harder time, who are in combat units, who saw terrible things. I believe that you need to serve in the army in Israel to consider yourself Israeli…" Andrey's ongoing usage of army service as an indicator of Israeli identity is particularly impressive given that his own experience in the army resulted in an emotional breakdown that required hospitalization.

---

[31] The 2011 Nakba Bill is a particularly salient example. The bill withdrew state funding from institutions that mark Nakba Day, commemorating Palestinians killed and displaced during the war of 1948, rather than Israeli Independence Day.

In sum, unlike most of Israel's political establishment, which I discussed in the introduction, my respondents do not concern themselves with the ratio of ethnic Jews to non-Jews in Israel. Nevertheless, such a relaxed approach toward demographics does not stem from their disregard for Israel as a Jewish state. They do not see a contradiction between Israel being a state with a historical narrative and symbols that reflect Jewish values and perspectives, and at the same time the presences of non-Jews, so long as they serve as ardent supporters and carriers of those symbols and narratives.

No Loyalty, No Jewish Ethnicity, No Citizenship

In chapter 2, I began discussing my respondents' negative attitudes toward non-Jews who demand that Israel accommodate their non-Jewish identities instead of adjusting their own ways to fit the dominant ethos of the state. They exhibit the same attitudes toward non-immigrant minorities, whose ancestors lived in historic Palestine prior to Israel's establishment. While their criticism of ungrateful immigrants amounts to little more than wishing that those complaining immigrants leave Israel, my respondents propose much harsher measures against non-acquiescent, non-immigrant minorities. Research on threat perception demonstrates that people regard groups whom they associate with physical, not just symbolic, violence as more threatening and deserving of exclusion (Canetti-Nissim et al. 2008:99). My respondents associate the Arab minority with the physical threat of terrorism, and so behave in nativist ways toward them.

Nativism is best explained as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., "un-American") connections" (Higham 1965:4). A group that is subject to a nativist backlash is seen as unassimilable and disloyal, which therefore, should be repressed in

order to prevent its usurpation of dominant and desirable ways of life (ibid). My respondents do not necessarily regard Arab Israelis as incapable of assimilation, but are critical of what they believe to be their choosing not to assimilate.

They believe that entire Palestinian communities wish to do physical harm to Israelis, and regard only individual Arabs, with whom they have had positive interactions as exceptions to this general rule. As a result, they are proponents of collective punishment as a measure against terrorism. Darya espouses this hawkish attitude, "Regarding evictions of the terrorist's family,[32] of course that is very good, but in my opinion that is not enough. They evicted a terrorist, the whole village celebrates. They imprisoned our boy,[33] the whole village celebrates. […] I think that you shouldn't just evict the terrorist's family, but level the whole village. If you do this one time, maybe they will think the next time." Darya believes that terrorism is nurtured in entire Arab villages, and advocates draconian measures to ensure its prevention.

Elizaveta shares a virtually identical sentiment regarding appropriate tactics for preventing terrorism, "My opinion is that maybe a way to act, to somehow slow this [terrorist] process, is to deport all the [terrorist's] relatives from the country immediately. Because, basically, he went, he killed, he is deemed a hero. They celebrated his funeral grandly, and that's it, everything is wonderful. And the next young boy who is growing up, watching how heroic he is, goes and does the same thing." Both Darya and Elizaveta are textbook examples of nativists, who advocate for severe repression of groups, whom they regard as disloyal and threatening.

---

[32] Darya is referring to Israel's revoking permanent residency of East Jerusalem terrorist's family, who committed the truck ramming attack on January 8, 2017 that killed four Israelis (Abebe 2017).

[33] Darya is referring to the soldier, Elor Azaria, who was sentenced to 18 months after killing a wounded knife-wielder when he no longer posed danger (Cohen 2017).

Their adherence to a stereotype that most Arabs are predisposed toward physical violence against

Israel pushes them to be proponents of these severe group-wide measures.

While Elizaveta and Darya advocate for deportation as a punitive and preventative

solution to terrorism, Anton takes this notion one step further and believes that a loyalty-based

population transfer could be a solution to the conflict as a whole,

> Another solution could be, no matter how harsh it sounds, is a transfer. Well, for
> example, a transfer, once again, not based on national characteristics, but on
> characteristics of loyalty to the state. Meaning that people, who, yes, agree to
> become citizens of the state and accept all the laws, yeah, they remain a part of
> this territory, and all the rest, maybe even by paying them, it's possible to move
> them anywhere else. That's also possible. There is not such a huge number of
> Arabs in the [occupied] territories who are not loyal. A big part of them, a big part
> is mostly interested in the most simple human things: a house and a job.

Again, these are nativist views. Even though he claims that most Arabs wish no harm to Israel

and are therefore deserving of a livelihood in the state, he also believes in subjecting only the

Arab community to such preemptive loyalty tests, which is evidence of his belief in the

threatening nature of the Arab community as a whole.

Possible Peace

Individual Palestinians

My respondents place the same demands for acquiescence on Arab Israelis as they do on

members of their own community. They believe that peace between the two peoples is possible

as soon as Palestinians accept the status quo and cease making accommodationist demands of the

state — an integration strategy that the FSU immigrants have already embraced and which the

Palestinians appear to be rejecting. By drawing these implicit parallels between themselves and

the Arabs, my respondents contrast their loyalty to Israel with Arab rejection of the state, and

thus, further demonstrate their moral worth of joining the Jewish Israeli mainstream.

