

**"Sela" Program – Aid for immigrant adolescent girls
in the "Yedidim" Organization
Research Evaluation Report**

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Research Summary

Upon immigration to Israel, immigrants from both Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union undergo comprehensive changes with regard to traditions and lifestyles. They must cope with the challenges of providing for their families while simultaneously adapting to a new culture and language and experiencing the loss of previously familiar social and familial networks. The integration of immigrants presents challenges both to the immigrants and to the host society. With regard to immigrant adolescents, the challenge is unique in that the migration crisis overlaps with the universal crisis of adolescence. This report evaluates the "Sela" Program to Aid Adolescent Immigrant Girls; a project geared toward at-risk immigrant girls (first or second generation), between the ages of 12 and 18 who are referred by schools and social services. The program includes both personal mentoring whereby the adolescent meets with her mentor on a weekly basis and group sessions comprised of 10 girls and a group coordinator. Group activities are based on the yearly instruction program and include topics such as personal identity, self fulfillment, and feminine identity.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Immigrant adolescents

Various studies that examined the functioning of adolescents who immigrated to Israel, together with their families, in the 1990's demonstrated functional difficulties in the educational, social and personal realms. These difficulties were expressed through increased deviant behaviors among the immigrant youth such as school attrition and problems with the law. Despite this general data, it is problematic to address the difficulties of various groups of immigrant youth as posing a single set of challenges because adaptation difficulties are dependant upon ethnic origin, and gender as well as on personal, family, and community characteristics.

The scientific literature defines four groups of at-risk adolescents as follows: youth (aged 14-18) who dropped out of the educational system; youth who attend school or work but experience adaptation difficulties and are at-risk of dropping out; working youth without any supporting educational framework; and adolescents with dangerous behavioral tendencies who are resultantly referred to the relevant youth authorities.

1.2 Mentoring programs

Mentoring programs offer one response to the difficulties of immigrant children and youth in Israeli society. The term "mentoring" is used to describe the relationship between a minor, and an adult (the mentor), who is not the parent or a professional human service provider. These relationships are geared to assist in the minor's development through the providing of knowledge, skills as well as emotional and concrete support. The mentoring relationship has a number of components: a) it is based on a desired, agreed upon and voluntary relationship, b) the relationship is long term, c) the relationship is one-on-one, d) there exists a significant age difference between the mentor and the adolescent, e) the relationship's purpose is to advance the adolescent's capabilities and development, f) both parties are expected to benefit from the relationship. The role of the mentor includes functional components of peers (friendship and intimacy), of parents (role model, guidance, and support), and even functional components of educators (instruction and demonstration).

The scientific literature differentiates between two central trends in defining mentoring. The first, based on social learning theories, is instrumental, tangible and goal oriented. In contrast, the second trend, affective (emotional) psychology emphasizes general emotional goals in personal development and relies on the theoretical framework of social support and attachment theory.

Additional elements of the mentoring relationship may be tied to social capital theory. This theory addresses the mentoring process' ability to assist youth societal adaptation difficulties through the expansion of social networks achieved by connecting with those who are able to advance them within relevant social institutions.

The research literature indicates that the contributions of mentoring are rather modest. Such contributions are traditionally measured in three main domains: educational, social and psychological - that focuses on feelings of independence. Research findings demonstrate that the main contributions of mentoring programs are centered on expanded social support, social capabilities and educational functioning.

2. Research Method

2.1 Research goals

The present research had the two following goals: First, to evaluate the "Sela" Program's outcome retrospectively, at one point in time. The second goal was to evaluate the program's developmental process in order to assist in its ongoing development and implementation (formative evaluation).

2.2 Research tools

The research was conducted using a variety of quantitative and qualitative tools, adapted to this specific study and to the participant groups of adolescents, mentors and coordinators.

With regard to the adolescents, both interviews and questionnaires were used. In the interviews the adolescents were asked to describe the program's activities generally, and to relate to specific topics such as the relationship with the mentor, with the coordinator, and to the program's contributions. In addition, all participating adolescents completed questionnaires about their personal characteristics as well as about program evaluation and contributions.