Nina summarizes this sentiment,

> No need to separate [into two states], but instead just live calmly. It's just that I see young [Arab] people, also I hung out with some of them, who live, let's say in Jaffa and they feel fine — Israeli — and they enjoy everything. They are satisfied by the politics and all. They go to school, they are educated, they understand what is normal, and what is not. […] I believe that Arabs and Jews can live peacefully together because I have Arab acquaintances and I know their [Muslim] religion, and we are very close in religion and world views, and I feel like, just in theory, there is a solution. First of all, it is necessary to somehow solve the problem of those leaders who command Palestinians, who indoctrinate them from the very early childhood…

Nina believes that peace will come about as soon the Arab minority understands that acknowledging Israel as a state for the Jews will also grant them the possibility to lead a fulfilling life within it.

Zhanna holds a similar belief, and uses the visible success of Arab doctors to prove that whatever problems some Arabs experience in Israel are personal, rather than systemic. She says, "You already have land, and you live here, receive the exact same services. Do you know how many Arab doctors there are? A lot. You live and thank God. I'm not even saying this just in regards to the Arabs. Why the pathological desire to kill people?" Zhanna believes that if everyone simply chooses to accept, and learns to live within, Israeli norms and laws, he or she can be fulfilled and live in peace. She is either under the false impression that Arabs in Israel receive the exact same rights as Jews[34] or, similar to her attitudes regarding her own status as a non-Jewish minority summarized in previous chapters, believes that Israel is a state for the Jews

---

[34]Delving into all the ways in which Arab citizens are discriminated against in Israel is beyond the scope of this paper. Refer to Ghanem, As'ad (1998). "State and minority in Israel: the case of ethnic state and the predicament of its minority." *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* vol. 21:3, 428-448 for an overview on the subject.

and non-Jewish outsiders, both Russian-speaking and Arab, have a responsibility to accept it unquestionably.

As a follow up to her quote in the previous section, Darya claims that Arab Israelis are perfectly capable of leading a comfortable life in Israel and that any failure to secure a livelihood is the failure of individual Arabs. She says, "Look, in Tiv Tam,[35] we had many Arabs working with us, and we got along with them great, and the Jews, and the "Russians", all was well. There are also Arabs working with my daughter, and everything is fine. You know, there are normal people and there are the demented fanatics. You can't talk with the demented fanatics." Again, Darya uses the seeming success of her Arab acquaintances as proof of the Israeli status quo providing its minorities with opportunities to lead decent lives, if they so choose.

Unfortunately, I did not discuss the role of Arab civil disobedience and whether my respondents are more open to acknowledging grievances of Arab groups who do not use violence. However, given their rejection of public manifestations of non-dominant identities and their receiving group-level rights — such as in the case of LGBT rights discussed in chapter 2 — it is likely that they would regard anything short of passive acceptance on the part of the Arabs as making unfair demands of a state that is not their own.

As a solution to the conflict

Similar to the way in which my respondents frame successful integration as a one-sided process of the immigrants unquestionably accepting the policies and norms of Israeli society and state, they believe Israeli-Palestinian peace to be a one-sided process of Palestinians accepting the Jewish state and its territorial claims inside and, to some extent, outside of the armistice line.

---

[35] A "Russian" supermarket chain where Darya worked as a cashier

Placing such uncompromising and hawkish demands onto Israel's Palestinian "enemy" is perhaps another way in which my respondents demonstrate their loyalty to Israel and their rightful place within its mainstream.

David and Aleksey, a Halachic Jew who immigrated in 1990, believe that official acquiescence on the part of Palestinian leadership is a prerequisite to any long-lasting peace between the two peoples. David expresses this notion,

> Regarding the [Israeli] settlements, they can have natural growth, some [new] houses, while the Palestinians do not reject war. Just two days ago there was such a severe terror attack,[36] meaning that, in this way, we cannot make any concessions. We left Gaza in a one-sided way and what happened? Still, the terror attacks continue, the murders continue, people die. If they [Palestinians] forsake all terrorist activity and are ready for peace, then we can stop building the settlements and give them territory, but that's on the condition that it will be a demilitarized [Palestinian] state. They accept Israel's right to exist, and agree that they stop all further attacks on Israel.

David does not see a contradiction between lamenting Israel's one-sided disengagement from Gaza and making one-sided demands of the Palestinians. Here again, David showcases a familiar trend among my respondents of believing that, as a Jewish state, Israel has a right to prioritize Jewish interests in territories under its control, even if doing so prioritizes the interests of a demographic minority. Aleksey takes this notion even further, claiming that Palestinians need not a state of their own, but should be satisfied with having autonomous regions within the Jewish state of Israel,

> Look, a long time ago in 96, after the Madrid Accords, Israel and the Palestinian Autonomy[37] lived a common economic life, meaning that Israeli-Palestinian factories were constructed. Israeli police officers patrolled the territories together with Palestinian officers. Israelis went to buy things in the Palestinian Autonomy.

---

[36] The same truck ramming attack that Darya referred to

[37] He is referring to areas of the West Bank that are under the civil control of the Palestinian Authority.