With regard to the mentors, questionnaires and telephone interviews were utilized. The mentor questionnaire included closed questions examining both the adolescents' characteristics as well as about program evaluations. Likewise, the questionnaire included open questions addressing perceptions of the program's goals and factors concerning its effectiveness. In addition, open-question telephone interviews were conducted in which additional data was collected.

With regard to the coordinators, semi-structured interviews were conducted including questions about perceptions of the program' process as well as about the program's contributions and effectiveness.

2.3 The research sample

The sample was comprised of adolescent girls from five groups, as follows: A total of 29 girls of 47 (62%) that participated in five different groups (Beersheba, Ashdod, Kiryat Gat, Jerusalem and Kiryat Yam).

The sample of mentors was derived from seven groups whereby 33 mentors of the total 69 (48%) who participated (in addition to the five groups described above, mentors from another group in Beersheba and in Yerucham also participated).

Eight coordinators were interviewed including the seven group coordinators and the program's national coordinator. Since it was impossible to interview the adolescents in the Beersheba "B" and the Yerucham groups, we interviewed the social workers who referred the girls to these two groups.

2.4 The research process

Data was collected between May and July 2006. During this period, the interviewers visited each group, administered questionnaires to all girls present (a total of 29 questionnaires) and conducted personal interviews with two or three girls from each group, who volunteered or were referred by the coordinator (a total of 9 girls). In addition, the coordinator of each group was interviewed.

The mentor questionnaires were sent via mail to each mentor and self-administered. Twenty-two mentors completed and returned the questionnaires. An additional 11 mentors completed the questionnaire during a telephone interview.

In the Beersheba "B" and Yerucham groups, we encountered numerous difficulties with regard to both meeting the girls and conducting interviews with them.

2.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data underwent categorical content analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using frequency analysis. The program's contributions were analyzed using Anova test.

3. Findings

The findings are divided as follows: 1) findings deriving from the adolescents' reports, 2) findings deriving from the mentors' reports, 3) findings deriving from the interviews with the coordinators, and 4) comparisons between the adolescents' program evaluation and those of the mentors.

3.1. The adolescents' reports

3.1.1 The self-described characteristics of the adolescents

Socio-demographic characteristics: The adolescents' average age was 14.8 years. Forty percent emigrated from the eastern states of the former Soviet Union, approximately 20% from the western states of the former Soviet Union and about one third from Ethiopia. Nearly half of the girls (45%) resided in Israel between three and ten years. More than 25 percent of the girls resided in Israel for more than ten years and another 25 percent were born in Israel. Approximately 40 percent derive from one-parent households. About 10 percent have experienced the death of a parent. Fifty percent of the girls' mothers are employed outside of the home and 68% of the fathers are employed. Approximately half of the girls rated their family's financial situation as good, very good or excellent and 13 percent considered the family's financial situation as bad or very bad. Approximately one-fifth (21%) of the girls work in the afternoons. With regard to housing, approximately one third of the girls reside in family owned apartments, 57 percent in privately rented apartments and 14 percent in public housing.

Family functioning: Family functioning was measured using the Hudson scale (IFR). On average, the girls' scores with regard to their status within the family were within the normal range. Difficulties in this area were recorded among approximately one fifth of the girls.

Social functioning: Social functioning was measured using the Hudson scale (IPR). On average, the girls' scores with regard to social issues were within the normal range. However, approximately one third of the girls reported difficulties in this realm. The responses indicated that all the girls had friends from both their countries of origin and other countries of origin, including native Israelis. However, they tend to spend more time with friends deriving from their countries of origin.

Educational functioning: The majority of the girls study in academic high schools and 14 percent in vocational high schools. About two thirds of the girls claimed that on their most recent report cards their grades were either good or very good. One third claimed that their grades were satisfactory. With regard to educational aspirations that majority (79%) aspire to complete high school with full matriculation exams, although only 50 percent believe their chances of achieving this are high. Approximately a third of the girls believe they have a reasonable chance of graduating with full matriculation exams and about one fifth (18%) believe their chances of achieving this are low. Data regarding the girls' school absentee records are worrisome and attest to the fact that a high percentage of the girls are at risk for being

"disengaged" youth - that is, youth who do attend some sort of educational framework, but who are not involved in meaningful learning. About half of the girls incurred three or more unjustified absences in the past month and more than 25 percent were suspended from school at least once in the past.