> The Palestinians would come to work in Israel, no problem. […] Everything changed when Palestinian politicians saw that the contemporary trend is a hurdle on the way to a Palestinian state, not a Palestinian Autonomy, and because of this, they found a pretext, and began the *intifada.*[38] And from that moment on, the relationship deteriorated sharply. I believe that a return to this economic idea would solve the problem because it is very positive because it brings about an economic flourishing. Because the way I see it, it doesn't matter a Palestinian or a Jew, in the end, a working person he wants one thing — he wants to work, he wants to bring money home, he wants to feed his children, his family, that his children grow up, study, acquire professions…

Similar to David, Aleksey does not see a contradiction between advocating for Jewish national self-determination in the Jewish state of Israel, and his claims that Palestinians can live a perfectly satisfactory life without a state of their own, provided that their basic human needs are met. Of course by doing so, he is claiming that Palestinians, unlike Jews, are not entitled to national self-determination in an independent political state.

In short, my respondents espouse nativist attitudes toward Palestinians on both sides of the armistice line and advocate for hawkish state policies regarding them. They believe that Arab Israelis have the potential to lead fulfilling lives in Israel if they choose to be its loyal citizens, and furthermore, that Israeli-Palestinian peace is possible only when Palestinians forsake any territorial claims. These demands entirely deny Palestinian nationhood, asserting that Arab Israelis, unlike Jews, should not expect Israel to represent their interests, and that West Bank/ Gaza Palestinians should either be satisfied without a state, or with one that is situated on leftover territory after the completion of Israel's settlement project.

Nevertheless, my respondents do not see equating the predicament of an immigrant group and a domestic minority as false equivalencies, and in their eyes, the demands they place on Palestinians mirror the demands they place on their own community. Furthermore, by making

---

[38] Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation

an implicit comparison between their own acceptance and Arab rejection of Israel, as well as by advocating for Palestinian repression, they seek to prove their serious commitment to Israel's dominant narrative, Jewish identity, and physical security in order to show that they are deserving of a place within its mainstream.

Conclusion

This paper sought to understand the political integration paths that FSU immigrants have undertaken in Israel. Their socialization in the FSU resulted in their only nominal connection to Jewish culture and religion, as well as virtually no experience with citizenship in a democratic state. Even the more recent arrivals came from only transitional democracies, and therefore also have had limited exposure to democratic governance. The arrival of the almost one million immigrants with such tenuous attachments to Jewish culture and democratic principles helped highlight the tension inherent in Israel's dual character of being Jewish and democratic. Namely, what precisely makes a state Jewish? What makes a state democratic? How much of each characteristic should the state be willing to compromise to secure the other? My study shows that FSU immigrants define a Jewish state as one that prioritizes Jewish culture, narratives, and identities in the public sphere. They define a democratic state as one that protects the rights of individuals to hold any kind of national, religious, or ideological identity in private, provided that they do not threaten to usurp the existing order of the state. The frequent identity-based derisions that my respondents experience also suggest that, despite Israel's official claims of being Jewish and democratic in equal measure, Israeli society and state demand cultural and ethnic conformity from its members. These experiences and definitions of Jewishness and democracy can help explain the political integration paths that the immigrants have undertaken and their hawkish attitudes toward Palestinians.

Contrary to Portes and Rumbaut's theory, FSU immigrants, at least in the first generation, are not engaging in reactive political mobilization despite being discriminated against socially, being residentially segregated and disadvantaged economically, as well as experiencing

84

structural barriers to full integration because of the Orthodox monopoly on religious matters in Israel. Gerstle's conceptualization of the acquiescent integration strategy most closely reflects the political integration path that the FSU immigrants have undertaken, as they seek classical assimilation, but even Gerstle claims that continuous discrimination will push people off the acquiescent, into the transformational path of political contestation. It is yet to be seen what integration paths the second and third generations will undertake, but thus far, first generation FSU immigrants do not regard political mobilization as an appropriate or necessary strategy, even in the face of discrimination.

My study shows that FSU immigrants still believe in the classic assimilation theory that regards immigrant incorporation as a one-directional process, and sees the host society as a stable population into which the immigrants do and should acculturate and assimilate. The subscription of FSU immigrants to this ideology has two major consequences on their own political integration strategy: (i) they believe that the Israeli state does not owe them anything and that it is inappropriate to make demands of it, and (ii) that by demonstrating their uncompromising loyalty to Israel, Israelis will eventually come to accept them as equals. They hold these two beliefs even in the face of ongoing discrimination — clear evidence of the strategy not granting them full acceptance, at least not yet. They do so mostly by attributing discrimination to inappropriate behaviors of either the individuals doing the targeting or the individuals being targeted. Another tactic is agreeing that the stereotypes apply to the Russian-speaking community, but that he or she is an exception that is worthy of being accepted into the Israeli mainstream.

In addition to placing these assimilationist demands onto themselves and members of their own community, the FSU immigrants regard Israel's Arab minority as having to, likewise, unquestionably accept Israel as a state for the Jewish people and relegate their non-Jewish identity to the private sphere exclusively. They espouse nativist attitudes toward Palestinians because they regard their non-acceptance of Israel as an inappropriate conduct for national minorities, implicitly contrasting it to their own appropriate behaviors. Furthermore, they associate entire Palestinian communities with violence against the state, and thus, advocate for draconian measures to prevent it. I do not wish to serve as an apologist for these attitudes, but I believe that critically examining why many Russian-speakers espouse nativist views is the first step toward finding a means to combat intolerance among this and other populations.