Participation in high risk behaviors: About one third (31%) of the girls smoke cigarettes. Two girls reported drug use. However, five other girls did not deny that they would use drugs if given the opportunity. Approximately one third of the girls reported that they had run away from home in the past. With regard to violence, about half of the girls reported that they were not involved in incidents of physical violence with other adolescents during the past month; however one third reported that they were involved in at least one such episode during the past month. One fifth of the girls reported involvement in episodes of physical violence with other adolescents between two and four times during the past month.

How the girls view their futures: More than half of the girls would like to pursue university education and 28 percent would like to acquire a profession. About 14 percent of the girls want to work in a profession that does not require any special training. The majority of the girls (82%) plan to enlist in the army or the national service. Approximately 46 percent of the girls believe that their chances of enlistment are good and half of the girls believe that their chances are fair. Just one girl considered her chances as poor.

3.1.2. Program evaluation derived from the adolescents' reports

In general, the girls' evaluation of the program was overwhelmingly positive. Most of the girls (90%) strongly agreed or very strongly agreed that "the meetings had a positive effect on me". The majority of the girls expressed their desires to meet with the mentor more often than once a week and to participate in the Sela Program in the coming year, as well.

The interviews yielded similar results. The interviewed girls pointed out, from their own accord, extremely positive assertions and complements about the program. When asked to define their experience in the program, they said: "We come to Yedidim and we leave as grown-ups", "a new kind of friendship", "learning and support" and, "learning about myself".

Evaluating program activities and content: Most of the girls agreed that they acquired new, important and interesting knowledge. In the interviews, the girls

enjoyed relaying the activities that focused on the relationship with the opposite sex and the volunteering activities. Another activity that was described in detail by some of the girls was when they themselves were involved in the development and implementation of a group activity. Also, the girls described their organized trip to "Superland" as very satisfying.

The relationship among the groups' members: On a scale of 1 to 9, the average score given to the relationship among the groups' members was 7.2. In addition, the majority reported feeling at ease in the group and being able to express their opinions freely in front of the groups' members. They felt valued and believed that the group succeeded in achieving unification. Most of the girls also reported they were able to contribute to the group. The atmosphere among group members enabled them to share experiences, offer opinions, advice and to consult with and to include their fellow members in their personal, and at times, intimate matters. Together with this, it seems that the group activities were not the place where the girls found their "true" or closest friends.

The relationship with the student-mentor: The vast majority of the girls very much enjoyed the personal relationship with the mentor and described it using terms of warmth and affection such as "I love her" or "she is like a sister to me". On a scale of 1-9, on average, the girls graded the trust between them and their mentor as 8.5. In response to a question about to what extent the personal meetings with the mentor were found to be effective, the girls gave an average score of 7.8. In addition, all the girls testified that they felt that the student was happy to meet with them.

From the interviews, we learned that the relationships were formed based on trust and friendship, acceptance, partnering, mutuality as well as on joint recreational experiences.

The relationship with the coordinator: Also, the girls described the relationships with the coordinators in a positive manner. On a 1-9 scale, the average score describing the personal relationship with the coordinator was 8.7. In response to a question addressing the usefulness of information relayed during the group session, the average score was 7.2.

A number of the girls described the coordinator as someone who stood by them when confronted by various authorities in the community.

3.1.3 The program's contributions

The program's contributions were examined in five different spheres: Its contribution with regard to the girls' sense of self; its contribution in the social sphere, its contribution in the educational sphere, its contribution in the familial sphere and its contribution with regard to the relationship with various helping authorities in the community.

When comparing the program's average contributions, significant differences were found among the spheres ($F=6.3$, $df= 4$, $p<0.05$), such that the contribution relating to the girls' sense of self is significantly higher than the other four measured spheres ($F=20.5$, $df= 1$, $p<0.05$). In addition, it was found that the program's contribution to the relationship with various helping authorities in the community is significantly less than the other four measures ($F=15.6$, $df= 1$, $p<0.05$).