I will be the first to point out that my study has various shortcomings. Firstly, I treated Jewish Israelis as a homogenous population against whom to contrast the Russian-speakers, and to a lesser extent, Arab Israelis. In fact numerous divisions exist within the Jewish Israeli population, which include religious and secular, as well as Ashkenazi,[39] Mizrahi, and Ethiopian. Nevertheless, addressing all of these internal divisions was beyond the scope of this paper and the primary distinction to which I wanted to draw attention was whether the individuals are considered Jewish by the Israeli state or not, which the above mentioned groups are and approximately 30% of the FSU immigrants are not. Secondly, when addressing Palestinian non-compliance with Israel's dominant narrative, I did not address Palestinian non-violent political mobilization, and whether my respondents would also regard non-violent activism with disdain because of its non-adherence to the dominant societal narrative. Similarly, I did not address the

---

[39] Jews of European descent

attitudes of my respondents toward ethnic Jews, who also, do not comply with the ethos of the state. Do they believe that those holding dominant identities have more of a right to engage in political mobilization against the state's dominant narrative than those who hold non-dominant identities? Lastly, as I already mentioned, this study only addressed the integration strategy undertaken by the first generation, but its consequence on the second and third generations are yet to be discovered. Perhaps official Jewish status will obtain even more salience in the second generation — creating brighter boundaries between the two groups of FSU descendants — as veteran Israelis intermarry with Halachically Jewish Russian-speakers, but not with others.

Nevertheless, my study explains the political integration strategy of FSU immigrants, what they hope to achieve as the end result, and what convictions urge them to regard acquiescence as the most appropriate strategy. Any political or civil society organization wishing to do work with this community — either in regard to the rights of the Russian-speakers or broader work that merely wishes to engage them — will be able to mobilize the community better by addressing and working to dismantle their understanding of political mobilization as inappropriate for national minorities. My findings are especially helpful for the Israeli left, which more so than the Israeli right, is notorious for its secular, Ashkenazi elitism and exclusion of virtually all of Israel's minorities, including the Russian-speakers (Shuster-Eliassi 2017).

Furthermore, even though Gerstle's theory captured the integration strategy of the Russian-speakers almost perfectly, he nevertheless predicted that ongoing discrimination would push immigrants toward political mobilization, which does not appear to be the case with the FSU immigrants. The segmented assimilation theory, likewise, predicted that ongoing marginalization from the host society would push the immigrants to develop reactive ethnicities.

My research demonstrates the inability of existing immigrant-incorporation theory, which is mostly based on immigrants in North America, to accurately theorize incorporation of my respondents and the unique contexts of exit and reception that they experienced. Thus, my study also highlights the need for broadening immigrant-incorporation theory to be based off of cases outside of North America and in countries, such as Israel, that have jus sanguinis citizenship acquisition systems.

References

Abebe, Danny Adeno. 2017. "Deri revokes residency status of Jerusalem terrorist's family." *Ynet,* January 10.

Ahren, Raphael. 2016. "Lieberman open to building freeze outside of settlement blocs." *Times of Israel,* November 16.

Alba, Richard and Victor Nee. 2007. "Assimilation." Pp. 124-136 in *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965*, edited by Mary C. Waters, Reed Ueda, Helen B. Marrow. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Al-Haj, Majid. 2004. *Immigration and Ethnic Formation in a Deeply Divided Society: The Case of the 1990s Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel.* Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Al-Haj, Majid. 2014. "Ethnicity and Political Mobilization in a Deeply Divided Society: the Case of Russian Immigrants in Israel." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 28 (2): 83-100.

Arian Asher, Michael Philippov, and Anna Knafelman. 2009. "The 2009 Israeli Democracy Index: Auditing Israeli Democracy Twenty Years of Immigration from the Soviet Union." *The Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute.* Retrieved on January 25, 2017.

Bagno, Olena. 2011. "The Price of Fear: Israel Beitenu in 2009." Pp.19-40 in *The Elections in Israel 2009*, edited by Asher Arian and Michal Shamir. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Bartram, David. 2011. "Migration, Ethnonationalist Destinations and Social Divisions: Non-Jewish Immigrants in Israel." *Ethnopolitics* 10 (2) : pp. 235-252.

Ben Shetreet, Ida and Laura Woolf. 2016. "Guide for the New Immigrant: 12th Edition." *Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption.* Retrieved on February 3, 2017.

Bick, Etta. 1998. "Sectarian Party Politics in Israel: The Case of Yisrael Ba'Aliya, the Russian Immigrant Party" Pp. 121-145 in *Israel at the Polls 1996,* edited by Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler. London and Portland: Frank Cass.

Borschel-Dan, Amanda. 2016. "25 years later, Russian speakers still the "other" in Israel, says MK." *Times of Israel,* September 1.

Canetti-Nisim Daphna, Gal Ariely, Eran Halperin. 2008. "Life, Pocketbook or Culture: The Role of Perceived Security Threats in Promoting Exclusionist Political Attitudes toward Minorities in Israel." *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (1): 90-103.

Cohen, Gili. 2017. "Hebron Shooter Elor Azaria Sentenced to 1.5 Years for Shooting Wounded Palestinian Attacker." *Haaretz,* February 21.

Cohen, Asher and Bernard Susser. 2009. "Jews and Others: Non-Jewish Jews in Israel." *Israel Affairs* 15 (1): 52-65.