In the interviews, the girls identified these same five spheres as the program's contribution. In regard to improvements in relation to self, the girls primarily related to improved self-esteem, and sense of ability and the alleviation of embarrassment in social settings. Also, they emphasized that the program helped them learn about themselves and improved their self awareness.

In regard to improvements in the social sphere, the girls spoke of a widened circle of friends. Some noted that the program provided them with concrete advice regarding difficulties that arose with peers at school or with their boyfriends.

With regard to improvements in the educational realm, some of the girls noted improvements in their school performance.

With regard to improvements in the familial realm, certain girls described how the mentor or the coordinator helped them cope with difficulties arising from their dealings with other family members.

With regard to the interactions with community authorities, an example was provided where the coordinator stood up for an Ethiopian girl against a discriminatory teacher.

3.1.4 The girls' recommendations

The main recommendation that was repeated by five of six girls was to **increase the frequency or length of the personal and/or group sessions**. In addition, the girls recommended specific activities that may be beneficial for them such as music,

nationwide meetings with Yedidim participants, field trips, computers and academic tutoring.

3.2. From the mentors' reports

3.2.1 The adolescents' characteristics – functioning and involvement in high risk behaviors

From the mentors' reports it is apparent that approximately half of the girls study in special education programs that do not provide access to complete matriculation diplomas. The high risk behaviors that are present in more than half of the girls are: learning problems (86%), and unexcused absences from school more than three times a month (55%). Thirty-eight of the mentors reported that the adolescent had social behavioral problems at school, 35% reported that the adolescent smoke cigarettes, 32% reported social problems, 27% reported drugs/alcohol use in the adolescent's environment, and 20% reported the existence of family violence. At-risk behaviors noted by a smaller number of mentors are: alcohol consumption (15%), unprotected sex (14%), and drug use (11%). Forty-one percent reported that the various authorities (social services, school, etc) do not provide the adolescent with adequate support.

3.2.2 The mentors' evaluation of the program

The findings derived from the mentors' reports about the mentoring process relate to four topics: the quality of the relationship; characteristics of the relationship; the adolescent's family's perspective about the program; and difficulties with program implementation.

The quality of the relationship: The majority of the mentors (about 80%) believe that the relationship formed between them and the adolescent is positive and of a high quality. Almost all of the mentors felt that there existed "good chemistry" between them and the girl.

Characteristics of the relationship: Most of the mentors reported feeling as if they were older friends of the adolescent, and that the girls shared their personal thoughts and were happy to meet with them. Approximately a third of the mentors reported that during the past year there was a need to mediate between the girls and some external authority and one fourth actually took part in such mediation. The mentors conveyed varied opinions with regard to the relevance and usefulness of the specific program content proposed for the personal meetings. When requested to rate

the program content relevance for the adolescents, about one third of the mentors reported "slightly agreed". Approximately half of the mentors reported not making use of the proposed content.

The standpoint of the adolescents' families toward the program:

Approximately 75 percent of the mentors reported that the adolescent's family supported the mentoring relationship. About half reported that the family's standpoint toward the mentor improved during the year.

Difficulties with program implementation: One of the major reported difficulties was the tension between the need to function in accordance with the pre-planned program implementation and the need to adapt the program to the specific adolescent. The majority of the mentors pointed out that they did not plan each meeting ahead of time and did not always adhere to the program content, as developed for the project.

The mentors described difficulties in convincing the adolescents to attend activities and carry out duties. This difficulty was apparent throughout the year, not just at the program's commencement. With regard to the relationship with the girls' families, certain mentors described difficulties in obtaining the families' trust, thereby requiring from both the mentors and the coordinators significant efforts. In such cases, the mentors expressed their belief that the lack of trust from the family also negatively affected their ability to succeed in advancing the adolescent.

In relation to mitigation of high risk behaviors, a number of the mentors felt that they did not succeed in promoting change in behaviors that they believed were high risk, such as smoking or engagement in unprotected sexual contact.

Additional described difficulties such as crowded conditions or socio-economic distress in the home; the mentor's lack of familiarity with the adolescent's culture; difficulties coping with close social circles that negatively influenced the adolescent and the program's short time span.