Cohen-Goldner Sarit, Zvi Eckstein, and Yoram Weiss. 2012. *Immigration and Labor Market Mobility in Israel, 1990-2009.* Cambridge and London : The MIT Press.

Corella, Beatriz and Rinat Ben Noon. 2013. "Mapping Study of Civil Society Organisations in Israel." *EPRD Consortium.* Retrieved on March 1, 2017.

Channel 9. 2016. "The Opposition is Already Celebrating the New Year." *Channel 9,* December
       28 [in Russian].
Dahl, Robert. 1989. *Democracy and its Critics.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
Elias, Nelly. 2012. "Russian-speaking immigrants and their media: still together?" Pp.72-87 in
       Russian Israelis, edited by Larissa Remennick. London and New York : Routledge.
Elias, Nelly and Julia Bernstein. 2007. "Wandering Jews, Wandering Stereotypes: Media
       Representation of the Russian-speaking Jews in the FSU, Israel and Germany." *Jewish
       Images in the media* na: 15-38.
Englard, Izhak. 1987. "Law and religion in Israel." *The American Journal of Comparative Law*
       35 (1): 185-208.
Epstein, Alek and Nina Kheimets. 2002. "Immigrant intelligentsia and its second generation:
       cultural segregation as a road to social integration?" *Journal of International Migration
       and Integration* 1(4): 461-476.
Ettinger, Yair. 2015. "Woman's Conversion Voided After 30 Years: Daughter Launches Legal
       Battle." *Haaretz,* November 22.
Gerstle, Gary. 2013. "Acquiescence or Transformation? Divergent Paths of Political
       Incorporation in America." pp. 306-320 in *Outsiders no more? Models of Immigrant
       Political Incorporation,* edited by Jennifer Hochschild, Jacqueline Chattopadhyay,
       Claudine Gay, Michael Jones-Correa. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
Gitelman, Zvi. 2001. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881
       to the Present.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Gitelman, Zvi. 2016. *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United
       States, Israel, and Germany*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press.
Gitelman, Zvi and Ken Goldstein. 2002. "The "Russian" Revolution in Israeli Politics." Pp.
       141-161 in *The Elections in Israel 1999,* edited by Asher Arian and Michal Shamir.
       Albany: State University of New York.
Goldman, Paul. 2017. "Arab Israelis are Joining the IDF in Growing Numbers: Officials." *NBC
       News,* February 26.
Horowitz, Tamar. 2003. "The Increasing Political Power of Immigrants from the Soviet Union in
       Israel: From Passive Citizenship to Active Citizenship." *International Migration* 41 (1):
       45-71.
Higham, John. 1965. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925.* New
       York: Atheneum.
Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2013. "Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel."
       Retrieved on April 15, 2017 (http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/
       declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx).
Israel Our Home. ND. "The Vision of Yisrael Beitenu—Israel Our Home." Retrieved on
       February 2, 2017 (http://www.beytenu.org/the-vision-of-yisrael-beytenu-israel-our-
       home-2/).
Israel Our Home. ND. "Achievements." Retrieved on February 2, 2017 (http://ndi.org.il/
       деятельность/достижения/) [In Russian].
ITIM. ND. "Study and Preparation for Conversion." Retrieved on March 3, 2017 (http://
       www.itim.org.il/en/study-and-preparation-for-conversion/).

Jimenez, Tomas R. 2010. *Replenished Ethnicity: Mexican Americans, Immigration, and Identity.* Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Kaiser, Cheryl and Brenda Major. 2006. "A Social Psychological Perspective on Perceiving and Reporting Discrimination." *Law & Social Inquiry* 31 (4): 801-830.

Khanin, Vladimir (Ze'ev). 2010. "The Israel Beitenu (Israel Our Home) party between the mainstream and "Russian" community politics." *Israel Affairs* 16 (1): 105-123.

Khanin, Vladimir (Ze'ev). 2012. "Russian-Jewish Political Experience in Israel: Patterns, Elites and Movements." Pp. 55-71 in *Russian Israelis*, edited by Larissa Remennick. London and New York: Routledge.

Lerner, Julia. 2012. "'Russians' in Israel as a Post-Soviet Subject: Implementing the Civilization Repertoire." Pp. 21-37 in *Russian Israelis*, edited by Larissa Remennick. London and New York: Routledge.

Leshem, Dafna. 2000. "The Whore and the Other: Israeli Images of Female Immigrants from the Former USSR." *Gender & Society* 14.2 : 333-349.

Lieberman, Oren. 2015. "How does Israel's parliament work?" *CNN,* March 14.

Linz, Juan and Alfred Stepan. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

Lissak, Moshe and Eli Leshem. 2007. "The Russian Intelligentsia in Israel: Between Ghettoization and Integration." *Israel Affairs* 2 (2): 20-36.

Mann, Michael. 2005. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morashtenu. ND. "Goals." Retrieved on March 12, 2017 (http://en.morashtenu.org.il/about/goals/).

Philippov, Michael and Evgenia Bystrov. 2011. "All by myself? The paradox of citizenship among the FSU immigrants in Israel." Pp. 258-277 in *The Contradictions of Israeli Citizenship: Land, Religion and State,* edited by Guy Ben-Porat and Bryan S. Turner. London and New York: Routledge.

Portes, Alejandro and Min Zhou. 1993. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530: 74-96.

Portes Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies*: *The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation.* Berkley, Los Angeles and London : University of California Press.

Portes Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut. 2006. *Immigrant America: A Portrait.* 3rd ed. Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Ravid, Barak. 2016. "Lieberman's 'Peace Plan': Pay Israeli Arabs to move to Palestinian State." *Haaretz,* November 28.

Razin, Eran and Dan Scheinberg. 2001. "Immigrant Entrepreneurs from the Former USSR in Israel: not the Traditional Enclave Economy." *Journal of Ethnic Migration Studies* 27(2): 259-276.

Reeves, Philip. 2013. "On Multiple Fronts, Russian Jews Reshape Israel." *NPR,* January 2.

Remennick Larissa. 1998. "Identity Quest among Russian Jews of the 1990s: Before and After Emigration" Pp. 241-258 in *Jewish Survival: The Identity Problem at the Close of the*

20th Century, edited by Ernest Krausz and Gitta Tulea. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Remennick, Larissa. 2002. "Transnational Community in the Making: Russian-Jewish Immigrants of the 1990s in Israel." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28 (3): 515-530.

Remennick, Larissa. 2007. *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration and Conflict.* New Brunswick and London : Transaction Publishers.

Sezgin, Yuksel. 2013. *Human Rights under State-Enforced Religious Family Laws in Israel, Egypt and India.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shuster-Eliassi, Noam. 2017. "The Guide for Leftists Who Want to Stop Preaching to the Choir," *+972,* January 7.

Sofer, Ronny. 2007. "Consular Marriage in Israel Approved." *Ynet,* September 3.

Tamkin, Emily. 2016. "How Soviets Came to Celebrate New Year's Like Christmas (and Why Russians Still Do)." *Foreign Policy,* December 30.

Tolts, Mark. 2016. "Demography of the Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora." Pp. 23-40 in *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United States, Israel, and Germany,* edited by Zvi Gitelman. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press.

Appendix

Interview Guide

General

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself to get us started? What is your life story? Where did you grow up? How old are you? When did you move here? What was your childhood like? What is your family like? When and why did you decide to move here? What do you do now? What are your hopes for the future?
- How do you self-identify? (As a "Russian," as an Israeli, as a Jew, etc?) Why do you think you self-identify this way? How has this changed over the years? Why do you think these changes occurred?

Relationship to Judaism

- What is your relationship with Judaism?
- Do you consider yourself Jewish? Why or why not? How has this changed over the years (before and after immigration)?
- Does the state consider you Jewish? How does this make you feel?
- How does the state's definition of your Jewish identity affect your daily life? Do you think some things are easier/harder for you because you are/are not considered Jewish?
- Does anyone ever question your Jewish identity? How does this make you feel?
- Did you grow up Jewish? How did you and your family practice Judaism when you were growing up? How do you practice Judaism now? How did this change over the years? Why do you think these changes occurred?
- What was the Jewish community like in your country of origin?
- How involved were you with the Jewish community in your country of origin? Could you give me an example.
- Do you hope to make changes to how you practice Judaism? Why or why not?
- Do you think the way in which you practice Judaism is similar or different from others? Who do you think practices the religion in the same way? Who do you think practices the religion in a different way?
- How important is it to you that your children practice Judaism in the same way? Do you hope that your children will practice in a different way? How come?
- If you don't consider yourself Jewish, do you practice any religion? How do you practice it? Did you grow up with this religion? How did you practice it in the past? How has this changed over the years?
- If not considered Jewish, have you ever considered converting to Judaism? Why or why not?
- If your children/spouse are not considered Jewish, would you like them to convert? Why or why not?
- How important is it to you that your children practice your religion in the same way as you do? How come? Do you hope that they will practice in a different way?

- What is your definition of "Jew"? How come? Do you think your definition is different or similar to that of others? Why or why not? Who thinks similarly about Judaism and who doesn't? Could you give me an example.
- What does Israel mean to you? Has this changed over the years? In what ways?
- What was your opinion of Israel prior to immigration? What is it now? Why do you think these changes occurred?
- What do you think should be the relationship between Jews and Israel?

Immigration Process
- What made you decide to move to Israel?
- How did people in your community react to your decision to move to Israel?
- Can you walk me through your process of immigration? How did you feel about it?
- In what ways did you have to prove your Jewish roots in order to be able to come to the country? How did that feel?
- How long did the "gathering of the documents" take?
- Did you immigrate alone or with family? Why or why not?
- Did you have family or friends in Israel at the time of your arrival? Who? Where? In what ways did they help you with the moving process? Would your decision to come to Israel been different if they were not here? Were you in touch with them prior to your decision to move?
- Did you receive any institutional aid to help you with the process of immigration and settling in? (like an NGO or a governmental organization in Israel?) Which organizations? In what ways did they help you? For how long? What do you think they did well? What could have been done better?

Integration Process
- Can you remember how you initially felt, when you first moved to Israel? Was that your first time in Israel? How did visiting Israel and moving here differed?
- If you had a question about Israeli life, who would you ask? Could you give me an example?
- If you had a logistical question (i.e. going to the hospital, furnishing your apartment), who did you turn to for help?
- Who constituted your primary social circle when you first got to Israel? How did this change over the years?
- Did you become a member of any institution? (synagogue, church, community organization, club, the army?) Why or why not? If yes, how soon after your arrival? Do you think this helped/was detrimental to your integration process?
- Did you join any online support groups (like the Facebook page : keep olim in israel)? How did you find out about it? Was it helpful? In what kind of situations would you turn to such a group for help?
- What surprised you most about Israel?
- What did you like best/least?
- What obstacles did you first run into in Israel?
- What recommendations would you give to somebody from the former Soviet Union who is thinking of immigrating to Israel?