3.2.3 Evaluation of the tools available for the mentors

Most of the mentors believed that they were capable of providing the adolescents with the expected, but about one fifth felt that they lacked certain needed professional skills. All the mentors were satisfied with the coordinators' support and availability. Together with this, approximately one fourth of the mentors reported that, in their opinion, the coordinator needs to be more involved. One fourth of the mentors

asserted that the training provided throughout the year was not sufficient. Likewise, they reported that they did not turn to the coordinator to help them cope with emotional responses experienced as a result of the mentoring relationship.

With regard to physical locations of the personal meetings, the mentors met the adolescents in the adolescents' homes, in the mentors' homes, outside, at the location of the group meetings or other places. Most of the mentors (78%) reported the physical location was appropriate for the meetings, yet one fifth claimed difficulties regarding this aspect of program implementation.

Ninety-four percent of mentors felt that the frequency of the meetings was appropriate.

3.2.4 The program's contributions according to the mentors

The mentors indicated that, in general, the program benefited the adolescents. This view was held also for those girls whose mentors sensed that they did not derive the maximum benefit from the program or reach all planned goals. Most of the mentors defined specific goals for the girls, which included: "increased self esteem", "improvement in school performance", "widening of horizons", and the providing of a supportive emotional atmosphere and a different sort of role model.

In those instances where the mentoring was successful and the relationship defined as "close" the mentor believed that the girl confided in her and the goals were achieved. Many mentors emphasized that despite the small number of meetings and the short time span, they felt that they succeeded in helping the girl look at her future in a new light. In addition, it was apparent that the mentors served as role models both because of their relative closeness in age to the girls and their distance from the girls' social sphere. Furthermore, the mentors believed that as the relationship developed the adolescents became increasingly open to ideas that previously caused suspicion.

When asked to rate from a 1-9 scale to what extent they believed that the meetings benefited the girls, the mentors' response was rated as 7.2.

The program's contributions were examined in five different spheres: Its contribution with regard to girls' sense of self; its contribution in the social sphere, its contribution in the educational sphere, its contribution in the familial sphere and its contribution with regard to involvement in high risk behaviors.

When comparing the program's average contributions in the various spheres, significant differences were found among the spheres ($F=12.75$, $df= 4$, $p<0.05$). The

contribution relating to girls' sense of self was significantly higher than the measured contributions of the social, educational and familial spheres ($F=74.8$, $df= 1$, $p<0.05$). In addition, it was found that the program's contribution to reduce involvement in high risk behavior (as defined by the mentors) was significantly higher than the measured contributions of the social, educational and familial spheres ($F=6.7$, $df= 1$, $p<0.05$).

3.2.5 The mentors' recommendations

The topic of **family cooperation** was emphasized in the mentors' interviews. They recommended involving the family, particularly the parents, in some of the meetings as an integral part of the work plan to help the adolescent. Likewise, they recommended dealing in a more straightforward manner with the issue of the girls' **ethnic background**.

An additional recommendation was to encourage the referring agencies to provide **more accurate and detailed information** about the girls prior to commencement of the relationship. Some of the mentors felt that the information provided was inadequate and more comprehensive information about the girls' backgrounds would have contributed to more efficient use of the limited time afforded.

Another recommendation called for allowing greater flexibility with regard to program **contents** so that they may be adapted to the girls' personal realities. The life experience of certain girls caused them to be more mature or, at times, less mature than the level of group discussions. Some of the mentors believed that it would be beneficial to modify the program topics for each individual adolescent, in collaboration with the adolescent, herself.

3.3 The coordinators' reports

3.3.1 Commencement of the work

Initially the program was commenced in four groups during the months of November and December: The Beersheba "B" group, that included girls who participated in the program during the previous year as well, was the first group to function at the beginning of November. In Ashdod, the work began at the end of November, and in Kiryat Yam and Beersheba (group "A") at the end of December. Additional groups commenced in Jerusalem in January and in Kiryat Gat in February. With regard to the

Yerucham group, it was not possible to obtain clear answers as to when the group began meeting.