- In your opinion, are there any aspects of Israeli immigration/integration policies that need to change? What works well and what doesn't?
- Have you ever considered leaving Israel? Why or why not? When? What made you stay?
- Have you had friends or family who left Israel? Why?
- If you could be a recent immigrant again, what would you do differently? Why or why not?

Social
- Do you feel socially accepted or not? In what ways? (If not, would you like to be?) Why do you think that is?
- Are your children socially accepted or not? In what ways? Why do you think that is?
- Who are the people that you see most of/interact most with? Where are they from? Are they accepted socially in Israeli society? In what ways? Where did you meet them? Are your relationships with them good/bad? Why do you think that is? What would you like to improve about your relationships with them?

- Are you happy with your circle of acquaintances? Would you like to change anything about it? (i.e. its composition/size?) How would you go about doing this?

- If you have a problem, who do you turn to for help? What kinds of problems get solved by what kinds of acquaintances? Who would you turn to in an emergency?
- Do you keep in touch with people from your home country? Why or why not? Who do you keep in touch with? How do you keep in touch with them?
- Do you ever visit your home country? Why or why not? How often? When was the last time you've been there? Do you visit by yourself or with your family? If you visit, who do you see there?
- Do people from your home country ever visit you? Who? How often?
- Are you a member of any institution/organization? Could you give me an example. How involved are you in this institution/organization?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Are you in a relationship? Are they Israeli/Jewish/immigrant (of what background?)
- Are your children in a relationship? (what is the background of their significant other?)
- How important is it for you that your significant other/your children's significant other hold these specific identities?
- Would you be open to having a relationship with someone of a different background (not from the FSU, (not (halachically)) Jewish, Ethiopian, Arab, etc)?
- Would you be open to your children having a relationship with someone of a different background (not from the FSU, (not (halachically)) Jewish, Ethiopian, Arab, etc)?
- Would you be open to marrying/having your children marry individuals of different backgrounds?
- What do your friends/acquaintances think of having relationships with people of different backgrounds? What about marrying people of different backgrounds?
- What do you think typical Israelis think about being in relationships with people of different backgrounds? What about marrying people of different backgrounds?
- Have you ever had someone not want to be in a relationship with you because of your background/not want to marry you?

95

- What role would you say being (halachically) Jewish or not has on your social status in Israel? How so? Could you give me an example.
- What role do you think being from the former Soviet Union has on your social status in Israel? How so? Could you give me an example.
- Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your identity? How so? From whom? Where? What has been your response to being treated that way?
- Have you ever witnessed someone else being discriminated against because of his/her identity? Could you give me an example. What was your response to witnessing such discrimination?
- Are there sectors of the Israeli population that you trust more/less? How come?

Political
- What do you think are the biggest problems in Israel today? Do they affect you personally? How so? Who is most affected by these problems?
- Are you civically involved in any way? (parent teacher associations, volunteer work, promoting cultural events?) Why or why not?
- Do you have an interest in politics?
- Are you involved politically in any way? Do you vote? Why or why not?
- Is there an Israeli party that you sympathize with?
- Are you involved civically/politically in your home country/with issues of your home country? In what ways?
- Do you vote in your home country elections?
- Do you have a greater interest in Israeli or your home country issues/politics? Why do you think this is?
- Do you think the situation in Israel or the situation in your home country most affects your personal wellbeing (mental and physical)?
- How important is civic involvement to you?
- How important is political involvement to you?
- If you have children, are they more or less civically/politically involved than you? How are they involved? Could you give me an example. How does this make you feel?
- Do your and your children's political opinions differ? In what ways?
- How important is it for you that your children are involved in civil society/politics?
- What do you think should be the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- Do you think your religious/national identity influences your civic and political involvement? In what ways? Could you give me an example.
- Do you think that the state's official designation for you (Jewish or non-Jewish) affects your civic and political involvement? In what ways? Could you give me an example.
- Do you think there is anything that I didn't mention that would be really useful for people to know about immigration/integration in Israel from the former Soviet Union?

Codes
Relationship to Judaism

- **Jewishness as internal self-identification:** you are Jewish if you feel Jewish on the inside, but only if this is very genuine (not for any tangible and practical ends)
- **Jewishness as a people:** you are Jewish if you identify with the Jewish collective no matter what
- **Jewishness as a nationality**: Jewishness is a national identity
- **Jewishness as religion:** Jewishness is a religious identity
- **Jewishness as a source of pride:** situations in which were proud or were told to be proud of being Jewish
- **Jewishness as heritage:** your "blood" makes you Jewish
- **No concern for Jewish continuity:** don't feel that the survival of the Jewish people depends on your marrying a Jew or your children marrying a Jew
- **Yes to continuity:** feel that the survival of the Jewish people depends on your marrying a Jew or your children marrying a Jew
- **Jewishness as a resource to move to Israel:** started identifying as Jewish or looking for proof of Jewishness in order to move to Israel
- **Total disillusionment:** total atheism/disappointment with religion after having held a religious identity/belief in the past

Life in the Soviet Union
- **Lack of Jewishness in the Soviet Union:** a situation in which Soviet type of Jewish identity (nationality without religion/covert) is apparent
- **Special responsibilities that come with being Jewish:** Jew on Jew imposed standards that Jews have to meet because they are Jews
- **Revival of institutional life:** becoming involved with Judaism again in a way that wasn't allowed during the Soviet regime
- **Don't know about own Jewishness:** not knowing that are ethnically Jewish until later in life
- **Lack of nationalism in the Soviet Union:** situations that show lack of nationalisms in Soviet Union or overt repression of national identification (in relation to nationalities other than Jewish)

Relationship to Arab-Israeli Conflict
- **Too much Arab side:** feeling that the world does not know enough about what is going on with the conflict from the Israeli side and if they did they would be on Israel's side
- **Severe punishment as deterrent:** the only way to deter terrorism is by continuing to be tough on terrorists/the need to be tougher
- **Dove:** the need for more dovish methods on the part of Israel and those serving Israel (like soldiers) in dealing with Palestinians/Arabs
- **Status quo:** current situation as the best way to deal with the conflict
- **Acknowledging the universality of peoples:** Arabs, Jews, non-Jews are all the same in their humanity and are all basically aspiring toward the same, human goals
- **Arabs/Muslims/black as other:** believing that have to understand special traits of Arab/Muslim/black people in order to know how to act appropriately toward them

Reasons for immigration/process of immigration, integration
- **Practical reasons for immigration:** immigrating to Israel in order to achieve a tangible and measurable end (better job, better education, better health services)
- **Ideological reasons for immigration:** Israel as a country that would better suit the immigrants' ideology (including dominant Zionist/Jewish narrative but also other ideological values like democracy and tolerance)
- **Ideological disappointment:** Israel did not deliver on the ideology it claimed to espouse
- **Sacrifices made to come to Israel:** the opportunity cost of coming to Israel, what was given up
- **Spiritual connection to Israel:** feeling mystical/ideological connection to Israel prior to immigration
- **Developing spiritual connection:** feeling mystical/ideological connection to Israel sometime after immigration
- **Familial support network:** situations in which social capital (family or friends) helped with personal problems

Relationship to Israel/Israelis post-immigration
- **Grateful to Israel:** a personal growth or a practical matter that occurred in Israel because of having the opportunity to live in Israel that significantly improved the respondent's life
- **Loving Israel:** belief in the importance of loving Israel/the Jewish people as a pre-requisite to living in Israel successfully
- **Low personal efficacy:** belief that an individual can effect change in very limited sense and only with issues that directly affect him/her
- **Critical of "Russian" community:** creating distance between themselves and other "Russians" (in terms of people and in terms of home countries)
- **Cultural closeness to "Russians":** when seek out members of the "Russian" community to fulfill needs that could be fulfilled by non-"Russians"/when the presence of the "Russian" community helped fulfill needs that would have been hard to fulfill otherwise (due to language and cultural barriers with Israelis)
- **Conscious effort to maintain "Russian" cultural identity:** making an effort to instill "Russian" identity in children
- **Superiority of "Russian" culture:** statement or story in which it became apparent that the respondent believes "Russian" culture to be superior
- **Personal responsibility for good or for bad:** personal traits rather than people's identities are the reasons behind people's actions
- **Biggest problems as practical:** the biggest problems in Israel are those to do with economic statuses of individuals
- **Peace process as most important:** the most crucial problems that Israel should deal with are those related to peace/war/terror
- **News source in Israel:** which news sources do they get information from
- **Israeli:** examples of situations when feeling more Israeli than "Russian"
- **Civic Israel:** belief in the importance of building collective identity around being Israeli vs dividing based on ethnicities (and religion)

- **Negative attitudes toward "Russian" community:** being unfairly treated by Israel or Israelis for being from the Russian-speaking community
- **Mizrahim-Ashkenazim tensions**: tensions within Jewish circles along racial lines
- **Feeling insecure in Jewish identity:** negative feelings because wanting to be Jewish/prove Jewishness, but sensing pushback from society, or sensing pushback from society because are not Jewish
- **Sectarian voting:** selecting a leader because he/she is Russian-speaking and will represent them in the government
- **Left as bad:** leftist organizations as actively working against the people and the state of Israel
- **Importance of unity:** unity of the people in Israel is Israel's special, positive attribute
- **Civil society:** examples that show their belief in the importance of civil society as an intermediary between the people and the government
- **No time:** would consider being involved in civil society, but don't have any time
- **The people and the government as separate spheres:** no communication between the people and the government
- **Transnationalism:** examples of transnational identities
- **Distancing from Israelis:** Israeli culture and manners are undesirable
- **More:** Israel should be providing immigrants with more than it is providing them with
- **Identity crisis:** feel neither "Russian" nor "Israeli" and it's making life harder
- **Benefits:** when being an immigrant renders you special advantages because are familiar with two cultures
- **Hardships:** recollection of hardships with neither a positive nor a negative connotation

General Life attitudes
- **Superiority of Soviet system:** examples of better standards of living, people having more comforts/rights in the Soviet Union/patriarchal government vs democracy/capitalism
- **Mistrust of institutions:** examples of not believing institutions to be an effective way to achieve change, avoiding institutions to achieve those ends by other means when that opportunity exists
- **Positive attitudes toward home country:** retaining meaningful connection toward home country
- **Strong leader:** need a strong leader to solve Israel's problems
- **Against extremism:** believe themselves and their views to be moderate and don't like extremism when it's coming from anyone