The reasons that the groups began functioning on the above described dates are, as follows:

- a) Delayed recruitment of mentors;
- b) A lack of cooperation of referral agencies;
- c) Limitations on the entitlement conditions for student-mentors' scholarships that reduced the student pool available to serve as mentors. This issue presented particularly difficult challenges, specifically in the smaller, peripheral locations where, from the outset there are few students.

3.3.2 Recruitment and selection of mentors

The recruitment, selection and training of mentors were central issues in the coordinators' experiences. It was particularly important for them since they perceived the role of the mentors as highly responsible and demanding. The coordinators pointed out that one interview was not adequate to evaluate the students' suitability to the mentoring role and their recommendation was to conduct a longer and more structured process of selection and recruitment of mentors.

3.3.3 Program contents

The coordinators conveyed that the topics presented in the monthly meetings provided a general framework but in certain cases limited the dynamic characteristic of the group. The coordinators indicated that there exists a need to allow for greater flexibility in the discussions because of the heterogeneity of the ages of the girls in each group or due to the coordinator's belief that a specific group needs more time on a certain topic. The topic entitled, "Adolescent girls and the opposite sex" was of great relevance, popular and extremely meaningful.

3.3.4 The relationship with the referring agencies

The group coordinators in the various districts worked in conjunction with social workers in the department of social services, educational counselors, community center coordinators and youth workers. The coordinators emphasized the importance of maintaining an ongoing relationship with the referring agency for the purposes of guidance and direction, updates regarding the process that the adolescent is

undergoing and the sense that the joint goal of both parties, namely the advancement of the adolescent, is being carried out in the best possible manner.

3.3.5 The relationship with the adolescents' families

For the most part, the relationship between the coordinator and the families was limited to an initial contact that included a home visit in order to present the project and its scope as well as to obtain the family's consent for the adolescent's participation. Subsequently, contact was maintained through the mentor who visited the family residence more often or with the coordinator, if and when necessary. In other cases, the coordinator maintained more continuous contact with the family in order to update them as to the girl's situation and progress. In one instance, a mother volunteered to direct an activity for the girls. In another case, the coordinator distributed business cards to the adolescents' parents in order to assure them that she was reachable. A different coordinator scheduled the activities in the afternoon in order to reassure concerned parents that their daughter need not return home late at night.

3.3.6 The coordinators' recommendations

- A. Program length. The coordinators recommended beginning the program earlier in the school year because of its limited time span and the fact that within this timeframe a number of both girls and mentors tend to drop out. Another coordinator suggested continuing the program for an additional year or at least continuing the group activities during the summer.
- B. Mentor selection and recruitment. All of the coordinators emphasized the need to invest greater resources in selection and recruitment of the mentors.
- C. Support for coordinators. This suggestion was brought up as a means to reduce the extra work load of the Perach mentors so that they can receive the scholarship as well as reimbursement of expenses such as telephone calls.
- D. The need for professional guidance via one-time lectures or ongoing training.

3.4. A comparison of the adolescents' and mentors' evaluations of the program's contributions

When measuring the program's contribution to improvements in the social and family/parental spheres, the adolescents tend to evaluate the program as contributing

more to these spheres than attributed by the mentors. With regard to measuring improvements in the girls' sense of self, there is no significant difference in the value attributed by the girls as opposed to the mentors ($t=0.9$ $p=0.35$).

4. Discussion

4.1 Characteristics of the adolescents

Based on content analysis and on the data derived from the evaluation findings, it can be seen that the participating adolescents comprise a heterogeneous group with regard to age, family status, educational status, and involvement in high risk activities. Most of the girls are between the ages of 13 and 17 and derive from various family structures. All the girls are within some sort of educational framework and express desires to succeed in their studies. From the mentors' reports, we learn that half of the girls are enrolled in special education programs of which most do not offer complete matriculation diplomas. Approximately half of the girls function adequately in school and the other half may be classified as belonging to the group of at-risk youth defined as youth that are part of an educational or work framework but have integrative difficulties and potential to drop-out. This finding is of importance to the program organizers as well as to the mentors and coordinators because it stresses the importance of intervention in the educational realm, a type of intervention that, at present, is minimally addressed by the program. The establishment of greater contact between the mentors, coordinators and school personnel should be considered.

With respect to involvement in high-risk behaviors, between one third and one half of the girls are actively involved in such activities. From the mentors' reports, it is apparent that half of the adolescents are not awarded the necessary support from educational or social services in the community.

In conclusion, some of the adolescents do not adhere to the definition of at-risk youth, some belong to the group that is currently enrolled in educational institutions but is at risk of dropping out and a small number actively engage in dangerous behaviors.

4.2 The relationship with the mentors

Data collected from the adolescents reveals their satisfaction with the program. They describe the mentors as authentic with regard to the relationship and see them as

sources of guidance whose advice they can value. Both the personal and group meetings were described by the adolescents and the mentors as characterized by emotional closeness, reciprocity, enjoyment and a willingness to attend.

4.3 Program content

The proposed content for the meetings was a complicated issue. Most of the adolescents (75%) believed that the program was suited to them; however, one fourth felt that it was too childish. Only one half of the mentors believed that the program was relevant for the girls. Both the girls and the coordinators considered the most relevant topics to be those concerning the relationship between the genders and volunteering in the community. In addition, there was tension between the need to adhere to the planned program and the need to adapt the content to the girls' desires and development of the relationship. Another issue that should be dealt with is the fact that this program was implemented for the benefit of young women and conducted by young women. As described in the literature, the developmental path of women differs from that of men. Addressing this issue may provide a valuable resource for those developing and implementing the program.

4.4 The relationship with the adolescents' families

The relationship with the adolescents' families is necessary in order to guarantee the existence and success of the mentoring and is of particular importance when the family is marginalized and foreign to the local society and culture. The involvement of the family in a more intensive manner should be considered so that the adolescent may experience the contribution of her ethnic origin and may find support within this framework. In other words, it may be beneficial to invite the family to act as an active partner in the advancement of the adolescent.

4.5 Selection, training and guidance of the mentors

All of the coordinators emphasized the importance of careful selection of mentors because the recruitment of inappropriate candidates may be detrimental not only to the program but, more importantly, may harm the adolescent under her influence. It is apparent that the selection process needs to be altered to include either a selection oriented training process or additional interviews.

4.6 Program contributions

Both the adolescents and the mentors provided high scores when evaluating the program's contributions. They agreed that the program's most significant contribution was improvement of the adolescents' sense of self. This finding is of overwhelming importance. The mentoring's contribution to personality related feelings demonstrates the importance of the interpersonal relationship for both the adolescents and their mentors. In addition, it attests to the investment that was made in order to create and develop the relationships. Nonetheless, means by which the girls' family and social ties may be improved also need to be addressed. The least significant program contribution relates to the rapport with community service organizations. This finding is indeed troublesome because it is indicative of the level of the girls' marginalization. They are initially marginalized because of their at-risk status and then once again because of the lack of rapport or disregard of the very framework that was supposed to help them. Another finding that should be addressed relates to the mentors' reports that the program contributes to the mitigation of dangerous behaviors among the girls. This finding is encouraging; however, future research needs to examine what specific behaviors were reduced and to what parameters.

4.7 Research limitations

The research has a number of methodological limitations: First, the data was collected at a single point in time, such that the evaluation is retrospective. Second, there was no control group. Third, it would be important to increase sample size. The lack of questionnaires of two groups of adolescents (Beersheba "B" and the Yerucham group) is of particular importance because the interviews with these groups' coordinators and the referring authorities indicated that the groups possessed unique characteristics.

In light of this, we recommend the continuation of the research such that the methodological limitations may be corrected through the addition of a control group, data collection at two distinct points in time and increasing the sample size.

4.8 Recommendations

A. The range of ages among the participants in a single group should not exceed three years.

B. The mentoring process should encourage the creation of partnerships with the adolescents' families as well as the promotion of contact with the community service authorities (the social capital approach).

C. The program's time frame should be expanded.

D. Additional means of selecting mentors should be implemented.

E. Program content should be broadened to include topics dealing with feminine identity from the perspective of the unique experiences of women and should include topics that integrate the complexity of creating a feminine identity within a multicultural framework.